

CANDIDATE INFORMATION PACK

Director (Trustee)

Audit, Risk and Digital

Board of Directors | Audit & Risk Committee | Voluntary role | Closing date: Monday 14th December

WICKERSLEY PARTNERSHIP TRUST.

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Believe Together, Learn Together, Succeed Together

We aspire to ensure all students leave our care able and qualified to play their full part in an ever-changing world.

1. Welcome

A very warm welcome to Wickersley Partnership Trust, and thank you for your interest in joining our Board.

Wickersley Partnership Trust (WPT) was founded in 2014 and I became CEO in 2018. Our Trust exists to further the interests of the young people we serve. Across 13 schools in Rotherham and Gainsborough, we aspire to ensure every student leaves our care able and qualified to play their full part in an ever-changing world. We are proud to be one school on many different sites.

Our Directors have ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of the Trust. They make sure it is solvent, well run and delivering the charitable outcomes for which it was set up, and they hold me and my executive team to account for doing so.

We are looking for a Director with senior experience in audit, risk, compliance or digital and cyber security to join our Board and its Audit & Risk Committee. The committee gives the Board independent assurance that risks are managed and controls work across all our schools. It also leads the Board's oversight of cyber security, data protection and the safe use of artificial intelligence, which matter more every year to the safety of our pupils and the running of our schools.

You do not need to have worked in education. We want someone who knows what good assurance looks like, who will ask the right questions with independence of mind, and who shares our commitment to safeguarding and to the children of our communities. First-time board members are very welcome, and we will give you a full induction.

This pack tells you about the Trust, the committee's work, the role and how to apply. You can learn more about us at wickersleypt.org. I would be delighted to hear from you, and I hope you decide to apply.



Helen O'Brien
Chief Executive Officer, Wickersley Partnership Trust

Why this role, why now

Our 2026 Board skills audit identified digital and AI governance as the area where we most need to strengthen our expertise. Every school must meet the DfE digital and technology standards by 2030, cyber threats to schools are growing, and AI is arriving in classrooms and offices. The Board needs a Director who can help it see these risks clearly, alongside the committee's core audit and risk role.

2. About Wickersley Partnership Trust

Wickersley Partnership Trust is a multi-academy trust and an exempt charity regulated by the Secretary of State for Education (company number 08833508). We serve around 7,500 young people, almost all in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, with one school in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, and we plan to grow, predominantly at primary level.

2014	13	7,500	5	£62.5m
founded	schools	young people	specialist SEND centres	annual income

Our vision	We aspire to ensure all students leave our care able and qualified to play their full part in an ever-changing world.
Our mission	WPT exists to further the interests of the young people that we serve.
Our ethos	We are one school on many different sites, with embedded inclusivity and high expectations for every pupil.
How we improve	System Leadership: colleagues whose responsibilities are delivered Trust-wide share skills, expertise and resources, so our schools are more effective, efficient, engaging and equitable than they would be alone.

Working in partnership

We believe schools and trusts achieve more together. We anchor the **Learners First Partnership**, work alongside other regional trusts in the **Positive Change Alliance**, whose Operational Excellence work brings together estates, finance, IT and governance leaders, and are a Futures Partner of the **Foundation for Education Development**.

3. Our strategic priorities 2026/27

Our Board has set five strategic priorities, delivered through our Action Plan 2026–2031. The right-hand column shows where this role makes its biggest contribution.

	Priority	Strategic focus	Where this role contributes
1	**Developing Leadership Excellence**	Leaders and governors drive an ambitious vision with clear accountability and collaborative governance.	**Assurance on the Digital Strategy; independent, risk-informed challenge to the Board.**
2	**Investing in Our Workforce, Driving Excellence Together**	A diverse, highly skilled team with professional development, clear pathways and manageable workloads.	Assurance on staff digital literacy and AI training.
3	**Ensuring Every Child Achieves and Is Ready for Their Next Step**	High expectations, excellent teaching and structural inclusivity, so every child thrives.	Lawful, secure handling of pupils' data and records.
4	**Creating a Culture and Environment where Everyone can Flourish**	Wellbeing, safety and open communication at the centre, while adopting safe digital innovation.	**Cyber security, data protection, the safe use of AI, complaints and whistleblowing.**
5	**Sustaining Excellence Through Strong Partnerships**	Long-term viability through strong financial management, estates, effective systems and partnerships.	**Connected systems, the DfE digital and technology standards by 2030, internal scrutiny and risk management.**

4. Our schools

13 schools, almost all in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, with The Gainsborough Academy in Lincolnshire.

