

## All about NEAT

### Overview

NEAT was set up as a multi-academy trust (MAT) in **April 2017**. A **MAT** is a single organisation set up as a strategic collaboration to improve and maintain high educational standards across a number of schools. Each school within a MAT is an academy.

Our MAT is **mixed** because it includes both schools that have a religious character and those that do not. We work closely with the Newcastle Diocesan Education Board about the governance of the trust and the performance of our Church of England school.

The **five academies** in NEAT are rated **Good by Ofsted** and based within Newcastle upon Tyne:

- Benfield School (a secondary school with a sixth form)
- Central Walker Church of England Primary School
- Tyneview Primary School
- Walkergate Community School
- West Walker Primary School.

The trust has a total of **2,500 pupils** and a **£16 million budget**.

The trust directly employs **380 staff** and in some of our academies there are also cleaning, caretaking and catering staff employed by external contractors.

Walkergate Community School is a designated **teaching school** and leads the Newcastle Teaching School Alliance, which includes all schools within NEAT and a number of other primary schools within Newcastle.

The **Newcastle Research School at Walkergate** is part of the Education Endowment Fund's Research Schools Network.

NEAT also owns a **trading subsidiary company**, NEAT Active Limited which runs the community provision at Benfield Sports Centre and the Newcastle PE and School Sport Service.

### NEAT charitable objects and common purpose

NEAT, like all MATs, is a charitable company limited by guarantee.

#### Our charitable objects – the purpose of the trust

Our charitable objects are:

- (a) to advance education for the public benefit by establishing, managing and developing academies which offer a broad and balanced curriculum and which include:

- (i) Church of England schools which operate in accordance with the principles, practices and tenets of the Church of England, and with regard to any advice issued by the Diocesan Board of Education; and
- (ii) other academies with or without a designated religious character; and to recognise and support the individual ethos of each academy;
- (b) to promote facilities for recreation and leisure time in the interests of social welfare and with the objective of improving the quality of life for residents in the areas where the academies are located.

### **Our common purpose – what is important to us**

Our common purpose as a trust is to **nurture, educate, achieve** and **transform**. We recognise that we have a range of stakeholders to whom we are responsible:

- We believe our first responsibility is to our **children, young people and their families** to prepare our learners for the changing world by recognising and **nurturing** their uniqueness and providing the right environment to grow their potential, instil a love of learning, enable them to **achieve** and realise their dreams. Through our work with young people and their families we will develop learners who are resilient, aspirational, respectful, resourceful, creative and effective communicators.
- We recognise our responsibilities to our **employees and volunteers**. We will value their diversity and recognise their **achievements**. We will provide a safe and stimulating environment where staff are well led and managed, empowered to be innovative and have opportunities to develop professionally.
- We are responsible to the **communities** in which we work and recognise the need to adapt our approach to be locally relevant. We will ensure that our schools are safe and welcoming and that our classrooms and learning spaces are inspiring and stimulating and provide the best **educational** environments to meet the needs of our learners. Our schools will be an integral part of their local community and we will strive to **nurture** effective partnerships within each community.
- We are accountable to the **Regional Schools Commissioner and the Education and Skills Funding Agency** for ensuring that we **educate** our learners for public benefit and that we use all public money effectively, efficiently and ethically. We will experiment with new ideas and through innovation, respond flexibly to changing circumstances to ensure the sustainability of the trust and that we **transform** the life chances of our communities.

### **Our values – what is important to us**

Our values are the behaviours that will enable us to achieve our common purpose and deliver our vision and strategic aims:

- Aspirational - We aim high for ourselves and others.
- Collaborative - We are best when we work together as one trust.

- Inclusive - We welcome and value every individual and foster a sense of belonging.
- Innovative - We are creative and forward thinking in our work.
- Responsible - We act professionally and ethically in the best interests of the trust community.

## NEAT Strategic Plan 2018-21

Our three-year strategic plan for 2018-21 was developed with the involvement of directors, local governors, senior leaders and staff across the trust. It sets out our vision and we have refreshed the strategic aims for 2019-2021 in light of our changing context and priorities.

### Our vision for 2018-2021 – what we want to achieve by 2021

We belong to an innovative, sustainable trust working collaboratively with partners to share our vision and values that enables all learners within our influence to be well prepared personally, socially and academically for the next stage of their lives in a changing world.

### Our updated strategic aims for 2019-2021 – what we will do to achieve our vision

- **Aim 1:** Ensure all academies deliver a quality education leading to good outcomes for all learners.
- **Aim 2:** Embed an effective whole family approach to supporting welfare, attendance and attainment that has a positive impact on pupil outcomes.
- **Aim 3:** Ensure that the trust is well led, managed and governed to ensure continuous trust improvement.
- **Aim 4:** Ensure the trust is operationally effective and showing improvement in performance over time.
- **Aim 5:** Grow the trust to enable a broader and better educational experience.

