



Candidate Pack

Appointment of Trustee



United Learning
The best in everyone™



Welcome

Thank you very much for your interest in the role of Trustee at United Learning.

We were founded over 130 years ago as a group of independent schools at a time when Victorian Britain had realised that the lack of educational opportunity for girls and young women was a serious social problem. Over the last 20 years, we have taken on the challenge of turning around some of the most problematic schools in the country and grown to be the country's largest academy trust.

From September, the Group will have over 100 schools – predominantly state funded academies. While we are not a huge organisation by the standards of other sectors, we are unprecedentedly large for a school's trust and we have had to change thoughtfully at each stage of our growth. Doing so has led to real success for the children in our schools – we have a number of schools which are within the country's top 50 schools for progress in the latest 'progress 8' tables.

We have recently completed the third year of our 5-year strategy – Best in Everyone – and defined the United Learning Way, so you would be joining us at a very exciting time. Our ambitions are to create the best schools to learn in, work in, join and to be the best contributors beyond our schools. Building a productive and proactive collaboration across the group and beyond will be a key feature of this role.

We are now looking to appoint a Trustee with a strong background in Estates and Asset Management, who will play a strategic role in overseeing our significant and diverse property portfolio and the substantial annual investment into our estate. Our ideal candidate will

bring estates leadership experience at a senior level, in a multi-site environment with a particular focus on asset management.

This is a key role on our Board. The Trustee fulfilling the Estates brief will chair the Estates Committee, and also be a member of the Finance Committee, into which the Estates Committee reports.

We are working hard to become a more diverse organisation – which is key to our commitment to bringing out the best in everyone.

We welcome applications from everyone committed to this ethos and would particularly welcome applications from women, and individuals from an ethnic minority background who are currently under-represented on our Board. We are also keen to recruit individuals who live in the North of England where a proportion of United Learning's schools are located. All appointments will be made on merit, following a fair and transparent process.

This is an exciting opportunity to make a meaningful impact on the strategic direction of a growing organisation committed to enhancing educational facilities, and to join a reflective and analytical Board which is passionate about improving education for young people. We hope that you will be interested and, if so, we will be happy to discuss this role and our vision for United Learning with you.

Christian Brodie
Chair of the Group Board

About United Learning

United Learning is a Group of schools which aims to provide excellent education to children and young people across the country. We seek to improve the life chances of all the children and young people we serve and make it our mission to bring out ‘the best in everyone’ – pupils, staff, parents and the wider community. We uniquely comprise schools in both the state and the independent sectors. We currently educate over 74,000 children and employ almost 10,000 adults.

Our schools, primary, secondary and independent cover the length of England, from Carlisle in the north down to the south coast. We do not have a ‘one size fits all’ approach: each school has its own unique identity and traditions, but each shares our mission to bring out ‘the best in everyone’. We are committed to a common set of educational principles including an excellent academic curriculum, strong pastoral care and the development of the whole person, including through sport, the arts and a broad co-curricular programme.

As a national group of schools, we believe that Heads should run schools and we centralise functions only when that will give a significant gain in efficiency and effectiveness. We have been able to generate substantial economies of scale in the ‘back-office’ functions that schools require from taking this approach as well as building excellent ‘create once, use many times’ educational and other resources. We also recognise the powerful impact formal collaboration

and partnership have on driving school improvement and back-office efficiency. We aim to ensure that wherever we have a school, we have a cluster of at least three schools of the same phase, which are sufficiently close together to work with one another, sharing resources and expertise and giving staff local opportunities to develop their careers.

Overall, we aim to offer more to both colleagues and young people than any single school could offer alone. This includes the range of professional and career development opportunities for colleagues, including our extensive initial teacher training, early career and leadership development programmes. Our group-wide activities for young people offer them some truly exceptional and inspiring experiences. Our national, phase and sector collaborations are amongst the most developed in the country.



Our Ethos

Our approach to education is underpinned by a sense of moral purpose and commitment to doing what is right for children and young people. We believe in supporting our colleagues to achieve excellence and in acting with integrity in all our dealings within and beyond the Group. We believe the safety and welfare of all children and young people is paramount. We summarise this ethos as **'the best in everyone'** which underpins our core values:

Ambition – to achieve the best for us and others.