Secondary	Primary
• Wickersley School and Sports College (with sixth form) • Rawmarsh Community School • Clifton Community School • Thrybergh Academy • The Gainsborough Academy	• Aston Hall Junior and Infant School • Aston Lodge Primary • Brinsworth Whitehill Primary • Foljambe Primary • Monkwood Primary • Rawmarsh Ashwood Primary • Rawmarsh Sandhill Primary • Thrybergh Primary

We also run multiple provisions and centres for pupils with special educational needs, disabilities and social, emotional and mental health needs, including the Arran Hill, Magna Lane and Brunswick Centres.

One school on many different sites

Colleagues share skills, expertise and resources across all our schools, so every pupil gets the same high-quality education and experiences wherever they learn.



5. Assurance, risk and digital: why this role matters now

The Audit & Risk Committee is the Board's independent check on how well the Trust manages risk and controls its affairs. It directs a risk-based programme of internal scrutiny, reviews the work of the external auditor and owns the framework for the Trust risk register. It also seeks assurance on IT, cyber security, data protection, complaints and whistleblowing.

The committee assures ten objectives in the Trust's Action Plan 2026–2031, many of them about digital transformation, and reports to the Board on a single page after every meeting.

10	6	13	4
Action Plan objectives the committee assures	DfE digital and technology standards to meet by 2030	schools in our digital standards gap assessment	committee meetings a year

Where we are now

Risk management

An independent review of our risk management in 2025/26 gave substantial assurance.

Risk management e-learning is now mandatory across the Trust, and every risk on the register is linked to a strategic priority.

Internal scrutiny

Our internal scrutiny provider reviews areas the committee chooses each year.

In 2026/27 these are health and safety management, payroll, business continuity planning and staff absence.

Cyber security

We have refreshed our Cyber Security Policy and are appointing a Cyber Security Lead.

Next: an independent penetration test, an incident response exercise and renewal of Cyber Essentials, with a plan for Cyber Essentials Plus.

Digital standards

We are assessing all 13 schools against the six DfE digital and technology standards.

A costed roadmap and a Trust Digital Strategy will go to the Board in summer 2027.

Artificial intelligence

The Board approved our AI Policy in September 2026, and we keep a register of the AI tools in use.

An AI Safeguarding and Ethics Board will screen every new tool before it is used.

Data protection

Our Data Protection Officer service is provided externally, and internal audits across our schools gave significant assurance.

Requests for information are rising, so timeliness is a key measure on the committee's dashboard.

What success looks like

Risks seen early and managed within appetite. Audit actions closed on time. Every school secure and meeting the DfE digital standards by 2030. AI used safely and data handled lawfully.

6. About the role

Role	Director (Audit, Risk and Digital): a member of the Board of Directors, who are charity trustees and company directors
Committee	Audit & Risk Committee (chaired by Yuri Burton)
Responsible to	Steve Calvert, Chair of the Board
Appointed by	The Members of the Trust (Article 50 of our Articles of Association)
Term	Four years, renewable (Article 64)
Time commitment	About one day a month. The Board meets about six times a year on Thursday evenings, 5.30–7.30pm. The Audit & Risk Committee meets four times a year (November; December, jointly with the Finance Committee, for the annual accounts; March; and summer), usually on Thursday evenings. There are also school visits, training and an annual development event.
Location	Meetings are held at our central office, Swanage Court, Rotherham, or online. We ask Directors to attend some meetings and visits in person.
Remuneration	Voluntary and unpaid. Reasonable expenses are reimbursed.

Role purpose

We are seeking a Director with senior experience in audit, risk, legal compliance or digital and cyber security to strengthen the Board's assurance work. You will help lead the Board's oversight of the DfE digital and technology standards, cyber security, data protection and the safe use of AI, alongside the committee's core audit and risk role.

Directors, as a group and as individuals, are responsible for the governance and strategic direction of the Trust, its financial health, the probity of its activities as a charity, and the achievement of its objects, in line with the Articles of Association, the Funding Agreement, the Academy Trust Handbook and the law.

Your responsibilities as a Director

Shared by every Director of Wickersley Partnership Trust.

- **Strategic leadership.** Set and champion the Trust's vision, ethos and strategy; agree the strategic priorities and how we measure them; make sure decisions are informed by risk.
- **Accountability.** Hold the CEO and executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the Trust and its pupils, and for the performance management of staff.
- **Financial oversight.** Make sure the Trust's money is well spent and that it remains solvent.
- **Engagement.** Listen to and engage with pupils, parents, staff, local governing bodies and the community.
- **Legal duties.** Act within the Trust's powers and promote its objects; exercise independent judgement and reasonable care, skill and diligence; avoid and declare conflicts of interest.
- **Safeguarding.** Share the Board's strategic responsibility for safeguarding and read Keeping Children Safe in Education each year.
- **Collective responsibility.** Prepare thoroughly, challenge constructively, support Board decisions once made and keep confidential business confidential.
- **Conduct and commitment.** Uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life and our Directors' Handbook and Code of Conduct; attend at least 75% of meetings; take part in school visits, training and the annual skills audit.