The full plan including objectives for each aim and key performance indicators is available on NEAT's website at [https://www.neat.org.uk/web/strategic\\_plan\\_2018-21/377211](https://www.neat.org.uk/web/strategic_plan_2018-21/377211)

## NEAT governance structure

One of the key differences between a MAT and a school maintained by a local authority is the governance structure. Each MAT has its own governance structure. The diagram below shows the different levels of governance within NEAT and how these work with the trust's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and each academy's Headteacher.

The trust's Board of Directors is accountable for making decisions about the running of the trust and its academies, although it can delegate responsibility for these to committees or individuals.

### What is the Scheme of Delegation?

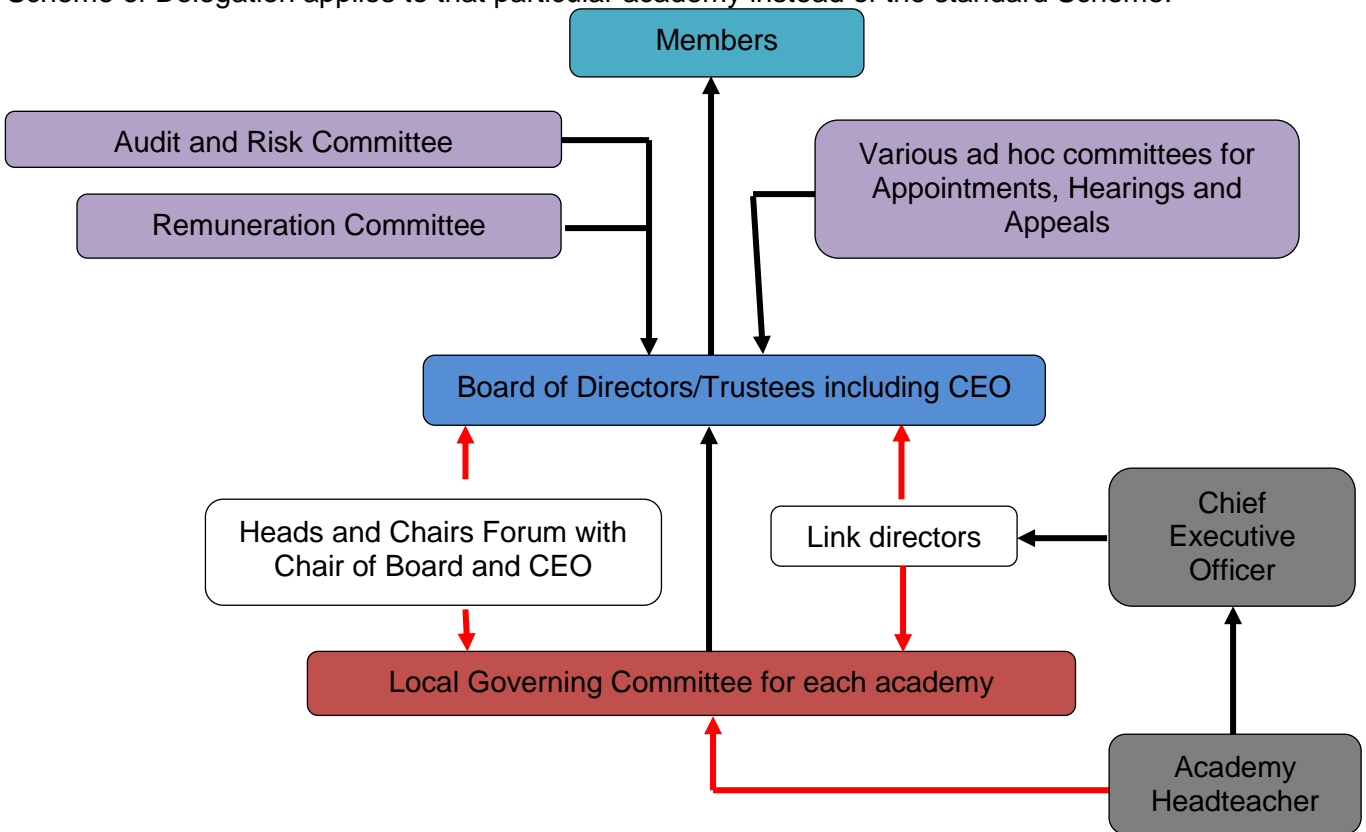
Each MAT has a Scheme of Delegation. This is an important document as it sets out how the Board of Directors will run the trust and its academies. It is reviewed annually so the Directors can improve the running of the trust over time.

