



*'Committed to improving the life chances of all children, wherever they may be'*

# Succession Planning Strategy 2020 - 2024

<b>Approved by:</b>	Board of Trustees	<b>Date:</b> 22 <sup>nd</sup> September 2023
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# Orchard Community Trust Succession Planning Strategy - School Leadership

## The Vision

The Trust has been established through a shared belief that that education is a preparation for life. In the spirit of inclusion, respect and safeguarding we seek to prepare each child to face life beyond the school with confidence, skills and abilities to be resilient and to succeed.

Orchard Community Trust is fully committed to improving the life chances of all children, wherever they may be. This moral obligation, our mission, does not end at the school gates, within our own Local Authorities, or even within our own country. Where we have the capacity to make a difference, we are morally bound to do so.

## Aims of the Strategy

Leadership and Governance across Orchard Community Trust at all levels will be excellent and succession planning will be effective in securing leaders of the highest quality across the Trust, both in all of our schools, in the Central MAT Team and at Trust Board and Local Governing Board level.

Succession planning is about ensuring continuity within an organisation, by having the right people in the right place at the right time at all levels in our organisation.

Succession planning in all organisations is widely accepted as a positive element of people management; it encourages talent development and ensures that leadership remains energised and forward looking.

## Underlying Principles of the Strategy

- The development of leadership capacity at all levels in the MAT is fundamental to the delivery of high quality school-based provision and an effective curriculum for children and young people and places the needs of pupils at the heart of the planning process.
- Growing our own leaders, where possible and appropriate will benefit each Trust school by recruiting leaders who have gained experience across the Trust, whilst balancing the need at times to recruit from outside of the MAT to ensure new ideas and experience is brought in.
- There is huge potential to improve school standards and performance through creative partnership arrangements for teachers, support staff and leaders at all levels. Collaboration, sharing expertise and effective CPD and development opportunities for all will develop capacity for greatness and empower people to want to progress their careers and develop their classroom teaching and leadership skills.
- Experience, skills and knowledge is best shared and this will be encouraged across the MAT with leaders taking responsibility for delivering projects across the MAT and key aspects of the MAT development plan.

## Trust Commitment

The Trust is committed to safe growth through careful succession planning that:

- Makes clear links in School Improvement Plans to the importance of leadership development
- Ensures Self Evaluation Forms (SEF's) address workforce capacity and development
- Identifies leadership potential and enables training and support for professional development
- Regularly reviews and evaluates leadership structures and their effectiveness with an eye to the development of the most efficient models of leadership
- Considers it as a success when a member of staff moves on to a leadership position at another school within the Trust
- Ensures appropriate induction and support through coaching and mentoring is in place for all staff, including leadership roles
- Promotes the Trust's approach to leadership development to external candidates and schools

### **Developing our people in our schools**

The Trust recognises that the provision of the highest quality teaching is of paramount importance. The Trust will ensure that all staff are appropriately skilled and that they have the necessary knowledge and capability in order to carry out their responsibilities effectively, share best practice and develop as key leaders.

### **Developing our Leaders and Managers in our schools**

Our aim is to have inspirational leadership, this means creating a culture of motivation and commitment. We intend to have inspiring leaders in all posts. They will be expected to create an environment of trust in which people can be creative and motivated to fulfil their potential.

They will be expected to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and behaviours-

- Have passion
- Have a sense of purpose
- Be honest and trustworthy
- Encourage others to share the vision
- Inspire others to achieve their potential

To ensure that we continue to succeed as a trust we need to invest time and resources to ensure that we have highly skilled, responsive leaders to support our trust and our people through the opportunities ahead.

The Trust will provide an environment in which everyone is encouraged and supported to develop leadership and management competencies.

Our Senior Leaders need to be supported by Managers who have the skills, knowledge and behaviours to lead and manage staff in line with the guiding principles of the Trust.

### **We will develop a Leadership Development Strategy**

To offer our leaders and managers, both current and aspiring, a comprehensive menu of options to enable them to manage their own development more fully and to enable them to maximise their talent.

