

# Chief Executive Officer template job description

For CEOs of multi academy trusts

September 2024

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the accounting officer of the trust. They have responsibility for informing and supporting the work of the board – including the board’s setting of the trust’s vision and strategy.

The CEO is responsible for delivering the agreed strategy; overseeing all operations of the trust – including enabling educational and organisational improvement at scale; ensuring sustainability, compliance, and the mitigation of risk; and building strategic partnerships with a range of stakeholders to ensure both strong educational outcomes for pupils and the sustainable development of the trust.

The ‘Being The CEO’ framework covers six areas, which are reflected in this template job description. This template provides a starting point for trust boards to develop a job description for their CEO. It is intended that this template is used alongside other available resources.

## About this job description

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## 1. Develops a leadership narrative that articulates the board's vision and values in practice, and shapes the organisation's ongoing development

### The Chief Executive Officer leads through:

- Articulating a clear narrative for the organisation's direction, development and growth– based on the board's vision and reflecting the trust's definition of a high-quality education.
- Developing a clear organisational strategy and goals (shaped in consultation with and ultimately endorsed by the board) that reflects the board's vision and the CEO's leadership narrative.
- Undertaking regular and meaningful engagement with staff (at all levels), stakeholders and end-users to both share the narrative and to inform and refine it where appropriate. Demonstrating a commitment to listening to the views and understanding the experiences of stakeholders, including supporting a culture of 'pure accountability' to end users for impact and success.
- Identifying opportunities to communicate the leadership narrative – externally and internally – through internal and external events, blogs, media (including social media), and otherwise.
- Accessing opportunities to develop and stretch their own thinking and develop and maintain contextual wisdom.

Achieved by engaging with thought-leaders, sector specific and wider research and trend analysis, and accessing appropriate professional development. This informs their ongoing work on strategy.

- Ensuring a healthy balance between central strategy and accountability, and the ability of each school to develop a sufficient sense of individuality and ability to respond to local needs.
- Modelling and actively promoting commitment to the trust's values and, more broadly, commitment to ethical governance, leadership, and practice across the organisation. The CEO adheres to and embodies the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education and the Seven Principles of Public Life (The Nolan Principles).
- Identifying opportunities to celebrate and share practice within the trust that contribute to furthering the trust's vision, values and strategy.

## 2. Builds an open, transparent and effective relationship with the governing board and its committees

### The Chief Executive Officer leads through:

- Investing sufficient time in developing relationships with the board; including regularly meeting with the chair and keeping them informed of key developments, successes and risks.
- Ensuring clear processes for their own role in formulating strategy and how board engages with this process and endorses strategy.

- Ensuring they and the executive team have developed clear and appropriate reporting mechanisms that contribute to efficient governance of the trust.
- Welcoming accountability from the board and robust performance management, while encouraging the board to discharge this across all aspects of organisational delivery and performance.
- Embracing the support and advice of the board, recognising the value of good governance.
- Supporting the board to meet their duties as company directors and as trustees of a charitable body, working with the board to ensure operational compliance and fulfilment of all statutory responsibilities.
- Ensuring there is no overlap in the work and responsibilities of the executive team, and those of committees and local governing bodies; ensuring awareness of and adherence to the scheme of delegation.
- Ensuring the implementation of high quality benchmarked surveys and other engagement mechanisms to achieve routine accountability to communities (based on metrics set by the board) – including to parents, pupils and to staff. Sometimes referred to as ‘pure accountability’.

### **3. Ensures that the organisation is an ‘employer of choice’ and is staffed by talented and skilled individuals at all levels**

#### **The Chief Executive Officer leads through:**

- Building and developing an executive team of experts – across a range of required disciplines – through whom they can adequately develop and deliver strategy and ensure organisational delivery, improvement and compliance across the trust’s operations.
- Headhunting and recruiting talented and sufficiently skilled and experienced people to senior leadership positions within the organisation
- Line management of the senior executive leadership team [and in some trusts, the headteachers] and through them ensuring high performance and effectiveness across each aspect of the trust’s operations.
- Confidently and sensitively addressing under performance or behaviours that are inconsistent with the values and culture the organisation stands for.
- Demonstrating a commitment to developing leaders and ensuring a succession planning strategy is in place both across the senior executive team and for headteachers and key specialist leaders across the trust.