Confidence – to have the courage of our convictions and to take risks for the right cause.

Creativity – to imagine possibilities and make them real.

Respect – of ourselves and others in all that we do.

Enthusiasm – to seek opportunity, find what is good and pursue talents and interests.

Determination – to overcome obstacles and achieve success.

Our values were selected in consultation with United Learning students and staff across the country. As a single organisation, we seek to bring together the best of independent and state sectors, respecting both traditions and learning from each. We believe that each of our schools is and should be distinctive – each is committed to developing its own

strengths and identity while sharing our core values as institutions which promote service, compassion and generosity.

This ethos is our expression of our Christian roots, in community academies which are fully inclusive and both welcome and respect students and staff of all faiths and none



Our Framework for Excellence

The 'Framework for Excellence' sets out the key principles our schools work to. They are designed to be meaningful and clear without being a straitjacket and to give school leaders space to meet the needs of their community, while also prioritising:

- 1 The best from everyone
- 2 Powerful knowledge
- 3 Education with character
- 4 Leadership in every role
- 5 Continuous improvement



Our aim is to bring out 'the best in everyone'. So, we must expect the best from everyone, all the time. Every child is a special individual, capable of extraordinary things. Who can know the limits of any child's potential?



Our Framework for Excellence

'The best from everyone'

Our aim is to bring out 'the best in everyone'. So, we must expect the best from everyone, all the time. Every child is a special individual, capable of extraordinary things. Who can know the limits of any child's potential? So, we expect unreasonably – we constantly challenge children to do what they think they can't, to persist, to work hard and to be at their best.

From every adult we expect the same: that they are at their best, expect unreasonably of themselves, are determined and resilient and pass those expectations on to the children in all they do. We act with the utmost love, care and good faith – the highest standards come with the greatest attention to the wellbeing of all.

'Powerful knowledge'

Our most important purpose is to teach young people things they would not learn outside school, which free them to think and act more powerfully in their lives. Words and numbers are our most powerful ways of representing the world. Mastery of language and fluent mathematical skills are therefore our top priority. We aim to prepare young people to make a success of their lives: a core entitlement to subject-based learning; the development of talents; an understanding of work and society.

Worthwhile learning is often hard. Inspiring teaching is what gives access to difficult concepts and the thrill of intellectual discovery. Powerful knowledge is not static or backward-looking. It includes the ability to critique, challenge the status quo, think and learn.

'Education with character'

Academic success is very important. Exam passes are an important aspect of that. But there is more to a good education. Our schools also aim to develop character, compassion and service. Young people are expected to contribute to their school and to society; to try things which they think they cannot do; to persist in the face of difficulty; to

become resilient in overcoming obstacles; to manage themselves; to work independently on things which challenge them; to work with others and in teams; to be courageous and caring; to lead.

We want young people to look back on a joyful schooling which has inspired and challenged them, given them wide opportunity and prepared them for the ups and downs of life.

'Leadership in every role'

Our children are leaders of the future. We expect them to start today – taking advantage of structured opportunities to lead and taking responsibility for themselves and others. Every adult in the school is a leader. In every word, tone and gesture, they set direction and expectation. We expect every adult to take responsibility and the initiative to do what is right for the children.

All those in formal leadership positions create the climate in which others work. They demand the highest standards, build a performance culture, develop their teams and create the space for others to lead. All leaders listen, grow relationships, act with integrity and care and expect the best from themselves and others in building a happy, confident school.

'Continuous improvement'

However good we are, we can be better. We constantly look for improvements and implement them with pace. We look for ideas for improvement inside the organisation and out; we observe one another; we steal good ideas with pride and look to make them better; we work together to improve.

We always look at the evidence and are rigorous in evaluating impact. We stop or change things which aren't working; we improve things which are. We aim for high leverage, high impact for low effort and low cost. We constantly look to have more impact for less cost and effort and to spend every pound wisely.

