

## **The Role and Requirements of the Academy Council Chair**

The School Advisory Board Chair plays a critical role in the Speech and Language UK's governance framework. In terms of status and contribution to the success of the school, it has some similarities to the traditional Chair of Governor role of a standalone school, though within a multi-school organisation there are some important differences which make the role more efficiently focused, and in many ways more attractive.

The role of SAB Chair requires personal maturity, a strong sense of social responsibility, demonstrable leadership qualities and emotional intelligence. Other expectations of a Chair include:

- Knowledge of the school. This will normally include living no more than 60 minutes away from the school, and evidence of some involvement with the local community and/or areas of the work of the school.
- Experience of chairing or leading effective meetings.
- Understanding of the School Advisory Board's specific remit as described in the Terms of Reference.
- An understanding of governance.
- A commitment to the Nolan principles of public life.

The Chair will typically not be a parent of a current pupil of the school, but rather be a representative of a local employer, charity, other educational service provider, or a faith/sports/creative arts or other community leader.

The main aspects of the Chair's role are:

1. **Developing the SAB as an effective body:** helping to attract SAB members with the necessary qualities and skills which can represent the diversity of the community, and ensuring that all members contribute as a team to the aims of the SAB.
2. **Giving the SAB a clear lead and direction,** including setting the culture of the SAB. This involves ensuring that each member is heard and understands their role in helping to shape the strategic direction of the school, and in providing sources of evidence to Speech and Language UK to support and to validate school improvement.
3. **Maintaining a relationship with the Principal:** in particular being a 'critical friend'. The Principal is formally accountable to the Speech and Language UK via the line management role of the Director of Education. The SAB Chair provides a less formal, but equally valuable, source of support, challenge and encouragement for the Principal.  
Speech and Language UK will seek input from the SAB Chair in the performance appraisal of the Principal.

4. **Maintaining a relationship with the leadership of Speech and Language UK:**  
The School Advisory Board represents an independent source of evidence for the organisation based on the 'lived experience' of parents, staff and others. The Chair is expected to bring relevant matters to the attention of Speech and Language UK's leadership. This may include positive assurances about the experiences of pupils, staff and parents, as well as any unresolved concerns which require support to resolve. Additionally, to facilitate the flow of information and to promote transparency and accountability Chairs will be members of the Education Committee and will be invited to attend Chairs' Forums at least termly to share their experiences face-to-face with each other and with Speech and Language UK leaders.
  
5. **Developing an ambassadorial role**, championing the merits and successes of the school and Speech and Language UK, and forging links to help provide opportunities for pupils and to stimulate wider community participation in the school.

### **Time commitment and knowledge requirement**

Being an SAB Chair should take up approximately 8-10 days per year.  
Time spent will be a combination of:

- Initial induction and ongoing guidance from the Director of Education and other members of the Speech and Language UK's leadership team.
- Preparing for SAB meetings and reviewing minutes.
- Attending meetings (SAB Meetings, Chairs' Forum and The Education Committee).
- Keeping in touch with the Principal - visiting the school at least once a term, and phone calls as required.
- Occasional participation on review panels for complaints and exclusions, subject to availability.
- Attendance when required at a meeting with an Ofsted inspector.

A thorough understanding of the school is crucial. Whilst there is no expectation or requirement for a Chair to have educational expertise, they will need to develop a feel for the school's community context, its strengths and weaknesses, what it does well and where it needs to improve.

In preparation for meetings, summary performance data will be made available to SAB members, including a report from the Principal. Information presented will include data generated by the school for its own internal monitoring and assurance, along with external sources such as Ofsted inspections and other independent reviews. This data will provide key indicators to the SAB of how well the school is meeting its goals and obligations, including outcomes for pupils, the

safety and welfare of pupils and staff, and assurances regarding the financial management of the school.

At SAB meetings, the Chair should invite members to ask questions and to comment on such reports and data. To be clear, the focus is not so much on professional scrutiny of the data (other controls are in place for that), but rather to give SAB members the opportunity to comment on whether such data is consistent with their own experience and perceptions of the school.

Speech and Language UK's overriding objective is to gain diverse insights and assurances regarding the school's environment as a safe and stimulating place for pupils to learn and to grow, and as a rewarding place for staff to work.