

# Candidate information pack

## Governance, Compliance and Risk Lead



Closing date for applications	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2026 at noon
Interview date	12 <sup>th</sup> May 2026

**Great Schools at the Heart of our Communities**

**Learning together, making the difference**

## Welcome from Chair of Trustees

Thank you for your interest in the role of Governance, Compliance and Risk Lead with Focus-Trust

Focus-Trust is a charitable primary schools trust established in 2012. We are based in the North-West of England and are dedicated to working with our 15 primary schools and welcome the opportunity for further growth. It is the core purpose of Focus-Trust to continually strive to be a learning organisation where the learning of all children and adults is valued and promoted.

We passionately believe equity of opportunity starts with education; irrespective of where you were born or where you live, a high-quality education in one of our great schools will make a fundamental difference to all our children's lives, career prospects and social mobility.

The Focus-Trust team is committed to providing a great educator in every class with a strong moral purpose, high quality pedagogy and a broad and balanced curriculum. We aim to provide inclusive and inspirational environments where our children thrive and build the social and cultural capital they need to make aspirational choices about their future, overcoming any barriers they may encounter.

We are seeking to appoint a new Governance, Compliance and Risk Lead from September 2026.

The successful candidate will demonstrate the following qualities:

- A strong understanding of both School and Trust Governance
- A strong understanding of compliance and risk within the sector
- Excellent organizational and interpersonal skills
- Experience of leading and motivating people and building effective relationships at all levels
- A clear understanding of the current educational and political landscape
- Presents as highly professional, setting high expectations for all and leading by example with presence, integrity, creativity, resilience and clarity.
- Excellent interpersonal skills with the personal credibility, gravitas and integrity to engage and influence at a senior level

We have a thriving partnership of schools who are driven to do the best for our children. As a team we believe in 'Collective efficacy' and have a shared commitment to work together on the things that matter to improve outcomes for all.

We are proud to have a great team of people working in our schools who always put children at the heart of our practice. We are committed to providing excellent professional development opportunities for all our staff and always aim to be an employer of choice.

Our new Governance, Compliance and Risk Lead must therefore be an exceptional leader who is committed to moving the Trust forward in the next phase of our strategic corporate and school governance plans.

I wish you well in your application.

**Paul Spencer - Chair of Trust Board**



## **Welcome from Chief Executive Officer**

Many thanks for showing interest in this exciting position within our Trust.

Having left headship and initially joined Focus-Trust in 2013 as the Academy Improvement Partner, and then becoming CEO in 2015, I have been privileged to be part of our Focus-Trust journey from the beginning.

Focus-Trust has enjoyed a successful thirteen years and I'm stepping aside from the end of August to pursue part-time, flexible working. After a rigorous national recruitment in February, trustees appointed Michael Rowland to be our new CEO from 1<sup>st</sup> September.

Trustees are now looking for a new Governance, Compliance and Risk Lead to build upon the great work of the previous post-holder, who left the Trust recently to pursue a promotional opportunity.

Over the past few years all fifteen of our schools have improved in all aspects and we are very proud of our great schools which are at the heart of their communities.

The new post holder will report directly to the Chief Operating Officer and will work in partnership with all members of the central team. Just like all educational organisations across the country, our schools face challenges in the coming years. However, the level of confidence and trust that exists between our Trust Board, Central Team and our individual schools is immense and everyone highly values these strong relationships and our culture of collective efficacy.

The new Governance, Compliance and Risk Lead will work as an integral part of our small Central Team and regularly be out in any one of our fifteen schools. Prioritising your time and support is vital.

As the current Chief Executive, I am keen to find the right values-driven person to fill this exciting position but I am equally concerned that the right person finds the position fulfilling and professionally and personally rewarding.

Should you have any questions about the role or would like to arrange a visit to any of our schools or our Head Office in Oldham, please contact Janet Berry, Executive Assistant via email [j.berry@focus-trust.co.uk](mailto:j.berry@focus-trust.co.uk) or by calling 07867 423 870.

We look forward to hearing from you.

**Helen Rowland – Chief Executive Officer**

## Job Description

<b>Job title</b>	Governance, Compliance and Risk Lead
<b>Salary range</b>	£45,000 - £50,000
<b>Responsible to</b>	Chief Operating Officer
<b>Holidays</b>	35 days + statutory bank holidays
<b>Pension</b>	Local Government pension
<b>Line Management</b>	No line management responsibility

### Key purpose

The Governance, Compliance and Risk Lead will work directly with the Chair of the Board of Trustees and will provide high-level direction for all strategic and organisational operations within the context of corporate governance to the Trust. In addition, the post-holder will act as the Focus-Trust Company Secretary and work closely with the CEO and central team. They will play a key role in building and delivering the shared mission, vision and the aims, values and culture of our Trust.

