



**APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR-DESIGNATE**  
(VOLUNTARY ROLE) • OCTOBER 2024

Dear parents

This document provides background information on the role of **Chair of Trustees** for the **Yorkshire Causeway Schools Trust** (YCST).

YCST is a strong, caring and ambitious multi-academy trust located in the Harrogate and Craven areas of North Yorkshire. The Trust is responsible for the wellbeing and education of around 3,800 children, and annual turnover is nearly £24m. Its nine thriving schools (both Church of England and community) share common values, interests and purpose, and pupils are at the heart of everything. Its culture is caring and inclusive, combining high expectations with high levels of support, and it has a very strong reputation within the locality and the region.

The Trust's governance structure includes eight local governing bodies, each of which focuses on the progress and improvement of an individual school. At a Trust level, the board sets collective strategy, oversees the implementation of the organisational plan, and monitors progress towards strategic objectives. The individuals who serve on these boards are some of the more than 250,000 volunteers who contribute their time and experience to governing schools in England. An external review of Yorkshire Causeway's governance concluded in 2023, the outcome of which was positive.

The tenure of the current Chair, Alison Glover, concludes in September 2025. Her period as Chair has been marked by highly effective strategic leadership, strong values, a rigorous approach to performance and a sustained personal commitment to the well-being of pupils, staff and communities alike. The Trust is very grateful for her contribution over many years.

The Trust wishes to identify Alison's successor in good time to enable a comprehensive and rich handover period to take place, and therefore hopes to ratify the appointment of its new Chair-designate by the end of October 2024. Potential candidates should bring an understanding of the trustee role, and ideally the current education governance landscape; a track record of success in your professional field; and a strong personal commitment to the ethos and objectives of the Trust. Leadership experience to oversee the setting of strategic objectives and planning for growth will be a distinct advantage, as will the ability to analyse and interpret school and trust performance data (or a firm commitment to acquire sector-specific skills as required).

As a Trust which includes both community and church schools, and which has a strong and beneficial relationship with the Diocese of Leeds, you must understand the importance of Yorkshire Causeway's Christian foundation and feel comfortable making your own contribution to it. You'll have an instinctive appreciation of its philosophy of good stewardship, and will understand the vital place of strong civic services at the heart of flourishing communities.

I very much hope that the role might be of interest, and look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Gooda'.

David Gooda  
Director, Navigate NDC

## About Yorkshire Causeway

Yorkshire Causeway Schools Trust was founded in March 2015 and includes both Church of England and community schools. We have an inclusive, mixed trust of church and non-church schools, urban and rural, small and large, working across a widening geographic area. Our 600 staff lead the education – in its widest sense – of 3,800 children and young people between the ages of 2 and 18. But more than just that, our Trust also looks after 22 buildings, feeds staff and students in 13 lunch halls, and develops high calibre educationalists through an ongoing programme of professional development and collaboration between schools.

The Trust offers its schools a growing shared central resource, providing professional support in key areas such as finance, estates, HR, IT and safeguarding. Drawing on the strengths and expertise across our schools, we ensure that best practice is shared across the Trust and that school improvement is continually pursued. We work closely with our school leaders to offer the appropriate support and challenge to achieve an organisation: “where everyone is valued and respected, where we share commitment to education that is ambitious, setting the highest expectations and where integrity is the foundation.”

Trustees have set three clear overarching strategic objectives: first, that Yorkshire Causeway is a good employer in the widest sense; second, that Yorkshire Causeway delivers education that is ambitious for every child; and third, that Yorkshire Causeway is a strong organisation. We describe ourselves as a “strong and strengthening” Trust, and anticipate a period of growth over the coming year(s). A draft strategy for the period from September 2024 onwards is currently under development with trustees.

While we are rightly proud of our exam results and inspection outcomes, there’s a rich variety of other aspects that really mark our Trust out as special. For example, a real focus for our youngest children on learning through play; making good friendships; students with a love of reading; and talented musicians who have to be heard to be believed. We excel in providing opportunities for our students to become courageous travellers and ambitious sportspeople and are inspired by the huge range of community and charity support activities undertaken.

Education has always been a complex sector, and the disruption of the last few years has posed real challenges to every school and trust in the country. But as we look back over that period, it’s clear that the difficulties we’ve overcome have actually accelerated the development of an incredibly strong shared culture. Our school communities are flourishing, and the Trust itself has a tangible sense of confidence and optimism about what the future holds. We are investing in digital development, in the alignment of teaching and learning between phases, in capital projects, and in sustainability projects; and we have the talented people we need to achieve even greater things ahead.

### Supplementary information

- [Trust website](#)
- [Annual Report 2022-23](#)
- Strategic Plan 2022-24: “*Strong and Strengthening*” (on request)
- Governance Framework 2024-2025 (on request)
- [School Improvement model](#)

## About the role of Chair

School Trusts are groups of schools that come together to form a single organisation. They are sometimes called Multi-Academy Trusts or MATs. School Trusts are specialist charities with one legal and moral purpose – to run and improve schools to advance education for public benefit. Like any other state school, schools in a Trust are free to attend, are inspected in the same way, and children take the same exams. They comprise primary, secondary, all-through, special, alternative provision, 16-19, and mainstream schools.