- Establishing an ‘employer of choice’ culture, with a strong sense of purpose, commitment to talent management and development, sustainable workload, flexibility, and other key employment benefits. The CEO models a positive and sustainable workplace culture.
- Providing leadership and ensures management so that the culture and operations of the organisation ensures there is no discrimination against individuals or groups related to any protected characteristics. Employees and volunteers are recruited and/or promoted based on merit and their ability to do their jobs well.
- Bringing about organisational change and improvement through a careful approach to engaging and involving staff, ensuring a ‘done with’ rather than ‘done to’ model where possible.

## 4. Enables improvement and disciplined innovation as an organisational habit

### The Chief Executive Officer leads through:

- Providing a compelling narrative around improvement priorities and what is valued or considered to be success aligned with the trust’s vision and the CEO’s leadership narrative.
- Fostering a culture of ‘collective commitment’ to all the trust’s schools among senior team members and more broadly across the trust’s headteachers, leaders, and staff.
- Ensuring quality curriculum, teaching and assessment of pupil learning across the trust both through central systems and the clear setting of standards and expectations across all schools.
- Ensuring that their role is about enabling improvement at scale and as an organisational habit, not least by recruiting improvement leadership specialists who have the skills to ‘lead’ as well as to coordinate and quality assure improvement activity across multiple schools and contexts.
- Ensuring that the data captured is consistent with the organisation’s view of success, relevant, timely, triangulated and used formatively and actively to inform ongoing improvement both across the wider organisation and in individual schools.
- That the systems and processes that define the scalable improvement model – including project and process management – ensure that improvement becomes ‘an organisational habit’ and that staff at all levels feel empowered to inform and contribute towards improvement where possible.
- Fostering a culture of disciplined innovation, where staff are empowered to engage in external and/or internal research and development activity that furthers the organisation’s vision and strategy and ensures that specialist staff stay at ‘the cutting edge’.
- Ensuring a deep commitment to safeguarding and compliance with safeguarding responsibilities across the trust, through effective leadership, training, systems and monitoring both centrally and in all schools.



## 5. Secures organisational sustainability and compliance

### The Chief Executive Officer leads through:

- Discharging their financial responsibilities as accounting officer, including ensuring financial compliance, robust checks and balances, a commitment to achieving value for money, and financial probity at all times across the organisation.
- Working with the Chief Operating Officer/Operations Director to ensure that the trust's strategy is supported by effective, responsive and integrated central services, as well as high-quality operational delivery across all schools.
- Engaging the board on sustainability issues, including strategic discussions and decisions as to how to invest resources to best serve the trust's medium to long-term needs and ensure value for money over time.
- Encouraging an 'investor' culture, whereby the organisation takes a strategic and long-term view as to where returns can be achieved that both reduce cost and improve quality.
- Seeking economies of scale, not simply through scaled procurement, but also through a culture where internal talent is maximised, and resources are deployed strategically – saving on external costs and building internal capacity in doing so.
- Building relationships with other local and regional academy trusts to share expertise, resources and to embark on shared procurement where appropriate.

- Developing a culture that values, encourages, and ensures compliance for volunteerism, fundraising and sustainable income generation to further enhance the educational offer for pupils' and contributes to improved outcomes.
- Ensuring that risk management systems and compliance monitoring systems are in place so that the organisation can anticipate and plan for risks and fulfil all its statutory duties and responsibilities. The CEO should know, understand and fulfil/discharge all their duties and responsibilities as accounting officers (see Appendix A).

## 6. Builds external relationships: fostering social and professional capital

### The Chief Executive Officer leads through:

- Creating a sense of openness and proactive engagement with local, regional and national stakeholders. Prioritising external relationships with reference to strategy and potential impact.
- Steering the organisation to engage with and embark on relationships that will add sufficient value to the organisation and pupils' educational experience, while avoiding collaborative overload and ensuring there are mutual benefits for all involved.
- Encouraging the board to play their part in building and maintaining key stakeholder relationships, while also ensuring their impact on pupils and benefits of all external partnerships are demonstrable and relate sufficiently to core business.

