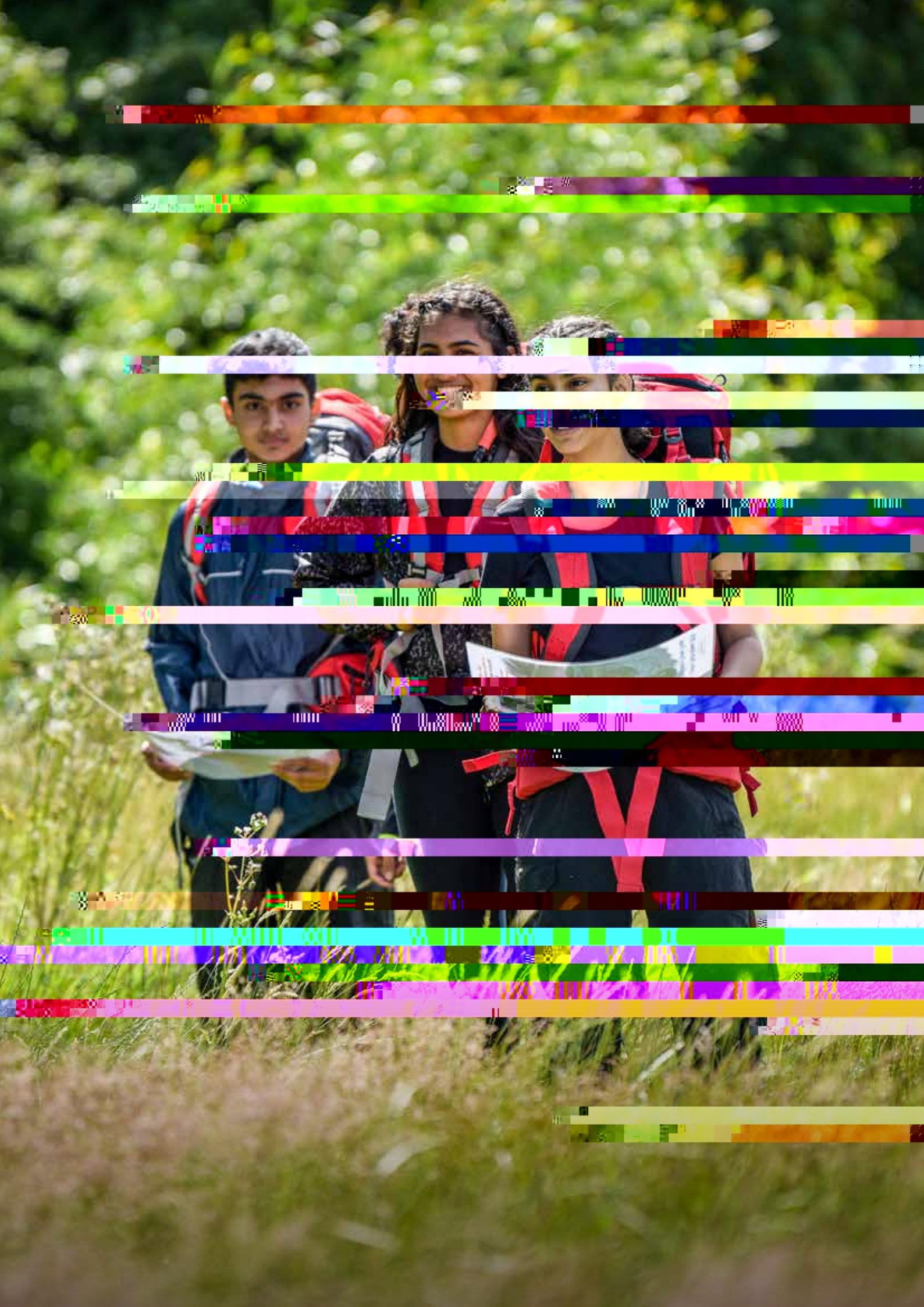




AVANTI SCHOOLS TRUST

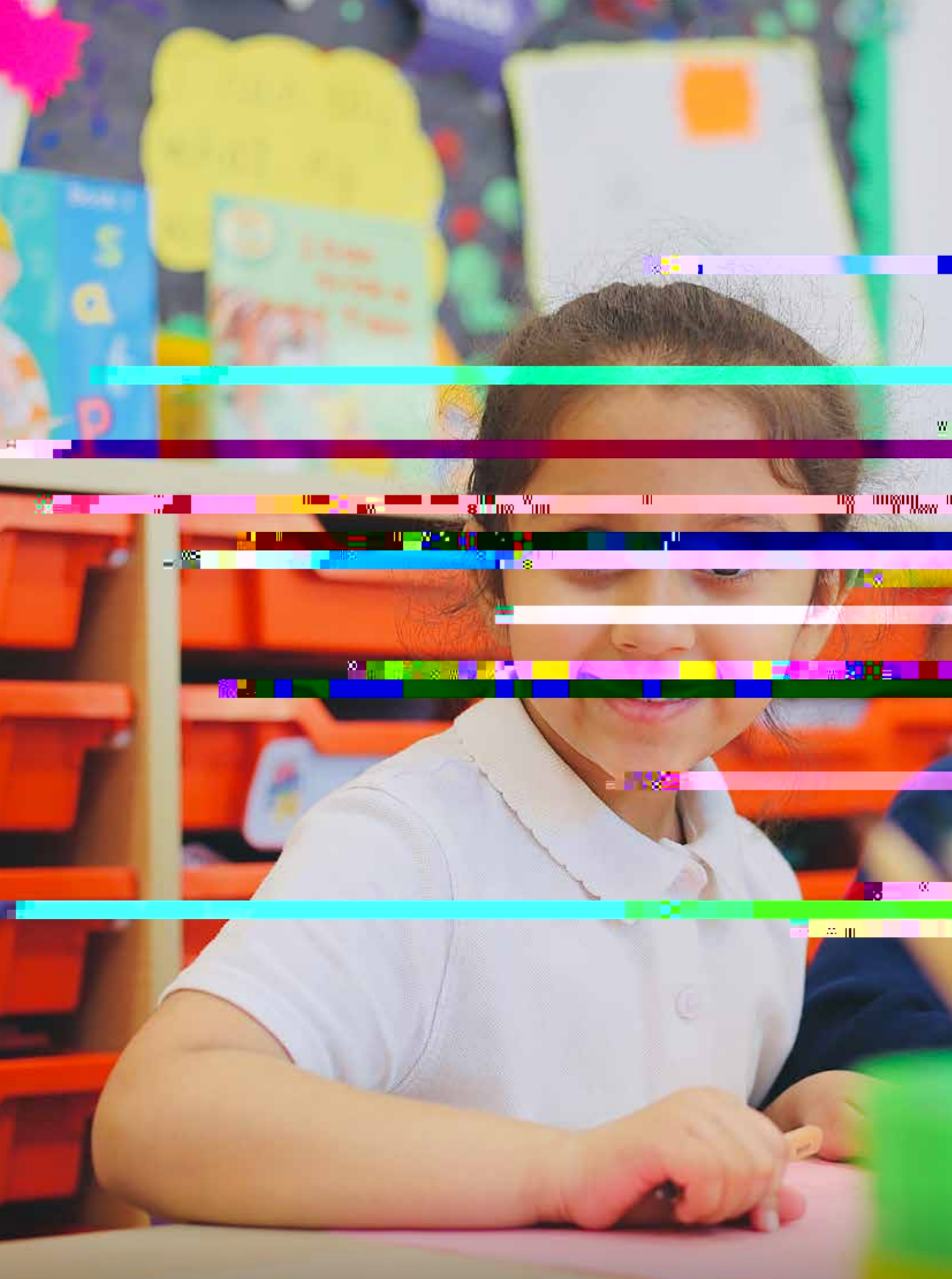




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**Foreword from the Chair of the Board Trustees:
Welcome to Avanti**

I am delighted to extend a very warm welcome to the Avanti community.

Being an Avanti Trustee or SSC Member is a privilege. We are part of a team of volunteers committed to the values and principles of Avanti who give their time and energy to the Trust and/or to our schools, for the benefit of the education of our young people. We work in partnership across the schools to improve the life chances of our young people.

The Trust is now responsible for the educational outcomes and wellbeing of more than 5,000 children, the livelihoods of over 600 employees and the annual management of £8 million of tax payers' money. The effectiveness of the Trust's governance is central to ensuring that those resources are used to make the biggest possible difference to the education and life chances of children. We therefore need the highest standards of Governance and to achieve this, we need not only high calibre and dedicated staff - we need dedicated, skilled and experienced Trustees and SSC Members.

This Handbook has been produced to support Trustees and SSC Members to be effective in their respective roles by providing clarity about Trust governance structures, machinery and expectations. It out-6(a)-7.4 (n)-7.7 (n)-8.5 (u)-7.2 (a)-8.7 (l)

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The purpose of this Handbook is to ensure that Trust Members, Trustees, Members of School Stakeholder Committees (SSCs) and all staff are clear about are clear about are clear about are

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The Avanti School Trust (the “MAT”) is a charitable company limited by guarantee.

The Trust has entered into a Master Funding Agreement with the Department for Education (DfE) and a Supplemental Funding Agreement in respect of each academy. Legally, the MAT is responsible to the DfE (and to the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)) for delivery of commitments under those Funding Agreements.

The DfE/ESFA require all MATs to comply with a range of regulations and guidance, much (but not all) of which is set out in the Academy Trust Handbook issued by ESFA and updated annually.

Additionally, the MAT is subject to the requirements of the Trust Articles of Association, (the “Articles”) which in summary, determine how the Trust is structured and constituted and the essential rules for how the Trust conducts itself.