The post-holder will possess a strong understanding of both school and academy governance, compliance, risk and excellent organisational and interpersonal skills.

The role of the Governance, Compliance and Risk Lead is to support the Chair and Trustees in ensuring the smooth functioning of the Board and related Committees and to support the CEO and other senior leaders in matters of good governance.

To be responsible for supporting the strategic development of governance across the Trust.  
To advise and support the Chair, Trustees, CEO, and COO, on all aspects of corporate governance, compliance, risk, regulation and effective business conduct for the organisation, ensuring the highest standards of probity.

To oversee and ensure appropriate support to the Chair, Trustees, CEO, and COO.

To be responsible for ensuring the Trust complies with relevant legal, constitutional and regulatory requirements associated with Multi Academy Trust status.

To support with the development, implementation and maintenance of a robust risk management framework and policy, ensuring strategic risks are identified, assessed, and mitigated across the Trust.

Work closely with the CFO and COO to ensure strategic oversight of governance-related risks, school based and Trust wide risks, ensuring alignment with the organisation's risk appetite, educational objectives, and regulatory requirements

Embed a proactive, mature risk culture throughout the organisation, providing expert advice to the board, central team and school-based leaders and key staff on mitigating risks.

To act as Company Secretary for Focus-Trust and undertake all compliance with and reporting to Companies House and other regulatory bodies.

To ensure the effective operation of corporate governance controls supporting the Board's sub-committees and Local Governing Bodies.

To support and work in partnership with Chairs of Local Governing Bodies and Head Teachers to ensure effective school governance

To oversee the work and support the Clerks to Local Governing Bodies.

## Key relationships

- Chair of Trustees, CEO,
- Trustees, Local Governors,
- Focus-Trust Central Team,
- Headteachers
- Focus- Trust Business Managers,
- Professional Advisors including Auditors, DfE, Local Authority and any other relevant key personnel.

## Key responsibilities

### RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE (BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO)

#### SUPPORT TO THE BOARD AND COMMITTEES

- To be responsible for and deliver on the Trust's corporate assurance requirements by supporting the Board, Board Committees and the Executive continuously improving, designing, and implementing effective Board assurance tools and processes and supporting the Chief Executive as the Accounting Officer.
- To ensure that the Trust Board and Committee meetings are properly constituted and organised with clear terms of reference, formulating agendas with the Chair and/or CEO, collating and distributing all papers as required and ensuring that draft minutes are produced and distributed in a timely manner.
- To work to further build positive relationships between the Trustees and the organisation.
- To act as a source of information and advice for Trustees and the Senior Leadership Team, Local Governors and Headteachers.
- To monitor and quality assure the business papers put to the Board of Trustees.
- To ensure the follow-up of decisions made by the Board and its Committees.
- To ensure that meetings of the Board and its Committees are conducted in accordance with their standing orders and terms of reference, and relevant legislation.
- To provide advice on the conduct of meetings and ensure that all business conducted is formally recorded and that records are certified and maintained correctly in line with legislation and corporate rules and regulations.
- To scrutinise and engage positively with all authors of all proposed agenda papers and advise on their clarity and focus to ensure that the main issue is drawn to the attention of the Board in a concise way.
- To maintain systems to ensure that all strategies, policies, and conventions of the Board are up to date and reviewed at appropriate intervals.
- To ensure that the Board of Trustees and its Committees are properly constituted, operated, and supported, according to standard orders and the regulatory framework  
To ensure that reporting arrangements enable the Board of Trustees to focus on the goals and objectives in the corporate plan which are at risk of not being delivered, including ensuring the effectiveness of escalation mechanisms.
- To maintain a calendar of prospective Board and committee business so as to ensure such business is appropriately conducted within an annual business cycle.
- To provide briefing and/or training for Committee Chairs, members and clerks as required

#### SUPPORT TO THE CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

- To work with the Chair to ensure that a 'private office' for the role is established clearly and operates effectively.
- To provide high-level secretarial and administrative support to the Chair and CEO to plan and prepare agendas, reports, supporting papers and taking minutes.
- To ensure appropriate mechanisms are designed and implemented for the Chair to manage the interface with Trustees, Chairs of Committees and Local Governing Bodies.
- To support the Chair in ensuring and effective induction and communications programme for Trustee and

Local Governors.