- Building constructive relationships with politicians and civil servants; communicating in a way that engages key influencers and ensures they remain informed about the organisation’s work and progress.
- Accessing peer-to-peer networks (within and across sectors) that are relevant and add value to the CEO and the senior team’s professional development.
- Working with the board to generate a culture of ‘pure accountability’ to communities – including staff, parents and pupils – that ensures the trust is openly committed to understanding and meeting their general needs and expectations over time.
- Contributing to the development of the wider sector through taking part in the work of sector bodies and engaging in appropriate opportunities to inform the development of other trusts and to inform government policy.

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## Appendix A: the accounting officer’s responsibilities.

In addition to the above, reference should be made to the Accounting Officer’s responsibilities as set out in the Academies Handbook. (updated 2024) sections 1.28 to 1.38. See below.

The Chief Executive Officer or equivalent is the accounting officer of the academy trust. The responsibilities and duties of the accounting officer are currently set out in the handbook as follows (retrieved September 2024). These sections (as they currently stand on publication) are:

### “Who is the accounting officer?”

- **1.28** *The board of trustees **must** appoint, in writing, a senior executive leader who may be appointed as a trustee. In single academy trusts this should be the principal. In trusts with multiple academies it should be the chief executive or equivalent.*
- **1.29** *The board **must** also appoint, in writing, a named individual as its accounting officer. This should be the senior executive leader. The individual **must** be a fit and suitable person for the role. The roles of senior executive leader and accounting officer **must not** rotate. The roles of accounting officer and chief financial officer should not be occupied by the same individual. The accounting officer should be employed by the trust. The trust **must** obtain prior ESFA approval, if it is proposing, in exceptional circumstances, to appoint an accounting officer who will not be an employee.*

### **Departure of the senior executive leader (accounting officer)**

- **1.30** When the senior executive leader is planning to leave the trust (for example retirement or resignation), the board of trustees should approach their [Regional Director](#) in advance to discuss their structure and options, including plans for recruitment.

### **What does the accounting officer do?**

- **1.31** The accounting officer role includes specific responsibilities for financial matters. It includes a personal responsibility to Parliament and to ESFA's accounting officer for the trust's financial resources.
- **1.32** Accounting officers must be able to assure Parliament, and the public, of high standards of probity in the management of public funds, particularly [regularity](#), [propriety](#) and [value for money](#).
- **1.33** Accounting officers must adhere to [The 7 principles of public life](#).
- **1.34** The accounting officer must have oversight of financial transactions, by:
  - ensuring the academy trust's property and assets are under the trustees' control and measures exist to prevent losses or misuse
  - ensuring bank accounts, financial systems and financial records are operated by more than one person
  - keeping full and accurate accounting records to support their annual accounts

### **The accounting officer's annual statement**

- **1.35** The accounting officer must complete and sign a [statement on regularity, propriety and compliance](#) each year and submit this to ESFA with the audited accounts. The accounting officer must also demonstrate how the trust has secured value for money in the governance statement in the audited accounts.

### **The accounting officer's duty to raise concerns**

- **1.36** The accounting officer must take personal responsibility (which must not be delegated) for assuring the board that there is compliance with the funding agreement and handbook.
- **1.37** The accounting officer must advise the board in writing if action it is considering is incompatible with the [articles](#), [funding agreement](#) or handbook.
- **1.38** Similarly, the accounting officer must advise the board in writing, if the board fails to act where required by the funding agreement or handbook. Where the board is minded to proceed, despite the accounting officer's advice, the accounting officer must consider the board's reasons and if the accounting officer still considers the action proposed by the board is in breach of the articles, the funding agreement or handbook, the accounting officer must notify ESFA's accounting officer immediately in writing."

## APPENDIX B: The Seven Principles of Public Life

The Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles) as set out on the government website (as of September 2024):

The Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles) apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the Civil Service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, nondepartmental public bodies (NDPBs), and in the health, education, social and care services. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources. The principles also apply to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

**1. Selflessness** – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

**2. Integrity** – Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

**3. Objectivity** – Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

**4. Accountability** – Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

**5. Openness** – Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

**6. Honesty** – Holders of public office should be truthful.

**7. Leadership** – Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

The full text of the Seven Principles of Public Life can be accessed on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) (as of September 2024).

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