Taken together, the Funding Agreements, Academy Trust Handbook, Trust Articles of Association and good practice guidance issued from time to time by e.g. The National Governance Association (NGA), establish the basis for the good governance of the Trust and to which the Trust Board is wholly committed.

CURRENT SCHOOL INFORMATION

School	LA	Date joined Trust/opening	Age range	Ofsted grade
Krishna Avanti, Harrow	Harrow	2008	3-11	Good
Krishna Avanti, Leicester	Leicester	2011	4-11	Good
Avanti Court	Redbridge	2011	3-11	Good
Avanti House Primary	Harrow	2012	4-11	Good
Avanti House Secondary	Harrow	2012	11-18	Good
Krishna Avanti, Croydon	Croydon	2016	4-11	Good
Avanti Fields	Leicester	2018	3-11	N/A
Avanti Park	Somerset	2019	4-14	N/A
Avanti Gardens	Bristol	2019	4-11	N/A
Avanti Hall	Devon	2019	4-16	N/A
Avanti Meadows	Hertfordshire	2021	4-11	N/A
Avanti Grange	Hertfordshire	2022	11-18	N/A
Avanti Brook	Hertfordshire	2023	4-11	N/A

Members

Trust Articles require that there should be a minimum of three Members. (In line with the minimum preference of the DfE the Trust currently has five Members).

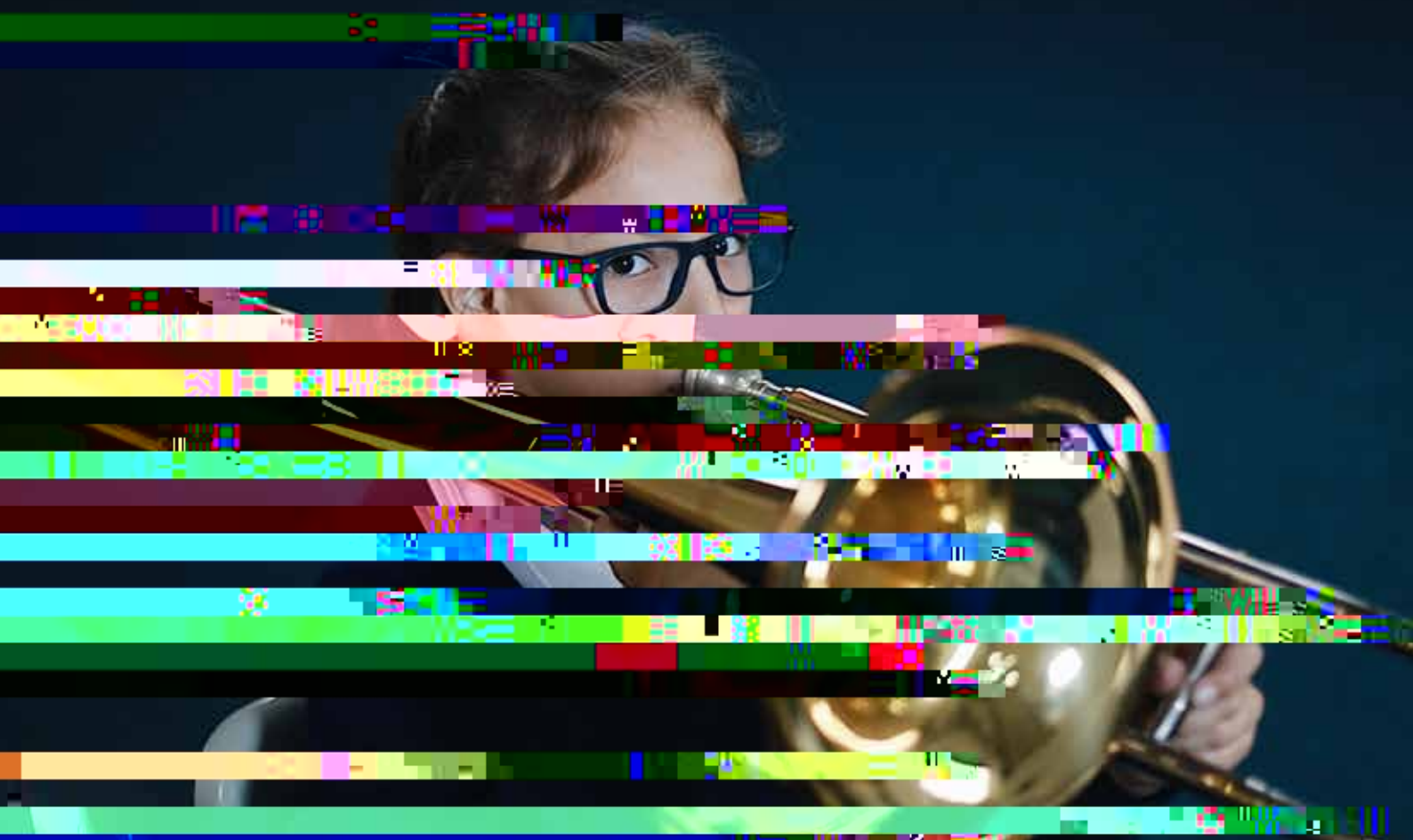
The Articles allow Members to appoint additional Members but there is no set term of office: once appointed a Member remains in office until they resign (unless they are removed by a majority of the other Members).