The NEAT Scheme of Delegation sets out in detail:

- the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of governance
- the committees that the Trust Board has decided to establish to carry out various functions on its behalf including a Local Governing Committee (LGC) for each academy
- the decisions delegated by the Trust Board to each committee, the CEO or the academy headteachers
- the constitution, membership and procedures for its committees.

The standard NEAT Scheme of Delegation is published on NEAT's website at: [https://www.neat.org.uk/web/scheme\\_of\\_delegation\\_of\\_governance/305098](https://www.neat.org.uk/web/scheme_of_delegation_of_governance/305098)

It also includes the circumstances when delegation may be withdrawn from the LGC and revert to the trust's Board of Directors using a risk management approach, in which case a bespoke Scheme of Delegation applies to that particular academy instead of the standard Scheme.



Key	
Board Committee with delegated powers	→ Direction of formal accountability
Academy-level Committee with delegated powers	↔ Direction of informal communication

## **What do the Members do?**

As a charitable company limited by guarantee NEAT has members who have a similar role to the shareholders of a company limited by shares. They hold the Trust Board to account for the effective governance of the trust and are responsible for ensuring that the trust's charitable objects are met. Their role can be described as "eyes on, hands off".

NEAT has five members. Three of these are representatives of the Church of England to reflect that we are a mixed MAT. Members are unpaid volunteers.

Profiles of the members and their business/pecuniary interests are published on the NEAT website at: <https://www.neat.org.uk/web/members/305116>

## **What do the Directors/Trustees do?**

The trustees of the academy trust are also its company directors. We refer to them as the trust's Board of Directors.

The board is accountable to the members, and to the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Department for Education (DfE) for all aspects of the trust's performance. It is responsible for conducting the trust's business and making strategic decisions. The board manages the business of the academy trust and is responsible for ensuring the governance structure as a whole carries out four core functions of governance:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the trust's academies and their pupils, and the performance management of staff
3. Overseeing and ensuring the effective financial performance of the trust
4. Ensuring effective stakeholder engagement.

NEAT has ten directors including the CEO. All directors are appointed on the basis of skills to ensure the trust is run effectively and they come from a variety of backgrounds including education, commercial and community organisations. One of the directors is nominated by the Newcastle Diocesan Education Board as the Church Ethos Director. Apart from the CEO who is paid as an employee, directors are unpaid volunteers.

Profiles of the directors and their business/pecuniary interests are published on the NEAT website at: <https://www.neat.org.uk/web/directors/276899>

## **What does each academy's Local Governing Committee do?**

Each academy within the trust has a local governing committee (LGC) which includes the headteacher, at least two parents and at least one member of staff, as well as governors nominated by the LGC (or in Church schools by the relevant Diocesan Education Board and Parochial Church Councils) and approved by the trust board. The LGC can also co-opt additional governors. Apart from the headteacher and staff governor who are paid as employees, local governors are unpaid volunteers.

When the standard Scheme of Delegation applies, the role of the LGC is to establish the ethos of the school, to ensure this is locally relevant, and, in the case of Church schools only, to develop and maintain its religious character. The LGC is key to providing assurance to the Trust Board about the provision and care for all learners within the academy and ensures effective engagement with local stakeholders. Their role is to be the “eyes and ears” of the Trust Board at local level.

### What does the CEO do?

Within NEAT the Headteacher of each academy is accountable to the CEO, whilst working closely with its Local Governing Committee, and the CEO is accountable to the trust board for the performance of all the academies. The CEO is also the trust’s Accounting Officer, which means they have personal responsibility for the financial resources of the trust.

## Working in partnership across NEAT

Collaboration is at the heart of NEAT’s approach and we aim that individuals at all levels of the trust can contribute and have impact beyond one individual school for the benefit of all children. Members, directors, local governors and staff join in the dialogue of working together as one trust in a number of ways:

- **Link directors:** Most directors are assigned to a specific school so that they get to know it well. This is an informal role and directors do not hold the school leaders or governors to account through this relationship but they may offer support and challenge as appropriate. The expectations are that link directors will visit the school from time to time (including attending a local governing committee meeting at least once each year).
- **Heads and Chairs Forum:** The Chair of the Trust Board and the CEO meet with the Headteachers and Chairs of Local Governing Committees in advance of each of the scheduled Trust Board Meetings. This is a forum for discussion and debate about strategic issues affecting the trust and its academies and when the trust wishes to consult about proposed changes to the way it operates. Heads and Chairs are encouraged to contribute to the agenda for the discussion.
- **Chairs and Vice Chairs Briefing:** The trust’s Director of HR and Governance, and the Governance Support Adviser who clerks the LGC meetings, meet with Chairs and Vice Chairs in advance of each LGC meeting, mainly to brief them about the model agenda and support them to chair the meeting effectively. This is also attended by the CEO and/or the Chair of the Trust Board from time to time, particularly if there are wider school improvement or governance matters to discuss.
- **Trust-wide focus groups:** Directors and local governors are encouraged to participate in focus groups with staff, which are set up to debate and develop the strategic priorities in the trust’s Strategic Plan. Current groups are focused on the curriculum, teaching and learning and mental health.
- **Headteacher Meetings:** The CEO meets with the headteachers of all NEAT academies monthly to jointly plan and develop priorities and activities relevant to all schools in the trust. The CEO and the Chief Operating and Financial Officer also meet the headteacher of each