### **Well Planned and Effective Promotion and Marketing of Orchard Community Trust MAT**

We will develop and agree a clear and focused marketing strategy for Orchard Community Trust MAT to ensure that we are an attractive employer of choice both for school-based staff and staff in the Central team. We will regularly review the website and its content and layout and develop promotional video films related to the MAT and brochures which outline the strengths and benefits of the MAT, we will commission an external company or person to develop, design and produce our marketing strategy, content and marketing materials (**see separate marketing specification and plan agreed Orchard Community Trust Board**).

### **Developing the Central Team**

Orchard Community Trust will have the opportunity to continually update their skills, knowledge and behaviours. Opportunities for on-going training will be provided.

### **Attracting, Recruiting and Retaining a High-Quality Workforce**

We need to operate best practices that attract, optimise and retain talent to ensure that we achieve our key objectives within operational costs. There are a number of ways in which we can do this including: -

- Implementing effective workforce planning to enable us to forecast more accurately our future resourcing needs and to ensure that we have the right people with the right skills at the right time
- Ensuring that our recruitment and selection procedures are fair, relevant and fit for purpose. We will develop a Trust wide strategy based on our guiding principles and ensure that safer recruitment policies are adhered to at all times

- Encouraging diversity in our workforce by promoting career opportunities. We will establish a Trust wide Equality and Diversity policy and a Single Equality Scheme
- Recruiting staff which will be based on candidates being able to describe their competencies rather than list their employment history
- Implementing strategies and policies which ensure that the trust is inclusive and that all staff are fully valued as individuals and a part of a larger organisation.

We are committed to attracting applicants from diverse backgrounds as we firmly believe that a diverse workforce enables us to draw upon the widest possible range of views, experiences and opinions. This enables us to better meet and understand the needs of the communities we serve. The Trust believes that all people have talent which should be identified and liberated. Consequently, it will introduce a talent management strategy based on the principles of retaining and developing talent.

The culture of our Trust is extremely important as this can directly affect employee motivation and consequently can have a significant impact on levels of engagement and our overall performance. Our workplace culture represents the way that we operate and therefore it is important that we have an attractive and focused environment to ensure that we maximise people's potential.

As a new Trust we need to have a firm understanding of the challenge ahead and issues we are likely to face over the coming years. This will enable us to more accurately forecast our future resourcing to ensure that we have the right people with the right skills at the right time.

We will continue to develop our workforce planning to enable us to make better informed decisions around recruiting, saving time and resources in the long term.

**The Trust will:**

- Prioritise with school leaders the annual focus for leadership development across the Trust that meets the needs of each school;
- Deliver future leaders for our schools at every level of the Trust through high quality CPD opportunities;
- Facilitate secondments and exchanges that share skills, fill vacancies or develop capabilities that adds value to the learning of pupils in another school;
- Review, revise and update the model of Governance across Orchard Community Trust to ensure that the structure is fit for purpose and capable of meeting objects of the Trust, is consistently compliant and capable of holding the Executive Management Team and school Headteachers to account;
- To support Local Governing Boards to have full and appropriate membership;

**Orchard Community Trust Schools will be expected:**

- To be clear and strategic within the Executive Management Board in order to identify priorities for improvement;
- To implement Orchard Community Trust performance management policies;
- To identify staff in the school who are ready for further leadership development and to support and engage in Orchard Community Trust leadership training;
- To participate in the delivery of Orchard Community Trust succession planning and leadership programmes;
- To host and take advantage of secondments and exchanges to other schools;

## **Developing the Trust Board and Local Governing Boards**

The Trust Board and Local Governing Boards will have the opportunity to continually update their skills, knowledge and behaviours. All new Board Members will undergo an induction programme that includes training for their roles and responsibilities. On-going training will be provided for Board Members to enable them to continue to effectively carry out their role.

Looking at this in terms of a Trust Board or Local Governing Board, this means recruiting new Governors/Trustees and encouraging learning and development across all.

Identifying and developing individuals in order to equip them to step into the chairing or vice-chairing role, when others step down from these roles, is a process commonly known as succession planning. Succession planning ensures the availability of capable individuals to take up the reigns when the time comes.