The **Chair** of a school trust board is a voluntary position which has a vital role in setting the highest expectations for professional standards of governance and accountability and providing confident, visionary strategic leadership to the trust. They lead by example, setting the tone from the top. They are the key link between the trustees, with legal and strategic responsibility for the trust, and the chief executive and senior team who are responsible for day-to-day operations.

The **Chair** leads on setting and championing a clear strategy that aligns with the trust's charitable objects, covers all pillars of [trust quality](#) and, where applicable and appropriate, sets out its aspirations for growth over time. As well as leader of the board, the Chair is at times a confidante, a manager, a critical friend, a cheerleader, an ambassador, an arbitrator, and possibly a mentor and coach; the balance of these roles adopted will depend on the situation at hand. The [Confederation of School Trusts](#) provides a comprehensive and authoritative source of information and orientation for candidates.

The overarching purpose of this role is therefore to lead the board in sustaining and continuously improving the provision of the highest-quality school environment, in order to drive ever-better outcomes for the children we serve. You will oversee the strategy and operations of the Trust so that trustees (and stakeholders including the Diocese of Leeds, DfE, Ofsted and the ESFA) are assured that we're using the resources and assets at our disposal to optimum effect.

Our culture is rooted in a Christian world view that deeply respects each and every individual and commits to working through strong and healthy relationships – respecting people, understanding people, leading through consent. This is best achieved and nurtured by an approach of absolute transparency, shared purpose, high integrity and a focus on objective evidence, trends and data. Candidates can enhance their understanding of Yorkshire Causeway's ethos and values by reading the book '[Flourishing Together](#)'.

Our vision is all about education and driving better outcomes for children. We've had significant success so far, but we cannot be complacent; we have a shared desire for and expectation of continuous improvement. We're not focused on growth for its own sake; if schools choose to join our Trust, it will be the consequence, not the cause, of the improvement they observe across the Trust.

We believe this is a very attractive voluntary non-executive opportunity: a positive, collaborative group of good schools, a strong and supportive culture, sound finances, and a board that's clear-sighted and engaged. If you feel ready for the stewardship of such a special organisation, we look forward to meeting you.

## Role profile

- This role description has been developed in the context of the Department for Education's [Academy Trust Governance Guide](#) (2024) , [Trust Quality Descriptions](#) (July 2023), [Academy Trust Handbook](#) (July 2023) and the [Academy Trust Governance Code](#) (included at Appendix 2 below), and we strongly encourage candidates to familiarize themselves with these documents.
- The Chair of Yorkshire Causeway board will be appointed in accordance with articles 82-92 of the Trust's [Articles of Association](#).

### Strategic leadership

- Leads the work of the board in setting a clear vision, implementing an agreed strategy and monitoring its progress towards objectives
- Leads the board in the Trust's self-evaluation process as well as setting risk appetite and tolerance.
- Leads board meetings in a way which embodies the culture, values and ethos of the Trust, setting the highest expectations for professional standards of governance.
- Leads and advocates for the Trust community of governance volunteers and ensures that they receive adequate and training and support in order to effectively fulfil the responsibilities delegated to them.
- Leads by example to avoid, declare and manage conflicts of interest.
- Works closely with trustees, the Governance Lead and Chief Executive to plan an efficient and effective programme of work leading to well-informed and well- considered decisions.
- Maintains effective knowledge of national and regional educational priorities and the implications of these for the board and the Trust.
- Reflects strategically on the future direction of the Trust and identifies the steps needed to achieve goals.
- Provides effective leadership of organisational change even when this is difficult
- Ensures that different perspectives, viewpoints and dissenting voices are properly taken into account and recorded.
- Ensures the board seeks guidance from executive leaders and from the Trust's governance professional before the board commits to significant or controversial courses of action.
- Ensures meaningful engagement with stakeholders to inform decision making and ensure the Trust is anchored in the needs of the communities it serves and the wider educational system.
- Communicates clearly with colleagues, parents and carers, partners and other agencies and checks that their message has been heard and understood.
- Advocates for and represents the Trust within the wider school academy trust sector.

### Educational standards, financial performance and performance management

- Understands and promotes the importance of interrogating data, in order to effectively hold executive leaders to account.
- Ensures the board holds executive leaders to account for financial and business management, in order to deliver ambitious educational outcomes.
- Provides confident and assured strategic leadership to the board during periods of scrutiny.

