

# The Cumbria Academy for Autism (CAA)

Cumbria Academy for Autism in Lillyhall near Workington is a special free-school, founded by a group of parents and professional volunteers. The trust seeks to recruit two trustees/non-executive directors with experience in HR legislation, and strategic leadership in Child Welfare and Safeguarding, Education (SEND) Board meetings are currently held virtually but will take place at the school when safe to do so.

## About the Trust

Following a 4 year bid and pre-opening process, the school opened its doors to an incredible cohort of young people in September 2019. Since then, the school has grown rapidly, reaching capacity nearly two years earlier than forecast. CAA provides a much-needed specialist environment for young autistic people in West Cumbria, focusing on delivering a holistic three-stranded curriculum; academic, life skills and therapeutic. The school has now entered its third year of operation and is preparing for its first Ofsted inspection. With a number of trustee vacancies, the CAA Trust are seeking enthusiastic, committed professionals to join their board, to help secure the very best outcomes for the students and realise the full potential of the vision for Cumbria Academy for Autism.

## Plans for the future

The key challenges facing the Trust over the next 12-24 months include:

1. **Continuing School Development: Post-opening.** The school has now completed two full years of operation, during which time it has continued to progress and develop despite the unforeseen challenges that the pandemic has brought. Some progress has been delayed, therefore, the trust are focussed on driving continued progress and delivering the planned success within the constraints of an ever-changing COVID world.
2. **First Ofsted Inspection** Entering the third year of operation, CAA are preparing for their first Ofsted Inspection. With rapid growth, new staffing, and changes to the Senior Leadership Team, the school is currently undergoing a period of adjustment. The trust wishes to develop the board to ensure stability and strong strategic oversight during this transition phase.
3. **Future Strategic Challenge: Succession Planning for Chair of Trustees and Multi-Academy Trust opportunities.** Looking ahead, the trust needs to ensure that longer-term plans are in place to secure a successful future for CAA. The current Chair has led the trust from the initial bid through to opening over these last eight years and recognises a need to bring additional expertise to the board to ensure a smooth succession plan in the future. The Trust also recognise the need to explore opportunities for development through either joining or establishing a Multi-Academy Trust.

## Role summary

Number of positions advertised: 3

### Trustee/Non-Executive Director

Trustees – or non-executive directors - are both charity trustees and company directors of the academy trust. The core functions of their role are: ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction; holding executive leaders to account for the educational and financial performance of a charitable company funded by the public purse.

The board of trustees manages the business of the academy trust and may exercise all the powers of the trust in compliance with its charitable objects, company and charity law.

Non-executive directors will be responsible for maintaining stability and the management of a dynamic structure. The role also includes contributing to financial planning for sustainability and potential growth, and holding the CEO/CFO to account.

In the interests of safeguarding, all trustee appointments would be subject to an enhanced disclosure and barring service check.

### Person specification

Every trustee is expected to abide by the trust's code of conduct and the seven principles of public life set out by Lord Nolan: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

The Competency Framework for Governance (DfE) 2017 details the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for effective governance:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/583733/Competency\\_framework\\_for\\_governance\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/583733/Competency_framework_for_governance_.pdf)

The strategic expertise required for these roles includes:

**Essential (due to multiple roles, candidates may be accepted who possess one or more of the skills below)**

- HR/legislation AND
- Strategic Leadership of Education (SEND)

**Desirable**

- Corporate/Charity Governance
- Growth Management
- Safeguarding
- Law
- Compliance

#### Role 1: HR

The Trust seeks a candidate with a background in a strategic HR role with an understanding of HR legislation. Where they have non-educational HR experience, a willingness to understand education settings and transfer their experience effectively is expected. An appropriate level of creativity/flexibility in HR solutions will be appreciated. Relevant qualifications in the field of HR are desirable.

#### Role 2: Strategic Leadership in Education

Candidates should demonstrate a commitment to learning and education and the success of students. The ideal candidate will be a practicing or recently retired Headteacher or will have experience working across schools with a wealth of expertise in school improvement. You will be passionate about SEND and Autism and have a keen interest in providing opportunity for all. As part of your role, you will oversee progression for the trust's young people and ensure that the school is delivering a holistic and bespoke curriculum to all students, which is both essential for their needs yet aspirational in terms of their development and progress. All trustees have a responsibility for safeguarding but as safeguarding trustee at CAA, you will take a strategic lead and provide oversight of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures. Knowledge and experience of safeguarding in either a prior governance role, or as part of your professional career would be desirable, but candidates will be considered who demonstrate professional ability, a desire to learn and would be willing to undertake the necessary training required for this role.

The successful applicants are expected to contribute to trust-wide board strategy, culture and scrutiny.

Applicants of all faiths, or of none, are welcome to apply. People from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

### Time commitment

Eight hours/month minimum (meeting time) including time for preparation, school visits and sub-committee attendance, usually consisting of ten meetings per year.

## Location of board meetings and Trust website

Board meetings are currently held virtually but will be held at the school in Lillyhall when safe to do so.

The school's website can be found here: [Cumbria Academy For Autism](#)

## Background on academy trusts

Academy schools, which are charities run independently of local authority control, now account for 74% of secondary schools and 31% of primaries – and their number is growing all the time.

Many of these schools are grouped together as multi-academy trusts (MATs). There are currently 900 multi academy trusts of 3+ schools. If the schools are to fulfil their potential, the trusts need non-executives (known in charity law as trustees) to bring a wide range of skills and experience to help guide strategy, ensure their ambitions can be soundly financed and keep their schools up to the mark delivering for their pupils.

“Boards must be ambitious for all children and young people and infused with a passion for education and a commitment to continuous school improvement that enables the best possible outcomes. Governance must be grounded in reality as defined by both high-quality objective data and a full understanding of the views and needs of pupils/students, staff, parents, carers and local communities. It should be driven by inquisitive, independent minds and through conversations focused on the key strategic issues which are conducted with humility, good judgement, resilience and determination.”

*Source: Governance Handbook, Department for Education (2019)*

Trusteeship is a voluntary, unpaid role for people who have the energy and skills to make a real contribution to shaping the future of our schools. You do not need to have any specialist knowledge of education.

## Applications

Academy Ambassadors is a non-profit programme which recruits senior business leaders and professionals as volunteer non-executive directors onto the boards of multi-academy trusts. If you are interested in applying for the role please send your CV and a short expression of interest detailing which role you are applying for to [academyambassadors@newschoolsnetwork.org](mailto:academyambassadors@newschoolsnetwork.org). Please note: candidates should live within reasonable travelling distance of the trust and/or have a link with the region. For more information, please call 0207 952 8556 or visit [www.newschoolsnetwork.org/AAP](http://www.newschoolsnetwork.org/AAP).

We strongly recommend applying as early as you can to have the best possible chance of being considered as we may change the closing date if we have received sufficient applications.

Closing date: 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022