Your contribution to the Audit & Risk Committee

The specialist contribution we are looking for.

- **Audit and internal scrutiny.** Review the external auditor's plan, findings and performance; shape and approve the annual internal scrutiny programme; and check that management's actions are completed on time.
- **Risk management.** Scrutinise the Trust risk register and any risks out of tolerance, including emergency resilience, business continuity and key-person dependencies.
- **Digital and cyber security.** Oversee progress towards the DfE digital and technology standards by 2030, the Cyber Security Policy and incident response, and the Academy Trust Handbook rule that trusts must not pay cyber ransom demands. Help the committee recommend the Trust's Digital Strategy to the Board.
- **Data protection and AI.** Seek assurance on UK GDPR compliance, data breaches, and subject access and freedom of information requests; support the safe, ethical use of AI under the Trust's AI Policy.
- **Propriety and compliance.** Review the register of business interests and related party transactions; oversee whistleblowing, fraud and complaints trends.
- **Policies.** Help approve the committee's policies, including Risk Management, Whistleblowing, Data Protection, Cyber Security, ICT Acceptable Use, Social Media, CCTV and Artificial Intelligence.

Under the Academy Trust Handbook and our Terms of Reference, Trust employees cannot be members of the Audit & Risk Committee; the committee's Chair cannot also chair the Board or the Finance Committee; and at least one member should have recent and relevant audit or finance experience and be independent of the Trust's day-to-day financial operations.

7. Your first year: what success looks like

We will agree these with you during your induction. The committee works to a common pattern: one focus item at each meeting, a one-page dashboard and a short report to the Board.

By the end of your first year	How we will know
Induction completed, including meetings with the CEO, the committee Chair, our internal scrutiny provider and IT and compliance leads	Induction signed off by the Chair
Baselines agreed for the committee's Risk & Assurance dashboard (risks out of tolerance, audit actions, cyber, data protection, complaints)	Dashboard in use at every committee meeting
Specialist challenge on the DfE digital standards gap assessment and costed roadmap	Every school RAG-rated; roadmap recommended to the Board
Assurance on cyber resilience: penetration test, incident response exercise and Cyber Essentials renewal	Findings acted on; tested response plan in place
Support for the AI Safeguarding and Ethics Board and AI tools register	Every AI tool screened before use
Input to the Trust Digital Strategy before it goes to the Board in summer 2027	Strategy recommended with clear milestones to 2030

8. What you will gain from the role

Being a Director is a significant responsibility, and it is voluntary. It also brings real rewards, both for you and for the young people we serve.

Make a real difference

Help shape the education and life chances of around 7,500 young people across 13 schools in Rotherham and Gainsborough.

See the impact of your decisions when you visit our schools.

Board-level experience

Serve as a company director and charity trustee of a £62.5 million organisation, alongside experienced Directors and executive leaders.

Valuable experience for a non-executive or board career.

Learning and development

A full induction, a buddy Director and ongoing training through the National Governance Association's Learning Link and Trust briefings.

Insight into how the education sector and its regulators work.

Networks and partnerships

Meet leaders from across the region and beyond through our work with the Learners First Partnership, the Positive Change Alliance and the Foundation for Education Development.

Put your expertise to work

Gain audit committee experience in a regulated, publicly funded organisation.

Help shape how 13 schools manage risk and adopt digital technology and AI safely.

Flexible and supported

Most meetings are early evening, many can be joined online, and reasonable expenses are reimbursed.

Our Governance Professional supports every Director, and we are happy to write to your employer about time off for your governance role.

> Many employers value governance roles as professional development: they build strategic thinking, influence, scrutiny and teamwork, and show a commitment to the community.

9. Person specification

We will assess candidates against the criteria below. E = essential; D = desirable. A = application; I = interview; R = references.

Criteria	E / D	Assessed by
All Directors		
Commitment to the Trust's vision and to improving the life chances of children and young people	E	A, I
Ability to think strategically, analyse information and ask challenging questions	E	A, I
Understanding of, or willingness to learn, the role of a trust Director and the legal duties of company directors and charity trustees	E	I
Integrity, discretion and commitment to the Seven Principles of Public Life	E	I, R
Ability to work collaboratively as part of a team and accept collective responsibility	E	I, R
Time to attend Board and committee meetings, visits and training	E	A, I
Commitment to safeguarding and to equality, diversity and inclusion	E	A, I
Previous board or governance experience	D	A
Knowledge of the education sector or the local community	D	A, I
This role: Audit, Risk and Digital		
Senior professional experience in at least one of: audit or accountancy; risk management or compliance; law; or digital, IT or cyber security leadership (for example Chief Technology Officer or Head of Information Security)	E	A, I, R
Understanding of governance, risk and internal control in a regulated organisation	E	A, I, R
Ability to interpret audit reports, risk registers and assurance information, and to challenge management constructively	E	A, I, R
Independence from the Trust's day-to-day financial operations	E	A, I, R
Professional qualification, for example CCAB accountancy, IIA, law, CISSP or equivalent	D	A, I
Experience of cyber security frameworks, data protection (UK GDPR) or the governance of AI and automation	D	A, I
Experience in the public, charity or education sector, or of risks involving vulnerable children	D	A, I
Experience of litigation, liabilities or insurance frameworks	D	A, I