Succession planning is not something that every Governing Board is proactive in addressing. Where the appointment of a new Chair is the result of a last-minute decision, this could lead to a situation where an appointment is made based on availability or the one who has served the longest. This might not secure the best person for the role. Many long-standing chairs tell us that they cannot stand down because there is no one on the Board willing and able to take on the role. This guidance is to help those Chairs and Governing Boards to solve this problem.

For many Governing Boards who do think about succession planning, the practice of conducting effective succession planning remains easier to talk about and much harder to achieve. The aim of this guidance is to help Governing Boards to start to turn policy into practice by ensuring that succession planning remains a key part of the Board's long-term practice and self-evaluation.

A successful Board should be constantly reviewing and refreshing to ensure that an effective balance of skills is maintained. Part of this is about creating a culture of Governors and Trustees moving on in a planned positive way; Governorship is not necessarily permanent, and the needs of the organisation and needs of the board change over time.

The Governance Handbook is clear that effective Governing Boards should “use active succession planning to ensure the board, and the whole organisation, continues to have the people and leadership it needs to remain effective.”

### **Why plan for Chair Succession?**

#### **The role of the Chair**

The Chair leads the Governing Board and ensures that its focus is strategic and that it meets all its legal responsibilities. A good chair will build an effective team, ensuring that all Governors/Trustees participate fully in meetings and committees, and will develop the knowledge, confidence and skills of the Governing Board. The chair needs to be well informed about local and national education issues and share this information with the Governing Board. They need to have a close, supportive, but not exclusive, relationship with the head.

The standard term of office for all categories of Governors and Trustees is four years. The National Governance Association (NGA) recommends that Governors and Trustees serve no more than two terms of office at any one school; that is eight years and plenty of time to make a difference. Chairs should be limited to six years in post as chair at the same school, except for exceptional circumstances, with regular reappraisal and renewals being beneficial to all schools, helping to ensure Boards do not become too cosy, while helping to maintain appropriate levels of challenge.

### **Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair**

All Governing Boards must have a chair and vice-chair. There are no set rules on how the election of the chair and vice-chair should be carried out. In maintained schools, any Governor standing for election must withdraw from the meeting when the vote is taken. The Governing Board must decide what the term of office for the chair and vice chair should be. Many Governing Boards choose to have annual elections. No one paid to work at the school can be elected chair or vice-chair.

In academies, the term of office is usually one year, as stipulated in the academy trust Articles of Association, although they can stand for re-election. The election usually takes place at the first meeting of the autumn term. Some chairs of academy committees are appointed by the Board of Trustees, as stipulated by their Articles of Association and scheme of delegation. We have developed a model procedure for the election of the chair and vice chair, which NGA members can download at [www.nga.org.uk/knowledge-centre](http://www.nga.org.uk/knowledge-centre)

### **Creating the Culture for Succession**

It is never too early to talk about succession at all levels within an organisation. Succession planning should not just be a concept; something that we all agree is a good idea, but that fails to feature in the Boards practice.

This means that Chairs and Clerks have a role to play in ensuring that it is a topic that is discussed in meetings. Many Boards have training and development as a standing agenda item, either on the full Governing Board or a committee agenda. The training and development discussion should include succession planning, identifying future training needs and development opportunities. If succession is only discussed when a serving chair announces their intention to step down, it becomes reactive, unexpected and people tend to shy away from committing.

In order to create a culture of succession planning on the Board, it is important to ensure the foundations are in place. The discussion around training needs and agreeing who is best placed to take over which chairing role can only happen once the team is established and the Trust has developed amongst serving Governors. An essential part of establishing trust includes addressing the realities of the Governing Board, developing the team and being able to have honest conversations about succession.

## **Reality – Delivering Effective Governance**

Sufficient time to govern is a long-standing challenge for many Governors and Trustees. It may be the biggest factor that deters existing Governors/Trustees from stepping forward to take on the role of chair. Feedback from governors at succession planning workshops indicates that this can be a barrier for some individuals.

Consider practical steps which will allow Governors/Trustees to contribute when they cannot attend a particular meeting. Ensure that Governors/Trustees understand that the role does not require a significant amount of time in school and that the clerk is circulating papers with adequate time to allow them time to read, comment and contribute.