- In conjunction with the Chair, to establish and oversee arrangements for the annual evaluation of the effectiveness of the Board and Committees.
- To ensure that a robust system is in place to investigate and deal with complaints relating to alleged breaches/misconduct, e.g. whistleblowing allegations.

## CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

- To ensure the standard and timeliness of meeting papers for the Board of Trustees.
- To take responsibility for compliance with the Academies Handbook, and for reviewing and amending the Focus-Trust Scheme of Delegation when appropriate, as part of the Governance Handbook.  
To keep under review all corporate governance arrangements that might affect the Trust, to ensure that the Board and Committee members are fully briefed on these matters and have regard to them when making decisions
- To ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place and in accordance with the constitution for the identification of candidates for Chair and new Trustees and for their appointment.
- To ensure that all appropriate reports, accounts and forward plans are submitted on time to the relevant bodies and, as and when required, are available for public inspection.
- To maintain expert knowledge of the regulatory framework and to keep up to date in best practice and requirements in respect of Multi Academy Trust governance.
- To ensure sub-committees of the Board of Trustees are properly constituted with clear terms of reference and are quorate.
- To ensure that controls regarding conflicts of interest and connected individuals and any other corporate governance conventions are maintained through an up-to-date Register of Interests.
- To ensure that the Board is appropriately sighted on issues of independence; the fit and proper persons test and Codes of Conduct declarations.
- To support the preparation, publication, distribution and presentation of the Trust's annual report.
- To manage and produce regular Trust Governance Newsletters and distribute to all Local Governing Bodies

## PROVIDING THE COMPANY SECRETARY ROLE FOR FOCUS-TRUST

- Through the role of Company Secretary, it is envisaged that the Governance, Compliance and Risk Lead will work very closely with the Chief Financial Officer to ensure compliance at all levels.
- Ensuring that an annual members' meeting is held in accordance with the requirements of the Focus-Trust Articles of Association. Preparing and issuing notices of meetings; obtaining internal agreement to all documentation for circulation to members; preparing Trustees/Directors/Governors for any members' questions and helping them create briefing materials; and formally minuting those aspects of the meeting that are required to be recorded.

Ensuring the Trust complies with its articles of association, and where appropriate drafting and incorporating amendments in accordance with correct procedures; to lead the process of non-financial compliance with the Trust's articles of association, including management of any membership and governance reporting requirements to review, propose and implement approved changes to the Trust's Articles of Association

- Establishing and monitoring procedures to ensure that the Trust complies with the requirements of the Department of Education's Master Funding Agreement education legislation and regulation, Charities Act 2011, and other relevant legislation such as company law and Companies House requirements, for example:
  - Ensuring that the requirements of any compliance frameworks are fulfilled appropriately and in a timely manner.
  - Acting as initial point of contact between the company and the Department for Education as the principal regulator, and Companies House.
- Maintaining the following registers and responding to appropriate requests concerning the information they contain:
  - Members.
  - Members of the Board of Trustees. Board member interests.
  - Gifts and hospitality accepted and refused.
- Ensuring that formal documentation is filed with appropriate bodies, as required, and to report certain changes regarding the school:
  - Annual return and accounts.
  - Changes to Trustees/members/Governors.
- Annual report accounts: The company secretary should be closely involved in the co-ordination of the preparation, publication, distribution, and presentation of the annual report (including annual accounts). This may be done in consultation with internal and external advisers.
- Establishing and monitoring the election and appointment processes for Trustees/Governors, and where applicable, ensuring that arrangements are made for the election, appointment and co-option of Trustees/Governors including:
  - Establishing who is entitled to vote. Obtaining the necessary declarations from candidates.
  - Arranging the distribution of the candidates' statements, where applicable.
  - Arranging the issue of voting papers.
  - Arranging for the returning of ballot papers and the counting of votes.
  - Declaring the results of the elections.
- Ensuring the Trust's stationery, including electronic communications (emails, websites, etc), orders, invoices, cheques, and other relevant documents include all the details required under company and charity law
  - Ensuring the safe custody and proper use of any corporate seal(s).
  - Monitoring and implementing procedures which allow for compliance with relevant regulatory and legal requirements:
    - Arranging for the Trust to access a comprehensive legal service, where appropriate.
    - Ensuring any restricted funds or funds held in Trust are used and managed appropriately.
    - Reporting to the board of Trustees on any matter of non-compliance.