> First-time board members are welcome. You do not need to have worked in education: we will give you a full induction, a buddy Director and ongoing training.

10. How we are governed

Our Directors are both company directors and charity trustees. Governance has three tiers:

Members

Guardians of the Trust's constitution. Members appoint Directors, including this role, and hold the Board to account for effective governance.

Board of Directors

Sets the vision, ethos and strategy, holds executive leaders to account, and oversees money, risk and compliance. **This role sits here.**

Local governing bodies

Each school's local governing body supports and challenges its headteacher, with powers delegated by the Board.

The Board and its committees

The Board of Directors works through five committees. Each has Terms of Reference linked to our strategic priorities, a dashboard of key measures and a one-page report to the Board after every meeting, so that Board time goes on strategy and challenge rather than paperwork.

Committee	What it covers
Audit & Risk	Internal scrutiny, the Trust risk register, external audit, IT and cyber security, data protection and complaints
Finance	Budget and long-term financial planning, reserves, value for money, procurement and DfE financial returns
HR & Staffing	Pay, recruitment and retention, safer recruitment, wellbeing and workforce development
Education Standards	Outcomes, curriculum, SEND and inclusion, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding assurance
Estates & Compliance	Health and safety, statutory premises compliance, Martyn's Law, capital and condition, PFI, energy and carbon, lettings and educational visits

11. Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

We want our Board to reflect the communities it serves. Applications from people from groups under-represented on boards, including women, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, disabled people and younger candidates, are particularly encouraged.

All appointments are made on merit through a fair and transparent process. Under the Equality Act 2010 the Trust may use positive action where candidates are equally suitable.

During the application process we commit to:

- paying for care and childcare while you attend an interview;
- paying your travel costs to interviews held in person;
- making any reasonable adjustments you need, for example arranging a sign language interpreter in advance;
- providing this pack in Word format;
- offering a first-stage interview to disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for the role.

If there is anything else that would help you take part, please let us know.

12. Additional information

Conflicts of interest

All candidates will be asked to declare any interests, including any connection with the Trust's auditors, IT and data suppliers or other contractors. We will consider whether an actual conflict exists. Within 30 days of appointment, Directors complete a declaration of business interests, which is published on our website.

Eligibility and checks

Appointment is subject to an enhanced DBS certificate, a section 128 check, identity checks, Companies House identity verification, and confirmation that you are not disqualified from acting as a company director or charity trustee. Trust employees cannot be appointed to this role.

Induction and development

You will complete an induction within your first three months, including meetings with the Chair, CEO and Governance Professional, a buddy Director and visits to schools. Ongoing training is available through the National Governance Association's Learning Link and Trust briefings.

Our Code of Conduct

Directors sign the Directors' Handbook and Code of Conduct each year. It sets out how we behave as a Board, including our commitment to the Seven Principles of Public Life.

13. Selection process and how to apply

Applications are assessed against the person specification. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to:

- an informal conversation with the Chair of the Board and the CEO;
- a visit to one or more of our schools;
- a panel interview with the Chair of the Board, the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee and the Governance Professional.

The panel's recommendation goes to the Members, who appoint Directors. References are taken up before appointment.

How to apply

Please send the following to our Governance Professional, at boardrecruitment@wickersleypt.org by 4pm on Monday 14th December.

1. a CV setting out your career history, responsibilities and achievements;
2. a covering letter (no more than two sides of A4) explaining why you are interested and how you meet the essential criteria in the person specification, with examples;
3. the names of two referees and how they know you. We will not contact referees without your consent.

Timetable

Stage	Date
Advert opens	Monday 23rd November
Closing date	Monday 14th December
Shortlisting	w/c 14th December
Informal conversations and school visits	w/c 11th January (TBC)
Interviews	w/c 11th January (TBC)
Appointment by the Members	January 2027

Informal conversations

For an informal conversation about the role, please contact the Governance team at boardrecruitment@wickersleypt.org, who will arrange a call with the Chair of the Board or the CEO.

Safeguarding

Wickersley Partnership Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expects all Directors to share this commitment. This role is subject to an enhanced DBS check and our safer recruitment procedures, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.