



INVITATION TO TENDER

External Governance Review

1. CONTEXT

On behalf of the Trust Board of the Girls' Learning Trust, we are writing to offer you an opportunity to tender for undertaking a governance review of our organisation. We currently operate three large secondary schools located in the London Borough of Sutton, with potential to expand further in the future:

- Carshalton High School for Girls
- Nonsuch High School for Girls
- Wallington High School for Girls

Our organisation, in common with other state funded multi academy trusts, is both a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. We have a turnover of c£30m, approximately 500 staff and around 4,500 students. We have a range of shared infrastructure services that span all our schools, and are supported by a dedicated team of members, trustees and governors.

Our latest accounts and other key documents can be found here: www.girlslearningtrust.org/our-governance/key-reports

2. OUR GOVERNANCE

We have three levels of governance:

1. Members
2. Trust Board
3. Local Governing Bodies (and other subcommittees)

The Members

Our Members are akin to the shareholders of a company, except that as a charity we accrue no profits. The Trust can have no fewer than three Members, the majority of whom cannot also be Trustees. Independent Members have an overview of the governance arrangements of the Trust and appoint the Trustees.

The Trust Board

Our second level of governance is the Trust Board. There are currently eleven trustees (who are also company directors). The Board is:

- Responsible for setting the strategic direction for the Trust, including key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Accountable for the educational performance of the Trust and all schools within it.
- Responsible for determining Trust-wide policies as appropriate.
- The employer of all Trust staff.

The Board has the following subcommittees:

- Admissions
- Audit & Risk
- Finance
- Governance
- HR
- Remuneration
- Local Governing Bodies (LGBs)

Local Governing Bodies (LGBs)

Our third level of governance comprises the Trust subcommittees and a Local Governing Body (LGB) for each school. Each Local Governing Body:

- Is responsible to the Trust Board for the performance of the school.
- Supports and challenges the Headteacher and the school leadership to secure strong student performance.
- Provides oversight and monitoring of the school's activities to ensure an excellent standard of education is delivered.
- Ensures that the School KPIs set by the Trust Board are delivered alongside the school development plan.
- Contributes to the wider work of the Trust through membership of certain Trust subcommittees.

Governing Documents

The specific arrangements related to our governance are set out in two key documents:

1. Articles of Association
2. Governance Handbook

The Governance Handbook includes:

- Comprehensive information on the structure, responsibilities and reporting requirements of the Trust.
- A detailed scheme of delegation for the Trust, setting out which area of our governance is responsible / accountable for what.
- An outline of the various policies required at Trust level, and those which sit more locally with the School LGB.
- An outline of the KPIs for the Trust.
- Formal terms of reference for all subcommittees (including the support protocols), and an annual calendar of business for a typical year.
- A code of conduct for trustees and LGB members, including arrangements for recruitment and induction.

We have recently moved our governance support platform to Governor Hub.

More information on our governance can be found here: www.girlslearningtrust.org/our-governance

3. REVIEW METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

The external review has been commissioned (and will be overseen) by our Governance Committee which, as per its own terms of reference, has delegated responsibility for 'making recommendations to the Trust Board on all areas related to ensuring effective governance'.

The Academy Trust Governance Code was launched in September 2023, and is a voluntary code that draws upon the Charity Governance Code and relevant Department for Education guidance. It sets out the principles, desired outcomes, and recommended practice for effective governance.

The Code was developed as a tool for continuous improvement in academy trust governance and it is hoped that all academy trusts will aspire to meet all aspects of the code over time. The Code has been developed by a group of organisations on behalf of the academy trust sector and serves as a good framework for an external review: <https://atgc.org.uk>.

We are open to tenders that are based on all governance review methodologies, but we envisage this code being central to any successful project. We would anticipate the following (non-exhaustive) key questions to be considered as part of the review:

1. Is our overall governance structure effective and fit for purpose?
2. How effective are our various committees, and are they fit for purpose?
3. What changes should we consider to the membership of our Members, our Trust Board and our subcommittees?
4. Is our scheme of delegation effective and fit for purpose?
5. How effective is governance supported throughout the Trust, and what might we do to improve it?

4. TENDER EVALUATION CRITERIA

All tenders will be broadly evaluated using the following six criteria with the weighting for each area of your bid specified as the following:

Review strategy and methodology	20%	How effectively does your review methodology meet the needs of our Trust.
Knowledge and experience of the MAT sector	20%	What experience and knowledge do you have of the MAT sector, and the current challenges / opportunities it faces in terms of governance.
Track record of other reviews	20%	What evidence have you got for undertaking similar reviews, including the impact these have had on the organisation in question.
Timeline	10%	What are the key dates and deadlines the review, noting our intention to consider the final report at our Governance Committee meeting on 24 June 2024.
People	10%	Who will be leading the review, and what experience or qualifications do they have in governance.
Cost	20%	What are the detailed costs associated with the project, and how does it represent good value for public money.

5. TENDER APPLICATION INFORMATION

Application Deadline

The deadline for a written proposal is 3pm on Wednesday 28 February 2024. Please provide this in a PDF format and send it to: tflynn@girlslearningtrust.org.

Shortlisting

Shortlisting will take place on 11 March 2024. Firms successful at this stage will be invited to interview.

Interviews

Interviews will take place in the week of 25 March over Microsoft Teams. This will involve a 10-minute presentation and a series of structured questions from the panel. We will try to accommodate timing preferences, but we won't be able to offer an alternative date.

The interview panel will be comprised of members of our Governance Committee:

- Sandy Gillett (Chair of Trust Board, Chair of Governance Committee & Member)
- Philip Taylor (Vice Chair of Trust Board)
- Raesa Chowdhury (Vice Chair of Governance Committee & Trustee)

- Nigel Pepper (Trustee)
- Jennifer Smith (CEO & Trustee)

6. FURTHER CONTACT DETAILS

If you are interested in this opportunity, or have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in contact with our Chief Operating Officer:

Dr Thomas Flynn
Chief Operating Officer
tflynn@girlslearningtrust.org