Supporting Governors and Trustees to fulfil their current role is the first step to helping them believe that they could take on a chairing role. Ensure Governors and Trustees attend local face-to-face training and have access to other forms of training like e-learning to help them to manage the role effectively.

Demonstrating commitment, having an ability to build strong relationships, having the skills to challenge constructively and having a thorough understanding of the role are the foundations for Governors and Trustees to develop. By setting out the expectations and commitment required from those governing, the Governing Board will then be better equipped to carry out its work within the school or trust and the community. NGA offers a model code of conduct and role description to help Governing Boards work towards effective governance: [www.nga.org.uk](http://www.nga.org.uk)

Leadership of the Governing Board is critical and existing chairs need to ensure that they model good practice and lead the Board in a way that ensures it achieves the balance of delivering the strategic role and accountability over the operational delivery by the senior leadership team.

### **Building the Team**

If the Governing Board needs to have honest discussions about succession planning, then first you have to build the team and build the trust; then you will find it much easier to have that conversation.

Getting to know each other and each individual's skills and background is vitally important. Existing chairs need to ensure all Governors/Trustees contribute and feel confident enough to ask questions and check understanding. It can be helpful to meet socially, outside of meetings and to welcome new volunteers in a more informal setting.

All Governing Boards should horizon scan and avoid becoming too inward looking; setting aside time for a vision and strategy day can really help to build relationships and focus the Governing Board on its strategic role. Further guidance can be accessed on NGA's Knowledge Centre [www.nga.org.uk/knowledge-centre](http://www.nga.org.uk/knowledge-centre)

Undertaking a Board self-evaluation is also critical for the Board to reflect on its strengths and focus on its areas for development.

Build the team's confidence with support, training and encouragement. Acknowledge their commitment and celebrate the success of the school or trust – people need to feel that they are achieving something and that their effort is appreciated. Thanking Governors/Trustees for a job well done is so important; it builds confidence and goodwill for the future.

**The Trust will:**

- Ensure that individuals have a one-to-one with the Chair to review their contributions and development needs at least once a year.
- Get to know each other outside of a formal setting. Volunteers have skills and experience which may not be obvious in the meetings.
- Talk about development in meetings.
- Consider completing a 360-degree feedback questionnaire for the chair.
- Undertake a board self-evaluation exercise to highlight strengths and areas for development each year.

**A Culture of Succession**

We know that some Governors and Trustees are fearful of taking on a chairing role and perceive it to be daunting and unachievable when put alongside their other commitments.

Breaking the role down and talking about what is actually involved can help to alleviate those concerns, but the timing of those conversations is so important; they have to be seen as honest assessments of the role and not a “sales job” because the existing chair, vice-chair or committee chair has announced that this will be their last year. The incumbent needs to model good practice and demonstrate that the role is achievable within a manageable time commitment.

Offer development opportunities which are not too daunting and work with the clerk to agree actions from the skills audit analysis. Visiting the school to represent the Governing Board with external stakeholders and sitting on the Headteachers performance panel are all great opportunities to develop skills and build confidence and, in doing so, create a culture of succession.

**The Trust will:**

- Ensure that existing chairs are be open and transparent about what the role involves.
- Role model an achievable role, not an impossible act to follow.
- Use skills audits as a basis for a discussion about training needs – not just a once a year exercise.
- Ensure Chairs delegate responsibility as well as tasks – all Governors/Trustees need to feel as though they are making a contribution.
- Value all contributions, celebrate success and thank everyone for all their efforts.

**The Trust will also:**

**Identify the Future Opportunity:**

When the succession culture is right, people will feel that they can be open and honest about their plans to step down and others can be open about their ambitions; once this discussion happens, then you are able to agree the future opportunities.

**Talent Spot:**

Existing Governors/Trustees may feel able or confident enough to offer to take on a chairing role or a new volunteer may join and have future potential. We will talent spot amongst our networks and amongst parents and encourage them to join the Boards, via due processes.

**Gain Commitment:**

It is an honest conversation, which will hopefully gain the Governors/Trustees commitment to take on a chairing role.