## OTHER DUTIES

The above list is not exclusive or exhaustive, and the Trust may require the post holder to undertake duties commensurate with the level of the role. As part of your wider duties and responsibilities, you are required to promote and actively support the Trust's responsibilities towards safeguarding.

Safeguarding is about keeping people safe and protecting people from harm, neglect, abuse and injury. It is about creating safe places, being vigilant and doing something about any concerns you might have. It is not just about the very old and the very young, it is about everyone who may be vulnerable.

## **METHOD OF WORKING**

Focus-Trust expects all staff to work effectively as part of a team or teams. As a minimum, this requires dealing with people politely and tactfully, communicating with colleagues both formally and informally, modelling our Trusts Code of Conduct and reflecting our Trust values.

You must carry out your duties with due regard to current and future policies, procedures and relevant legislation.

These will be drawn to your attention in your induction period, ongoing performance reviews and through Trust communications. All staff are required to maintain confidentiality as required.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Considerable importance is attached to the public relations aspect of all work undertaken by Trust staff. It is a prime objective therefore that staff will at all times project to the public the image of our Trust as keen to assist wherever possible, and positively promote the work that is carried out

## Person Specification

	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications	Minimum of 5 GCSEs Grade 5+ including English and Maths or equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A degree or equivalent qualification</li> </ul>
Experience	Previous experience of providing clerking / secretarial service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previously held the position of School Governor, worked closely with School Governors and/or with Trustees</li> <li>Previous experience of school and/or MAT governance</li> <li>Knowledge or experience of academy conversion processes.</li> </ul>
Knowledge, Skills and Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of GDPR and freedom of information legislation.</li> <li>Knowledge of principles of good governance, regardless of sector, with experience of putting principles into practice.</li> <li>Presents as highly professional, setting high expectations for all and leading by example with presence, integrity, creativity, resilience and clarity.</li> <li>Excellent interpersonal skills with the personal credibility, gravitas and integrity to engage and influence at a senior level.</li> <li>A commitment to the highest standards in all areas of governance, compliance and risk, including policy compliance.</li> <li>Good working knowledge of MS Office.</li> <li>Strive for continuous improvement and with an ability to inspire Governors to achieve their full potential in often very challenging circumstances.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong knowledge of the statutory and mandatory education and non-education policy requirements within schools, academies and Multi Academy Trusts.</li> <li>In depth understanding and knowledge of educational legislation, guidance and policy and the roles of Governing Bodies / Principals / local authorities and the DfE</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to analyse and process complex information and data quickly and rigorously in order to make the best of opportunities.</li> <li>• A strong communicator with well-developed presentation skills and the analytical ability to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences, acting as an effective ambassador for the Trust.</li> <li>• Highly organized, but flexible and comfortable working with intellectually challenging teams and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Self-awareness and willingness to learn and adapt.</li> <li>• Highest levels of integrity and probity and a commitment to the highest levels of effort, endeavour and focus on standards.</li> <li>• Sympathetic to and supportive of the vision and ethos of Focus-Trust.</li> <li>• Effective communicator, able to build and sustain positive relationships with all stakeholders.</li> <li>• Commitment to the development of Focus-Trust as a centre of excellence.</li> <li>• Adaptability to change and embracing of innovation and creativity.</li> <li>• Committed to the professional development of colleagues and self.</li> </ul>	
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**The panel will assess an applicant against the person specification through;**

- Application
- Interview
- Assessment activities
- References and other employment checks

## What you might want to know about Focus Trust

### Who are we?

Focus-Trust was incorporated in May 2012 as a primary trust. The Trust was originally sponsored by Focus Education, however the DfE decoupled this arrangement in 2024 and the Focus-Trust remains an entirely separate legal entity. As with all academy trusts, the Trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. The Trust's offices are situated in a newly converted historic mill conversion in Chadderton, Oldham with excellent motorway networks to access our schools.



The defining feature of Focus-Trust is that it is a specialist primary phase trust. This means that the work of the Trust is driven by the distinctive needs of primary schools. Whilst the Trust has robust systems for accountability, each school has their own distinctive identity, ethos and culture, and this is a commitment to every school when they convert and join the Trust.

Focus-Trust currently has a small centrally employed team. The members of the team are highly skilled and committed to the mission, vision, culture, values and moral purpose of the Trust.