## Role profile

### People

- Enables the board to work as an effective team by developing strong working relationships between trustees and creating a culture where differences are aired and resolved.
- Develops a good working relationship with the vice chair, ensuring appropriate development opportunities and that s/he is kept fully informed and is delegated tasks as appropriate.
- Ensures that trustees feel valued and encourages their development.
- Understands the importance of succession planning to the continuing effectiveness of both the board and the Trust.
- Ensure new trustees are helped to understand their non-executive leadership role, the role of the board and the vision and strategy of the organisation enabling them to make a full contribution.
- Sets high expectations for conduct and behaviour for all those in governance and is an exemplary role model in demonstrating these.
- Creates an atmosphere of open, honest discussion where it is safe to constructively challenge conventional wisdom and creates a sense of inclusiveness where each trustee understands their individual contribution to the collective work of the board.
- Promotes and fosters a supportive working relationship between the board, governance professional, executive leaders, staff of the organisation and external stakeholders.

### Structures, regulation and compliance

- Understands the importance of non-executive leadership roles and is able to lead discussions and decisions about what functions to delegate.
- Sets appropriately high expectations of the Trust's governance professional, ensuring the board is compliant with the regulatory frameworks for governance and charity and company law.
- Ensures the board receives appropriate training and development.

### Self-evaluation and performance management

- Leads on effective, purposeful and developmental management of the Chief Executive, setting clear objectives and ensuring high performance.
- Actively seeks regular and comprehensive feedback on their own performance as chair.
- Puts the needs of the board and Trust first and recognizes the appropriate time to step down or move on.
- Sets challenging development goals and works effectively with the board to meet these goals.
- Leads performance review of the board and its committees.
- Able to have open and honest conversations with board members about their performance and development needs, and if appropriate, about their commitment or tenure.

## Person specification

Candidates should be able to evidence the following characteristics, knowledge and experience (or a commitment to acquire them within an agreed period of time).

### Professional / personal

- Highly developed interpersonal and communication skills
- Proven leadership ability
- Strong organisational skills
- Strong business and financial acumen
- Proven ability to understand complex strategic issues, analyse and resolve difficult problems
- Sound, independent judgement, pragmatism and diplomacy
- High standards of personal integrity and probity
- Politically astute, with the ability to grasp relevant issues and understand relationships between interested parties
- Resilience
- Knowledge of the operating geography of Yorkshire Causeway, and a record of voluntary contribution in the area
- Sufficient time and commitment to properly fulfil the role.

### Role / sector-specific

- High level of understanding and interest in the issues of education and school trusts
- Commitment to the values and principles of Yorkshire Causeway
- Experience of effective committee or board work (ideally including some experience as a Chair)
- Clear understanding, and acceptance, of the legal duties, liabilities and responsibilities of trustees
- Sound knowledge of governance, both generally and as it pertains to education
- Able to commit sufficient time to properly fulfil this voluntary role.

## Appendix 1: Seven principles of public life

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, non-departmental public bodies, 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, including the trustees and executive leaders of school trusts.

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.

## Appendix 2: Academy Trust Governance Code

The Academy Trust Governance Code is a voluntary code developed by the sector that draws upon the Seven Principles of Public Life, the Charity Governance Code and relevant Department for Education guidance. It sets out the principles, desired outcomes, and recommended practice for effective governance.

**Fundamental Principle.** The Academy Trust's Directors are aware of and meet 'The Seven Principles of Public Life', understand the legal, regulatory and contractual obligations they must meet, and have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

**Principle 1:** Delivering the Academy Trust Charitable Objects. The Academy Trust's Articles of Association set out the Academy Trust's charitable Objects and how those must be fulfilled. The Board is clear about its aims and ensures that they are being delivered effectively and sustainably.

**Principle 2:** Leadership. The Academy Trust is led by an effective Board that provides strategic governance in line with the aims and values of the Academy Trust and engages effectively with its Members.

**Principle 3:** Integrity. The Board acts with integrity, adopting values and creating a culture which helps achieve the Academy Trust's charitable Objects. The Board is aware of the importance of public confidence and trust in Academy Trusts and their Schools, and the Board undertakes its duties accordingly.

**Principle 4:** Decision making, risk and control. The Board ensures that its decision-making processes are evidence informed, rigorous and timely and that effective delegation, control, risk assessment and management systems are set up and monitored. There is effective reporting at all levels of Academy Trust governance to ensure decisions are taken at the correct level in accordance with the Articles of Association and Scheme of Delegation.

**Principle 5:** Board effectiveness. The Board works as an effective team, using the appropriate balance of knowledge, skills, experiences and backgrounds to make informed decisions.

**Principle 6:** Equality, diversity and inclusion. In ensuring the effective achievement of the Academy Trust's charitable Objects, the Board has a clear, agreed and effective approach to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the Academy Trust.

**Principle 7:** Openness and accountability. The Board leads the Academy Trust in being transparent and accountable. The Academy Trust is open in its work, unless there is good reason for it not to be.

## How to apply

If you would like to apply for this role, please submit a full CV (ensuring you include a full chronological record, including all periods of both employment and unemployment) together with a letter of application which demonstrates your match to the role profile. Please also ensure that you have summarised your motivation for applying.

Applications should be sent by email to [david.gooda@navigategroup.co.uk](mailto:david.gooda@navigategroup.co.uk), and submissions will be accepted until midnight on **4 November 2024**. Interviews are expected to be held between 20 - 22 November 2024.