**Identify the Development Need:**

This is where the regular agenda item about training and development becomes essential; an opportunity to focus the Trust Board and the Local Governing Board's minds on development and succession.

**Enable Learning and Developing in the Role:**

As a Trustee or Governor, you are always learning and developing in the role; access to high-quality local training, e-learning and any DfE funded Governance development programmes will be ensured and training tailored to individual skills matrix assessments and requirements.

**Ensure the Effective Monitoring and Review of Learning:**

Either as a sharing of learning in a Board or Committee meeting or as a 1-1 with the Board or LGB Chair.

## Developing Governors and Trustees

### Developing Current Volunteers

When considering how best to support the development of existing Governors and Trustees, a good place to start is with a skills audit, which can be used as the basis of a discussion about current and future training needs. In some cases, this will lead naturally into an individual expressing interest in taking on a chairing role, in other cases it will not.

However, for all Governors and Trustees, keeping up to date, attending training and becoming as knowledgeable as possible is a requirement of the role.

It is important to remember that development is a self-led process; you cannot develop your Governors and Trustees, only they can do that, but you can offer them development opportunities. For many, development may include attending local cluster meetings to enable them to meet other local governance volunteers or simply reading updated guidance; for example, clerks can circulate the latest Keeping Children Safe in Education and ask that all Governors/Trustees read and be prepared to discuss at the next board meeting.

A blended approach to learning and development works well with a board of Governors and Trustees who are all volunteers and who will have varying amounts of time available to access learning opportunities. A combination of face-to-face formal training, discussion, networking, self-evaluation, conferences, reading and e-learning will hopefully offer opportunities to suit everyone's learning style and areas of interest.

#### **The Trust will:**

- Ensure that all Governors/Trustees access governance information on a regular basis.
- Ask your clerk to circulate essential guidance for all Governors/Trustees to read and discuss.
- Consider subscribing to an eLearning package to supplement face-to-face training.
- Arrange at least one in-house training session per year, focusing on issues specific to your school.
- Encourage Governors/Trustees to attend local face-to-face training, delivered by a quality provider.
- Remind Governors/Trustees that they are entitled to ask their employer for time off to attend to governance duties, including training.
- Buddy-up current Governors/Trustees to conduct monitoring visits together; the benefits outweigh any logistical challenges.
- Encourage a Governors/Trustees to attend a local cluster group, where they exist, for networking and updating knowledge.

- Offer additional responsibilities, attendance at external meetings and tasks to those who express an interest.
- Ensure that all training is recorded and reviewed termly to assess who is attending training and how that learning is being shared with the board.

## Developing new Governors and Trustees

Once you have evaluated the skills on your Governing Board, you will have a good idea of any gaps in knowledge, experience, skills and behaviours that you need to fill. You may then decide to recruit new Governors or Trustees to complete your Board and bring in fresh ideas and specific skills.

You can find skilled volunteers in your local community through Inspiring Governance and by using local communication channels. For more information about how to recruit Governors and Trustees, please download NGA's guidance on recruiting Governors and Trustees, the right people around the table [www.nga.org.uk/inspiring-governance](http://www.nga.org.uk/inspiring-governance)



Inspiring Governance is a free online recruitment service which connects volunteers interested in becoming Governors and Trustees with state funded schools in England.

[www.inspiringgovernance.org](http://www.inspiringgovernance.org)

If you find your perfect candidate through Inspiring Governance, NGA will provide them with free support and expert guidance for 12 months. This will help them feel confident and capable in their new role and give them the essential knowledge and skills to govern effectively. The support includes:

- A complimentary copy of an NGA induction guide
  - Welcome to Governance or Welcome to a Multi Academy Trust (dependent on type of school)
- Access to high-quality, in-depth induction modules on NGA Learning Link to support their Governance development with flexible e-learning at a time and pace that suits them
- Access to NGA's extensive online Knowledge Centre containing a wealth of governance resources
- Dedicated telephone and email support – staffed by professional advisers – to walk them through their first year
- NGA's weekly e-newsletter featuring the latest education news and policy updates
- A monthly 'Hot Topics' email designed especially for new Governors and Trustees
- If aged under 40, membership of the Young Governors' Network

However, you find new Governors or Trustees, once you have interviewed and appointed candidates, you should consider how you will induct and train them.