All the schools within the Trust are willing partners who have actively chosen to join Focus-Trust and there is a very high degree of consensus, cooperation and commitment from within the group.

The Trust has robust policies and systems in place to govern and guide its work. These have been gradually implemented as the Trust has grown. The Trust has well-established productive relationships with trade unions and meets half termly with a group of national trade union representatives to discuss policy development. This has enabled us to introduce and change a range of policies in a streamlined and cooperative way.

### Equity of opportunity

Focus-Trust is an equal opportunity employer, dedicated to a policy of non-discrimination in employment on any basis including age, gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, gender, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation and/or medical condition.

### Safeguarding

Focus-Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people. There is an explicit expectation that all employees share this commitment and adhere to all safeguarding policies and procedures. Applicants should be aware that the recruitment process will include an assessment of your suitability to work with children.

## **Right to work in the UK**

Under the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, it is a criminal offence to employ anyone who is not entitled to live or work in the United Kingdom. Applicants can expect us to ask for proof of this at interview stage, where you will be asked to provide some original documentation to confirm that you are eligible to work within the UK. Photographic proof of identity will also be required.

## **Validation of qualifications and identity**

All shortlisted candidates will be asked to bring original certificates or relevant qualifications and identity documents to interview. These will be photocopied and kept on file and, if appropriate, may be confirmed as genuine with the relevant awarding bodies. The copies of the successful candidate will be retained on their personnel file. The copies of unsuccessful candidates will be treated as confidential waste and disposed of appropriately.

## **References and Social Media Checks**

If you are shortlisted, we will take up references before the interview date, unless you state otherwise on your application form. However, two satisfactory references must be received before we can confirm any offer of an appointment. One of your referees must be your current or most recent employer. The information we request will relate to salary, length of service, skills and abilities, suitability for the job, disciplinary record and suitability to work with children. Copies of references or open references will not be accepted. On receipt of references, your referees may be contacted to verify any discrepancies, anomalies or relevant issues as part of the recruitment verification process.

In line with our safer recruitment policy, on-line presence checks will be undertaken if you are shortlisted. This check is designed to complement the range of standard recruitment checks and allows us to identify a candidate's online presence which potentially could damage the organisation's reputation.

## **Disability**

To comply with the Equality Act 2010, we are legally required to consider making reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged in the recruitment and selection process. We are therefore committed to meeting, wherever possible, any needs you specify on the application form. Please contact the named person on the advert, if you need to discuss this in any detail. We will consider any reasonable adjustment under the terms of the Act to enable an applicant with a disability (as defined under the Act) to meet the requirements of the post.

## **Disclosure of a criminal record**

Employment in this role is subject to an enhanced check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Checks will also be made against the lists showing people barred from working with children. All checks must be satisfactory before any offer of employment can be confirmed and before commencement of work can take place.

## **Dress code**

We expect all staff to dress professionally and appropriately for the roles undertaken. We pride ourselves on the high standards of dress of both our pupils and staff; these standards are led by our staff who we expect to set an example.

## Knowledge and skills profile

This is an important part of your application and is your opportunity to explain how you meet the person specification for the post. You should demonstrate, using a minimum of 2,000 characters and up to the equivalent of two sides of A4, your skills, knowledge and experience and give short examples. Describe how you match the requirement of the job; include experience gained from previous jobs, community or voluntary work. Ensure that the information you give is well organised, relevant and brief. You may find it helpful to use sub-headings in order to keep your statement well focused. If you do not submit this profile, you will not be considered for shortlisting.

## Policies

Focus-Trust and the schools have a range of policies and handbooks that help to make clear our expectations and ways of working. These are always shared openly with staff and are accessible to everyone. There are several policies that prospective employees should be aware of when making an application. These can be found on the Trust website [www.focus-trust.co.uk](http://www.focus-trust.co.uk) and school websites. All members of staff will be asked to sign a declaration as part of the induction process to acknowledge that they have read and understand the Code of Conduct and some of the key policies, e.g. Safeguarding and Child Protection, Health and Safety, Acceptable use of IT.

## Pensions

Focus-Trust contributes to Teachers' Pensions and Local Government pensions in the same way and with the same level of contribution as local authorities.

## Employer Relations

Focus-Trust has a Trade Union agreement which recognises the teacher and support staff unions. This is further supported by an ongoing and productive relationship with key trade union officials. Thank you for taking the time to read this information pack. We wish you every success in any application you may make.





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