

Internal summary document: Advocate recruitment & appointment process incl. actions for schools

1) Update the school website:

School staff to ensure the website reflects the current governance vacancy. Also, verify that the governance page is accurate and up to date, as this will be reviewed during Ofsted inspections. The Governance Support folder on the SharePoint site contains a document outlining the required website content and sample text for the governance page. You can access it here: [Governance Support Folder](#). The relevant documents are easily identifiable within the folder.

2) Inform parents via letter or newsletter:

Update the school newsletter and include the advocate vacancy. Consider sending a letter to parents in addition. Please note that this may result in a high volume of responses. A draft letter can be adapted for your use. The draft is below.

3) Governance handbook for candidates:

Provide any local candidates or applicants with the link to access the Governance Handbook, which offers an overview of the roles and responsibilities. Include the handbook link in the letter to parents. <https://atlp.org.uk/document/17988#governance-handbook/>

4) Expression of Interest (EOI) form submission:

Applicants are required to complete an online Expression of Interest (EOI) form, which will be received centrally by the Trust Governance lead. They will then forward the form to the identified school. The link to the form should be included in the letter to parents.

5) School review and interview:

Upon receiving the EOI, the Governance Lead will send it to the school and request that the school arrange a meeting with the applicant to discuss the role. The school should coordinate directly with the parent. It is recommended that the school ask the parent to bring identification documents necessary for the DBS check and review these documents during the meeting, making copies as required.

6) Appointment decision:

The headteacher should inform the Governance Lead if they wish to proceed with the appointment. If there are concerns about the suitability of the applicant, please contact the Governance Lead for further discussion. If there are multiple applicants, it may be possible to appoint more than one individual or to refer candidates to other schools to avoid an election process, as election committees are managed centrally. Redistribution to other roles or schools has been successful in previous instances.

7) Submission of ID documents for DBS:

The school should send the applicant's identification documents to HR for the DBS check. The Governance Lead will also email HR to confirm that the appointment is subject to DBS clearance and approval from the Chair.

8) Request for approval:

The Governance Lead will send a request for approval to the Chair of the Board, including a brief summary of the applicant's qualifications and suitability for the role.

9) Awaiting DBS clearance:

Once the Chair has approved the appointment, we will await DBS clearance. In some cases, HR may notify only the school, not the Governance Lead, when DBS clearance is received. Therefore, the school should inform the Governance Lead once the DBS check is confirmed.

10) Issuing appointment letter and setting up accounts:

The Governance Lead will issue a formal letter of appointment and share the relevant documentation with the advocate. They will also set up the individual's O365 and GovernorHub access, add them to trust-wide meeting invites, and grant SharePoint access. Although there is no formal termly induction meeting, there are numerous training videos available on the SharePoint site, and the Governance Handbook serves as an induction resource.

11) Forwarding login details and appointment letter:

The Governance Lead will email the applicant their login details and will forward this information to the school to confirm that it has been sent.

Advocates will be required to complete a declaration of personal details form which needs to be returned to the Governance & Compliance Manager to then update the Trust's GIAS governance record. This includes written declaration that they are not disqualified from serving in an advocate role. They will also be required to declare any personal details, and complete the year's safeguarding training (links to be sent by the G&CM).

12) School engagement with the appointed governor:

The school should make contact with the appointed advocate and begin inviting them to participate in school activities and engaging with them in their assigned areas.

Note: The Governance department maintains standing advocate recruitment posts on CharityJobs and ReachVolunteering. Where applicants indicate an interest in the school, or a vacancy that the school has – they will be directed to the school to engage in this process. Where the applicant does not indicate a preferred school, vacancies are reviewed across the trust and serviced by levels of need.

Draft base letter to incoming year group parents

Dear Parents and Carers,

We hope this letter finds you well. As we start preparing for the next academic year, we want to ensure that you're all aware of how our school is governed and extend an invitation for some of you to become actively involved in shaping the future of our school through joining the local governance network within the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership (ATLP) in a school advocate role.

Each school within the ATLP family benefits from the support of four dedicated advocate roles that work closely with one another and with school leaders to ensure our students receive the best possible education and care. These advocates also meet with their counterparts from other schools and with trustees on a termly basis to provide oversight and strategic direction.

Due to natural turnover, we currently have vacancies for some of these crucial advocate roles and are reaching out to our parent community to fill these positions, both within our own school but at other partnership schools. The roles available are:

- **Vulnerable Children Advocate:** This role is suited for individuals with professional backgrounds or experience working with or caring for children who have experienced disadvantage, including children in or previously in care, and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- **Safeguarding Advocate:** This role focuses on ensuring that our safeguarding policies and practices are effective and that our children are protected and supported at all times.
- **Support and Challenge (Leadership Support) Advocate:** This advocate provides essential support to school leadership while also challenging them to strive for continuous improvement and excellence in all areas.
- **Community Advocate:** This role aims to strengthen the relationship between the school and the wider community, fostering a sense of collaboration and mutual support.

Training for all roles will be provided, what's most important is your willingness to commit time, energy and care towards the school community. Advocates are appointed for a term of 4 years and work closely with the school leadership to advance the opportunities for students and their schools and help ensure the school is as strong as it can be.

The roles require a time commitment of approximately 30-40 hours per year, broken down into meeting attendance, preparation, email/telephone communications and training. This also includes occasional requests for advocates to sit on complaints or exclusion panels as neutral third parties as part of the trust-wide governance network.

If you are passionate about contributing to the strategic direction and oversight of our school and believe you have the skills and experience to excel in one of these roles, we would love to hear from you. Your involvement can make a significant difference in the educational experience of all our students.

Please let us know if you are interested in applying for one of these positions through contacting the school office or completing the online [expression of interest form](#). We can arrange a meeting between yourself and the headteacher to discuss further. The [governance handbook](#) is available on the trust's website which also includes more information about governance at ATLP. We look forward to working with dedicated individuals who share our commitment to providing a supportive and enriching environment for our students.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to contribute further to our school community.

Kind Regards

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