Governance

United Learning consists of two charities which are responsible for the operation of the Group’s schools. United Church Schools Trust (UCST) governs the Independent Schools, and United Learning Trust (ULT) governs the Group’s Academies. United Learning Ltd is the parent charity, and owns the independent schools’ land and buildings.

All the Trustees of UCST and ULT sit together as a Group Board, to which the Trustees of both entities have delegated their powers and functions. The Group Board carries out an annual self-evaluation process to review its effectiveness and continue to improve its performance.

The Group Board has responsibility for:

- Protecting the interests and assets of each charity and its schools;
- Safeguarding the charitable objects;
- Ensuring the maintenance of the United Learning ethos and values;
- Group strategy, management and governance; and
- Financial and educational performance.

Four committees advise on matters defined by their terms of reference ([further details here](#)): The Finance Committee; the Risk and Audit Committee; the Nominations and Remuneration Committee; and the Education, Standards and Performance Committee.

The Chair of the Group Board is Mr Christian Brodie, the Chair of ULT is Dame Reena Keeble and the Chair of UCST is Dr Rosalind Given-Wilson. [You can find out more about the Board of Trustees here.](#)

The Group Board delegates management of the Group to the Chief Executive and the management team, who therefore carry out important governance and leadership roles in relation to the individual schools in the Group. ULT and UCST have delegated decision-making powers to the Group Board, but continue to exist as separate charities and to meet as appropriate.

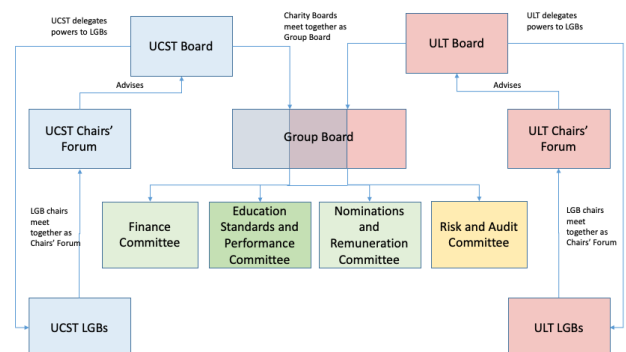
Local Governing Bodies

The Trustees have the ultimate legal responsibility for the governance of all United Learning schools. Each school also has its own Local Governing Body (LGB), to which clear roles and responsibilities have been delegated. The central purpose of the LGB is to provide support and challenge to the school on behalf of the Group Board, drawing on local knowledge of the school and its community.

The Group Board maintains links with the LGBs through the Head of Local Governance and designated Trustees.

The Chairs of the LGBs of the academies and of the independent schools come together with relevant lead trustees on each side to form a Chairs’ Forum, which meets three times in the academic year and provides advice on strategy and education, further enhancing communications between Local Governing Bodies and the Trustees.

[United Learning’s Scheme of Delegation can be accessed here.](#)



The Role of Trustees

The Trustees share collective responsibility for the effective governance and development of United Learning, setting our strategic direction and major policies in accordance with the Group's mission, vision and values.

The specific responsibilities and duties of Trustees can be outlined as follows:

- To ensure that United Learning's strategic direction and objectives are clearly established and kept under review.
- To develop positive, constructive working relationships with the Chief Executive and senior staff, acting as an objective, critical friend.
- To consider the organisation as a whole, and its beneficiaries, in all discussion of strategic direction, planning and activity.
- To ensure the finances of the organisation are managed properly with accurate information.
- To engage positively and collaboratively in Board discussions bringing fresh ideas and new perspectives.
- To question intelligently, debate and challenge constructively and thoughtfully and determine outcomes fairly.
- To act with integrity, objectivity and honesty, and promote openness and trust in relationships with all Board members.
- To ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of the children who are our beneficiaries.
- To comply with the Directors' and Trustees' duties as set out in the Charities Act and Companies Act and adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life.

Terms of Appointment

Trustees will be expected to attend six Board Meetings per year (c. three-hour meeting + preparation) and should also join at least one of United Learning's Committees which each hold meetings c. 3-4 times per year. In addition, there will be one annual Away Day with an overnight stay, usually in Cambridge, and a two day Annual Leadership Conference in Manchester which Trustees attend. Board meetings are normally in London in person, with one per year in Peterborough and possibly one held in a school.