academy monthly to review that academy's specific priorities and ensure financial and staffing resources enable these priorities to be met.

- **Strategic Leads Meetings:** The strategic leads in each academy for Safeguarding, Attendance and Equality and Diversity meet termly to network and jointly develop and deliver these trust-wide priorities. There is also a group for welfare practitioners.
- **SENCO Network Meeting:** The SENCOs work together to collectively develop thinking and responses to the needs of SEN pupils.
- **Subject Leads Meetings:** Cross-phase subject groups meet termly and work to ensure provision meets the needs of all learners aged 2-19 and that there are consistent standards across the trust's academies.
- **School Business Managers Meeting:** The SBMs meet monthly with the NEAT Central Team to co-ordinate business support across the trust.
- **Trust-wide training day:** Staff from all NEAT academies participate in at least one trust-wide training event each year, as well as other shared CPD opportunities.

### Working in partnership across the Newcastle Teaching School Alliance

Walkergate Community School has teaching school status and leads the Newcastle Teaching School Alliance (NTSA). All of the schools in NEAT are part of the NTSA, along with eight primary schools from another multi academy trust within Newcastle. This gives all staff within the alliance to learn from the strongest practice across the alliance.

As a learning organisation we want to contribute to best practice and transform our own schools by learning from others, developing and training our staff and accessing educational research, innovative teaching practices and funding opportunities.

All teaching schools are tasked with providing:

- high-quality school-led initial teacher training;
- high-quality school-to-school support to spread excellent practice; and
- evidence-based professional and leadership development for teachers and leaders.

Examples of projects in progress include:

- developing Lead Learners who are deployed across the NTSA to support aspects of school improvement
- providing leadership and/or teaching and learning support to a small number of primary and first schools outside the NTSA
- leading on headteacher induction across Newcastle schools
- leading on assessment and moderation for early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 across Newcastle
- working in collaboration with a research school to develop an action research approach to school improvement
- delivering accredited Outstanding Teacher Programme and Improving Teacher Programme.

## Working in partnership within the local authority

The Newcastle Promise Board was created during the 2017-18 academic year as a response to the wider context in the city and with the aim to strengthen the ties between schools and to increase the ability, through growing collaboration, to improve the educational opportunities for every child in Newcastle.

The Promise overarching statement is: “A city where we **all** share responsibility for providing the best educational opportunities for all our children and young people”.

All current NEAT academies signed the Newcastle Promise in July 2018 and the trust supports all of its academies within Newcastle City Council to do so. The NEAT CEO chairs the Promise Board’s school effectiveness sub-group.

NEAT and its academies continue to buy a range of support services through service level agreements with the City Council.

## Central support for NEAT and its academies

In addition to school improvement support from the CEO and through the Newcastle Teaching School Alliance, the NEAT Central Team provides expertise in a number of areas:

### Business support

- Finance and procurement
- HR
- Corporate governance
- Information governance
- Communication and engagement
- Project management

### Attendance and welfare

- An Attendance Officer who works with pupils, parents and staff across our academies to improve attendance
- A Family Support Officer who works with families to provide support to enable pupils to thrive and learn at school.

Profiles of the NEAT Central Team are published on the NEAT website at:

[https://www.neat.org.uk/web/central\\_team/276864](https://www.neat.org.uk/web/central_team/276864)

## Schools that may wish to join NEAT

We publish a guide to joining NEAT that explains our offer and what a school joining NEAT can expect. We believe that this a two-way process to ensure a successful partnership.



'Joining NEAT' is published on the NEAT website at:

[https://www.neat.org.uk/web/joining\\_neat/305132](https://www.neat.org.uk/web/joining_neat/305132)

## Contact us

The NEAT Central Team is based at the Heaton Centre, Trewhitt Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 5DY.

You can contact us by:

- e-mail at [admin@neat.org.uk](mailto:admin@neat.org.uk)
- telephone on 0191 2284090 during our core office hours of 8.30am-4.30pm
- sending a message on the Contact page on our website at:  
<https://www.neat.org.uk/web/contact/266643>

**Debi Bailey**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
(October 2019)