The NGA describe the role of Members as “the guardians of the governance of the Trust”. Members sit at the top of the Trust governance structure. Their role is discreet and separate from that of Trustees, their focus being to ensure that the Trust Board (which reports to the Members) is performing well, that the charitable objectives of the Trust (in summary advancing education for public benefit) are being met in line with the Trust Vision and ensuring/seeking assurance that standards of governance across the Trust are high. Members do not have any role in, or responsibilities for,

the day-to-day strategic or operation of the MAT or the Academies. They do however have specific powers to:

- Appoint other Members;
- Amend the Articles of Association;
- Change the name of the Trust;
- Appoint or remove Trustees;
- Approve the appointment of the CEO as a Trustee;
- Appointment (or remove) Trust External Auditors;
- Dissolve the Trust.

Where required, Members normally make decisions by written resolution procedure rather than through a physical meeting. However, where the Trust Board consider it appropriate, a general meeting of the Members may be called to transact business. Where possible, any general meeting will precede a Trust Board meeting.



The Trust Board – Trustee

Company Articles specify that Members may appoint a maximum of 15 Trustees, all of whom sit on the Board together with the Chief Executive (CEO) who is an “ex-officio” Trustee. As an “ex-officio” Trustee the CEO remains a Trustee throughout their tenure as CEO. Subject to that, Trustees are appointed for a term of four years and may be re-appointed.

The Board is accountable to the DfE and ESFA for the performance of all Academies within the Trust. Trustees are charity trustees (within the terms of section 97(1) of the Charities Act 1993). They are responsible for setting the strategic direction and Vision of the Trust and for the overall control, management and administration of the MAT. Trustees and SSC Members are subject to the Trust Code of Conduct which includes the Nolan Principles of Standards in Public Life, breach of which can lead to suspension or dismissal. All Trustees and SSC Members are required annually to confirm their adherence to the Code. New Trustees and SSC Members are asked to sign a formal Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The Board meets a minimum of six times each Academic Year and operates within the Trust Scheme of Delegation (“the Scheme” – see Delegations below).

Trust Board Committees

Trust Articles enable the Board to appoint Committees. These include School Stakeholder Committees (SSCs) which legally, are Committees of the Board. In addition to SSCs, the Board has appointed 5 Strategic Committees, the purpose of which is to support the Trust Board by undertaking the necessary level of detailed work that enables the Board to meet its responsibilities. The Committees are:

- **Audit and Risk Committee**
 - meets termly or more frequently as required, reporting to the Board on risk and any concerns arising from internal audit. Through the Trust Strategic Risk Register and the process of Internal Audit, the Committee reviews the effectiveness of Trust systems and procedures and assesses potential risks to the Trust arising from internal and external developments. The Committee sets the Annual Programme of Internal Audit and reviews the reports

Delegations

The Articles permit Trustees to delegate functions. The Trust Scheme of Delegation, (“the Scheme”) (available on Governor Hub) which must be formally approved by the Trust Board and reviewed annually, provides the framework for the strategic, operational and governance management and oversight of the Trust.

Under the Scheme, Trustees retain ultimate responsibility for the conduct and performance of the Trust. Some decisions are reserved to the Board. All delegations may be extended or withdrawn at the discretion of the Board. Responsibility for all operational matters is delegated to the Executive which must:

- Seek guidance from the Board on strategic matters, resource use and the development and regular review of the Trust Strategic Plan;
- Report to the Board and Board Committees on developments and progress in relation to the Strategic Plan, many aspects of performance, actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation and issues of high risk/impact. This includes Safeguarding matters, the effectiveness of which underpins everything the Trust does; and
- Explore issues with Trustees, including proposals for and development or review of key policies, management and Trust governance and structure etc.

The Trust Scheme is in three parts:

- Delegations to Trust Board Committees;
- Operational delegations to the CEO; and
- Operational delegations by the CEO to the Executive Management Team

Operational Delegations

The MAT Board holds the Executive to account for the exercise of delegated operational responsibilities : it does this through oversight, assurance reporting and



SC Constitution and Membership – with the exception of the Principal, who is an ex-officio member of the SSC, all SSC Members are elected/appointed for a term of three years. Subject to this, there are four categories of SSC Member:

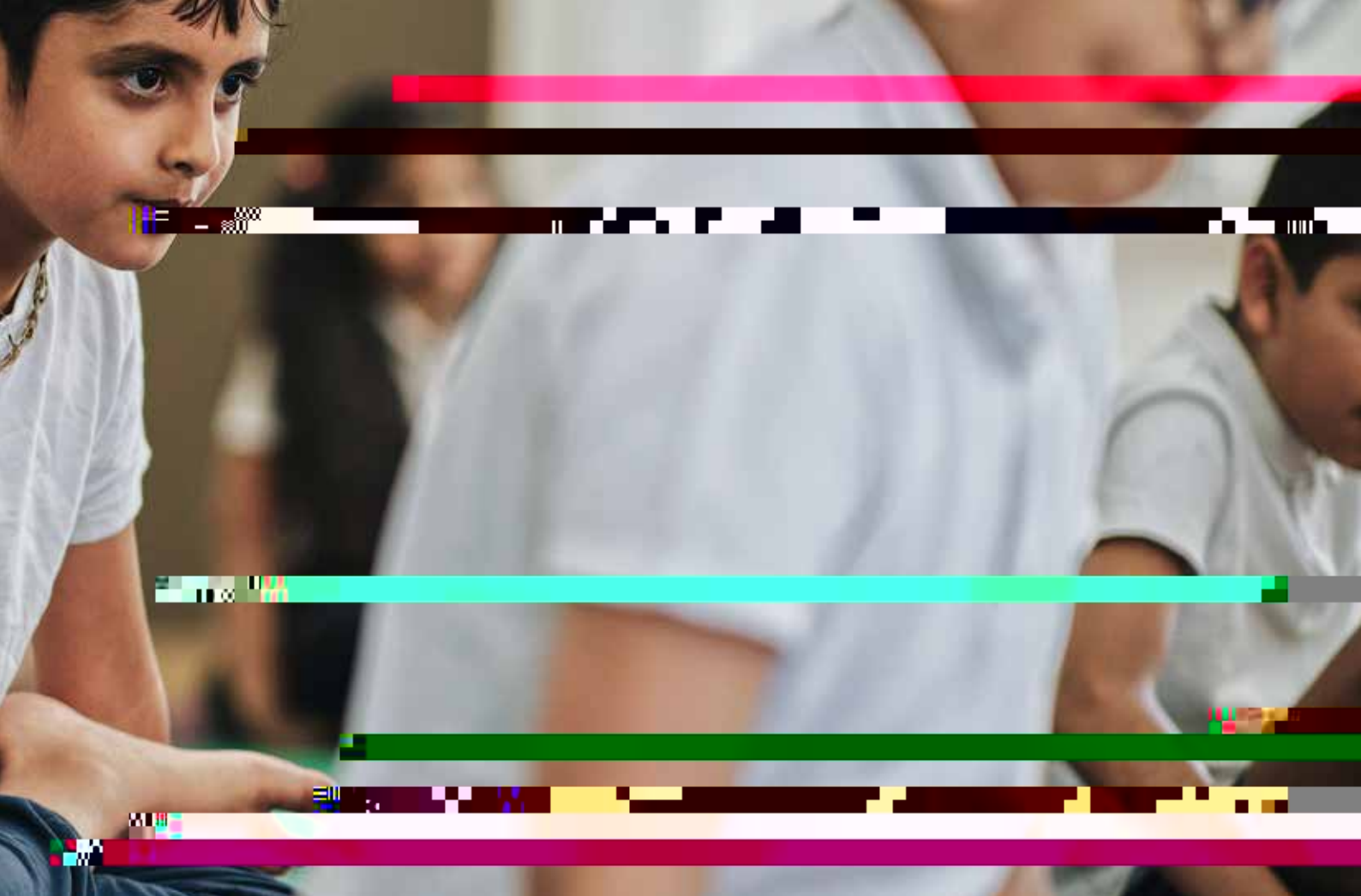
Parent/Carer members (2) – must be elected* (or appointed if an election is not possible due to the number of candidates).

Community members (2): these individuals are identified, nominated, approved and appointed by the SSC (subject to a formal procedure – details available on Governor Hub). Community Governors may (u)7 (o)7 (t)e individuus anh-12.11-o clo24.9 (omm)-86 (m)-4 i8 2alis (i)210 (t)-2 (r wi) o-r3.5 6, mv4.2107 (4.20.1 (r)-17.4 (l)-27 5 (a)-21.6 (m)-26.2 (l)-24.8 (e)-123.1 (nbG)-34.7 ()-13eve4.2.74 (r)-20.3 an4.2.74 ()-123.1 (r

SSCs : How they work to support the Trust

SSCs meet formally three times each year (once each term). The Constitution and Terms of Reference (delegations) of the SSCs are included in the Scheme of Delegation and are available on Governor Hub together with the supporting Annex which provides further details on the expectations of SSCs and SSC Members.

At inspection, Ofsted are likely to look for evidence



Developing the role of SSC Members: Getting to know your school – understanding performance

In addition to the Lead Safeguarding Member, SSCs are asked to appoint lead (or LINK) Members for SEND, Data and Outcomes, Health and Safety and Curriculum or Key Stages. All lead SSC Members should develop at least an appreciation of these issues, for which training is provided. (A Training Programme for Trustees and SSC Members is currently being developed, a draft of which is available in Governor Hub. SSCs should consider appointing an SSC Training LINK whose role would be to co-ordinate and track training for the SSC as a group, for individual SSC members and supporting the induction process for new SSC Members. The role also includes leading the regular skills audit exercise and supporting the related SSC effectiveness review.