The Trustee fulfilling the estates brief will chair the Estates Committee which is a sub-committee of the Finance Committee and will be a member of the Finance Committee.

Alongside this, Trustees should engage with United Learning's schools, for example with school visits and the production of a short summary report and will also become involved with particular areas / functions relevant to their skills and expertise. There may be virtual ad hoc meetings on occasion.

Person Specification

The new Trustee will be an individual of exceptional calibre with an ability to contribute to the ongoing strategic development of United Learning. The Trustee will fulfil the Estates brief and provide guidance and advice to the Director of Estates and Group Board on how best to maintain and develop its portfolio of school and other buildings.

Trustees should bring a strong understanding, ideally through previous or current experience, of the role of a non-executive. They should demonstrate a clear grasp of the support and constructive challenge elements of the Trustee role, and combining good judgement with excellent strategic skills and a capacity to think creatively and offer fresh perspectives. They will show understanding of, and help to address, the challenges of running a complex organisation which incorporates both academies and independent schools, and also the risks associated with the size of such an organisation. The Trustee should also act as an ambassador for United Learning and be driven by contributing to local communities and the education of young people. The Trustee will be a full member of the Board and will join the Finance Committee, as well as the Estates Committee (a subcommittee of the Finance Committee).

Property / Estates

United Learning is looking for a new Trustee with an Estates/ Property Asset Management background, who brings experience of operating at a senior level overseeing large, complex, multi-site estates portfolios. They will be able to provide advice, guidance and appropriate challenge to the Board and executive on how the Trust can best maintain and develop its diverse portfolio of schools buildings.

United Learning is looking at developing some of its existing properties for use as community hubs and is also opening a new free school which is scheduled to be ready in 2024. Other strategic priorities will be around use of independent school facilities and broader academy refurbishment.

It is not essential but desirable that this person has experience on projects within the education sector, for example with schools or universities. Experience of overseeing a dispersed national portfolio, as well as in a high-growth/acquisition environment, would be helpful.

This is a significant role in a charity and public service. Trustees must demonstrate the highest standards of personal probity and integrity, a commitment to the Nolan principles and must put first children, as the beneficiaries of the charity. Candidates must have sufficient time to fulfil the role, strong interpersonal skills, sound judgement, and the ability to understand complex issues.

Diversity

We particularly welcome applications from women, and individuals from an ethnic minority background who are currently under-represented on our Board. We are also keen to recruit individuals who live in the North of England where a proportion of United Learning's schools are located. All appointments will be made on merit, following a fair and transparent process, in line with the Equality Act 2010. However, the organisation may employ positive action where diverse candidates can demonstrate their ability to perform the role equally well.

Professional Background and Experience

- professionally qualified architect, surveyor or project manager;
- a track record in leading the estates function in a large, complex multi-site organisation;
- background in property management and experience of large refurbishment projects; and
- expertise on how the Trust can best maintain and develop its portfolio of school buildings.

Non-Executive Experience

- understanding of the non-executive role and the ability to operate in such a role;
- a commitment to education;
- skills in organisational management, including business and/or financial acumen;
- alignment to the values and principle of United Learning, and a commitment to public service; and
- a clear understanding of governance and of the duties of a trustee.

How to Apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to United Learning on this appointment. Candidates should apply for this role through our website at www.saxbam.com/appointments using code RBMVB. Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is noon on Wednesday 27 November 2024.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so).

The Selection Process

Initial interviews with Saxton Bampfylde will be held during week of 9th December.

The shortlist of candidates will meet with United Learning in January 2025. This will include one-to-one conversations with the Chair and CEO week commencing 6th January followed by a panel interview week commencing 13th January.

It is expected that the appointed candidate will join the Board Strategy session on 12th and 13th February in Cambridge.

Safeguarding

United Learning is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff to share this commitment. An enhanced DBS (previously CRB) check is required for the successful applicant as well as online checks and references, all of which are satisfactory to United Learning.

**The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.*



United Learning
The best in everyone™

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