## Welcoming and Inducting new Volunteers

The Governing Board needs to ensure that it is welcoming to newly appointed Governors and Trustees, and that they feel supported as they take on their new role. Governing Boards should have an induction policy and ensure that a named individual is responsible for making the arrangements for new Governors/Trustees to attend a formal induction – usually available from the Local Authority or Multi-Academy Trust.

It is important that a new volunteer has the chance to meet and network with other local Governors and Trustees and does not simply have an internal induction – Governors/Trustees need to horizon scan and develop knowledge by sharing good practice across all local schools.

#### **The Trust will:**

- Create a welcome pack for new Governors and Trustees with key documents, links to websites, names and contact details of the whole Governing Board as well as a list of all the training courses available and how to book a place.
- Ensure they have an email address and logins for any platforms and services they will need to use.
- The first meeting and first term – ensure that they have everything they need, have had access to data and past minutes and feel supported.
- Welcome any questions and ideas – being new gives people a unique perspective which can be really helpful to a Governing Board.
- Arrange an in-house induction with the opportunity for questions and discussion.
- Allocate a mentor – preferably not the Chair– and ensure that introductions are made.
- Talent spot – Governors/Trustees may be new but they may have leadership potential.
- Provide opportunities to make an impact quickly– they joined to contribute.
- Keep in touch – build relationships with new Governors/Trustees, and ensure you stay in touch in between meetings and training.

### **Ensuring Leadership**

#### **Leadership of the Governing Board**

The Chair has no individual power but plays a central part in determining the culture and conduct of the Governing Board. In a healthy board, others, particularly the vice-chairs and committee chairs, will play a leadership role.

Chairing well involves operating a distributed leadership model, where responsibilities are given to the most appropriate Governors/Trustees and the Governing Board works as a team to challenge, support and contribute to the leadership of the school. This has the added benefit of ensuring the relationship between the head and the chair of governors does not become exclusive.

Developing committee chairs and vice-chairs can be incredibly rewarding; both for the Chair of Governors and other Chairs.

This will help to ensure the Governing Board is operating as a corporate body, with collective responsibility.

**The Trust will:**

- Agree all the delegated tasks and responsibilities to committees and for working parties.
- Share with the wider Governing Board the dates of all one-to-ones with members of the Senior Leadership team and School Business Manager.
- Encourage all chairs to access local chairs courses as well as governance development programmes funded by the Department for Education.
- Network with other Governors fulfilling a similar role on other local Governing Boards – sharing good practice can help develop knowledge and keep the board moving forward.
- Ensure that all Chairs seek feedback from their board on how effectively they have fulfilled the role and ideas for the future.

**Committee and stakeholder group involvement**

**The Trust will**

Ensure that where appropriate, that Trust Board and Local Governing Board sub-committees and stakeholder councils at both Trust level and school level, have discussions related to succession planning and consider the KPI's for this. Outcomes will be fed back to the Trust Board via reports, the subcommittee/group Chair and presentations to the Board form these groups/councils.

**KEY INDICATORS OF OUR SUCCESS**

**That the Orchard Community Trust will have a leading succession plan**

MAT Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
There is a clear succession plan for the key posts within the MAT (CEO, Director of Finance, HR, Chair of Board, members and directors, Headteachers and Deputy/ Assistant Headteachers)	The Trust knows there are posts in the organisation that require a succession plan. It has not yet grown enough capacity from within the organisation to address this. The Trust would rely on external recruitment or some internal secondments to resolve succession issues	The Trust has a talent management programme that supports and develops talented teachers and leaders and equips them to work effectively across the Trust in different schools and roles. These blend CPD opportunities with wider leadership experience	The Trust has a talent management plan for emerging and senior leaders in the organisation that means the Trust can deploy its most talented staff to work in more than one school on secondments or permanent transfers, creating career development and succession solutions	The Trust has a talent management plan that has matured and now includes staff at all levels across the Trust. Senior leaders have worked in more than one Trust school and middle leaders and the best teachers are deployed across the Trust to sustain and deepen impact