The roles of LINK Members are subject to an agreed job role/description to be approved by the Trust Governance Officer in consultation with the Chair of the PGC Committee. (Details of established LINK roles are available on Governor Hub). The purpose of this is to support the lead in their role and to ensure there is clarity between their role and operational

responsibilities, on which lead roles must not encroach. Subject to this, SSCs are free to appoint at their discretion and within the Scheme of Delegation, lead SSC Members for other issues that reflect the local priorities of the School Improvement Plan and/or issues that may arise locally from time to time.

Visits and LINK Members

The contribution of SSC leads and other SSC Members can be developed through, for example, an Annual Programme of Governor Visits, to be agreed by the SSC Chair together with the Principal and focused around the school improvement targets for the year. These can be designed either for “pairs” of SSC Members who, subject to prior agreement with the Principal (or subject lead), can meet with staff to explore pupil progress etc. OR a group visit to familiarise Members with particular issues. Health and Safety, website compliance, parental engagement and governor training are other areas in which an SSC may wish to appoint a lead Member. To assist SSC leads, a formal reporting template together with guidance for Visits is available on Governor Hub

Informal “Engagement” Meetings

SSC Members have commented that, whilst they recognise the importance of the formal SSC termly meeting, the frequency of formal meetings and the necessary focus of those meetings on the formal business of the agenda can mitigate against their developing a thorough understanding of school life and issues.

As a means of addressing this, SSCs may wish to consider holding an occasional or a termly informal “Engagement Meeting”. The purpose of this would be to provide the opportunity for SSC Members to really get to know their school and to meet informally to review and discuss in depth aspects of school performance, policy and improvement. The focus of each “Engagement Meeting” would be a matter for the SSC Chair to agree with SSC member colleagues in consultation with the Principal, who may agree to facilitate the meetings or may nominate a colleague to do so (e.g. a subject leader or the school SENCo).

The Principal and colleagues have demanding workloads. It is therefore important that if the SSC support the “Engagement Meeting” approach, the meetings (and school Visits) are programmed well in advance in agreement with the Principal. (Ideally an annual Programme for the meetings and Visits should be set early in each Academic Year). The meetings and Visits may be held in school time so that SSC Members can gain first-hand experience of the workings and practices of the school and the challenges that teachers face day to day. The meetings/Visits also provide an opportunity to meet and receive parent/carer, community and pupil feedback about e.g. school performance, teaching and learning, pupil behaviour etc.

Expectations of an Avanti SSC Member

A key requirement of SSC Members is a genuine and deep interest in the learning, development and enhancement of the life chances of our young people. In submitting Expressions of Interest to serve on an SSC, prospective SSC Members are asked to demonstrate their commitment to supporting their school and the Trust and to upholding the Values, Vision and Ethos of the Trust with the best interests of our children at heart.

So that SSC Members can challenge their Principal knowledgeably and in the right way, and that SSCs can seek the necessary assurances around performance, it is important that over time, they develop:

- An understanding and awareness of Year Groups and Disadvantaged Groups – and as related issues, the purpose and impact of Pupil Premium and other funding streams and, (Primary Schools only) Sports Premium funding;

- The ability to act as a ‘critical friend’ to the Principal – showing positive support for staff but also challenge in a constructive way (as a result of this)

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SSC

All prospective Trustees and Governors are required to confirm that they meet the eligibility criteria, which is a statutory requirement (available on Governor Hub and provided to all prospective Trustees and SSC Members). Details are provided to potential SSC candidates by the school. (Separate arrangements are in place for Trustees).

The procedure for appointment as an SSC Member invites prospective candidates to complete an initial Expression of Interest (Eoi) on which they are asked to explain (maximum 160 words) why they are interested in becoming an SSC Member and the qualities and experience they feel they can bring to the SSC. Completed Eois are provided to the Chair who will often meet prospective SSC Members, together with the Principal, to explain in detail the responsibilities and commitment involved and the skill sets and experience that the SSC is looking to recruit. (All SSCs undertake a regular skills audit which not only informs the Annual Training Programme but also enables the Chair to identify the skills required to fill any skills gap that may arise when a Member leaves the SSC)



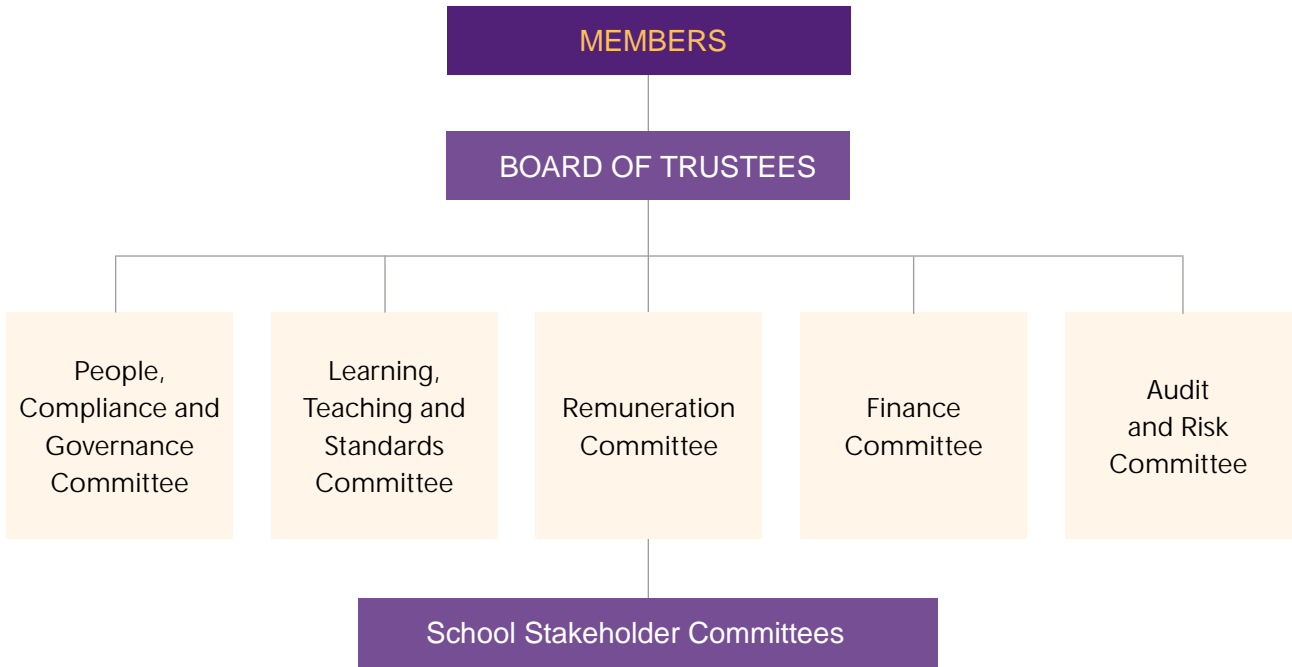
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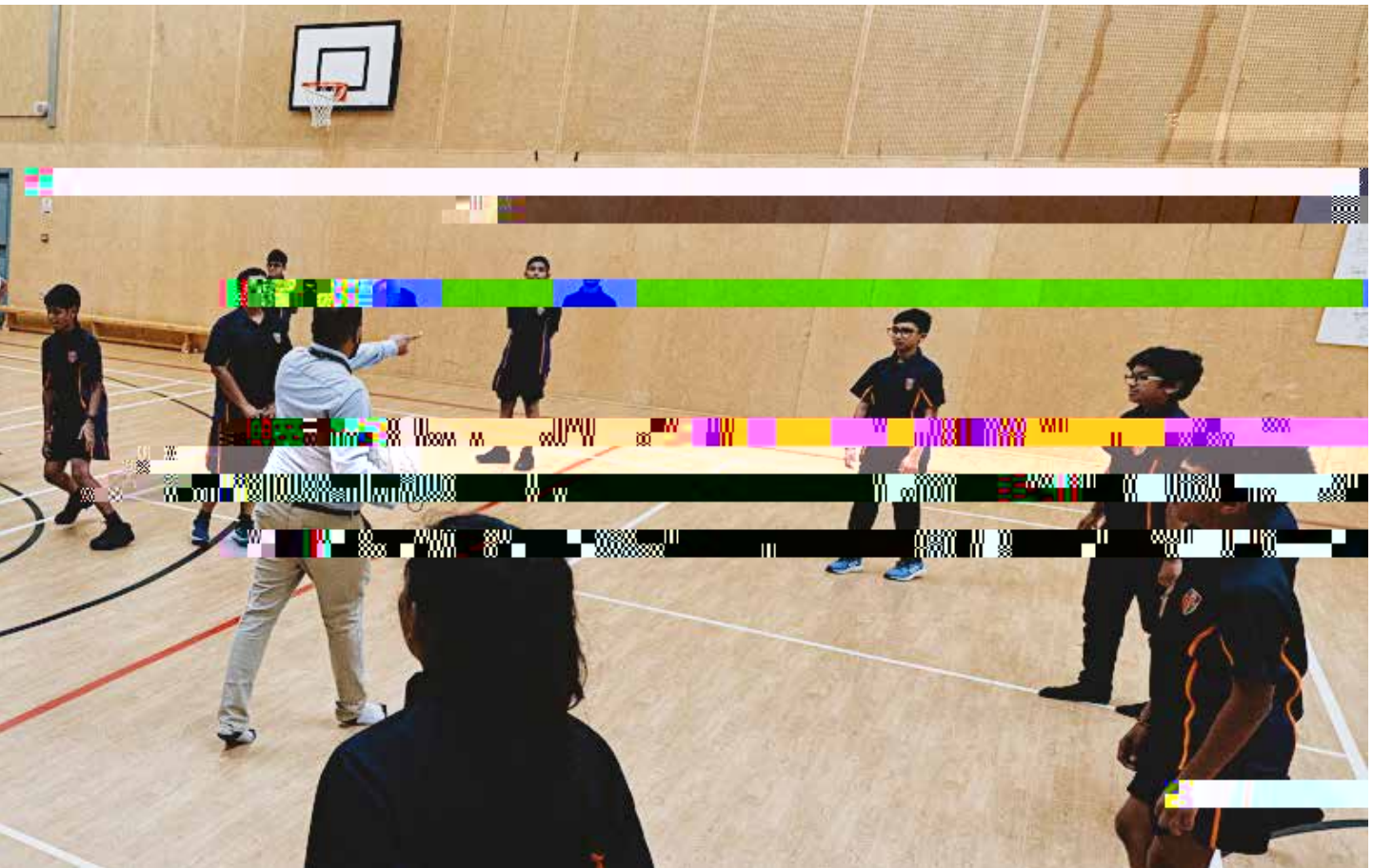
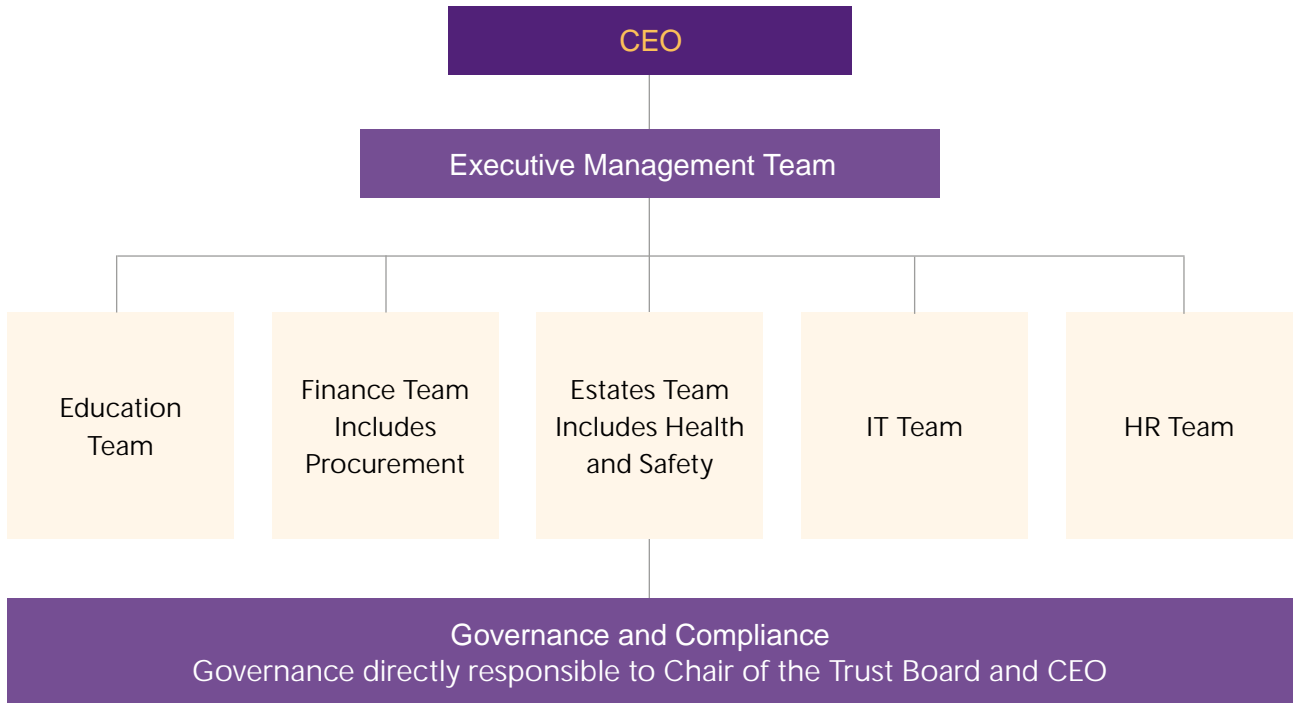
The Trust Governance archive and document management system

Governor Hub is the means by which Trustees and SSC Members can access key Trust governance records, including current and previous SSC agenda, supporting papers and minutes. Available from September 2022, the system is fully GDPR compliant and continues to be developed so that it will increasingly provide access to Trustee/SSC Member support, governance advice and the essential documentation that you will need to perform your role effectively.

The agenda and papers for all formal SSC and Panel meetings are provided to SSC Members, Trustees and Members electronically via Governor Hub. Paper copies of documents are not normally provided unless these are specifically requested from the school (or Trust Governance Officer) due to special personal circumstances. The system is easy to navigate and can be accessed at any time via p.c., laptop, tablet or smartphone – so that users are able to view documentation remotely and “on the go”. The system also provides links to important



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