



Decision Making Framework

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to clarify where responsibility and accountability sits for key functional areas across five sets of stakeholders – Ark Schools Board, the executive within Ark schools central team (Ark Central), Regional Directors & Regional Finance Directors, Principals and the Local Governing Bodies.

Date of last review:	September 2019	Author:	Head of Governance
Date of next review:	September 2020	Owner:	Director of Governance
Type of policy:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Network-wide <input type="checkbox"/> Tailored by school	Approval:	Board
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POSITIONING WITHIN ARK OPERATIONAL MODEL

Component	Element
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Leadership & Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring, Reporting & Data <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Governance & Accountabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching & Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum & Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Culture, Ethos & Wellbeing <input type="checkbox"/> Pathways & Enrichment <input type="checkbox"/> Parents & Community <input type="checkbox"/> Finance, IT & Estates <input type="checkbox"/> Our People	Legal

1. Introduction and governance model summary

The Ark Schools Decision Making Framework outlines where responsibility and accountability sits for the key functional areas within Ark Schools between the ‘tiers’ of governance:

- **Ark Schools board:** All Ark academies are part of a charitable company, Ark Schools, which is regulated by the Department for Education (DfE). As a multi-academy trust (MAT) all schools are held within one legal entity, Ark Schools has a Master Funding Agreement with the Department for Education and a Supplemental Funding Agreement for each individual school. The Ark Schools board is therefore the legal governing body for *every* school. The board hold and fulfil all statutory responsibilities by approving and monitoring the implementation and impact of network-wide educational and financial plans including the Operating Plan and budget. The board holds legal liability for areas that would normally be the responsibility of a school governing body, such as the Single Central Register and policies, with support from the central team.
 - **Ark central:** Ark central provides support to the schools. The executive leadership and staff responsible for working with schools to deliver educational and operational outcomes. The board discharge the provision of all training/ support systems for schools to the executive team.
 - **Regional Directors (RDs):** The board discharges management of the schools, strategic planning and line management of Principals and Executive Principals through the Chief Executive and Directors of Education to Regional Directors. The RDs are also there to develop and maintain strong relationships with the Chairs of Governors and clerks to the governing bodies.
 - **Regional Finance Directors (RFDs):** Responsible for strategic financial management of all schools in a region including implementation of financial processes, financial planning and reporting and line management of regional finance staff.
- Principals:** Responsible for delivering all educational and operational outcomes in their individual school.
- **Local Governing Bodies (LGBs):** LGBs provide strategic input into individual school plans and budgets, monitor alignment of school processes and reporting with overall strategy and policies, and embed the school’s ethos and values. They are responsible for localised challenge and support but with no legal liability or final approval of policies or core documents. They also lead on local stakeholder engagement (staff, parents, community).

Ark believes that this model allows for strategic board decision-making and focused local governance. Flows of information and decision making are co-ordinated by the central governance team and are embedded into the scheme of delegation, meeting cycles, and agenda planners. This ensures that trustees and governors work together to support meaningful improvement across the network – and as governors spend less time on policies and paperwork it means that they can spend more time understanding the specific needs of their school and adapt their activities accordingly. They are central to the focus on the school’s values and ethos so that all students believe they can succeed. They also provide continuity of care to the school and as such are a continuing powerful advocate for their needs within the Ark family and for linking with their communities

Note: This document does not lay out every legal responsibility of a MAT or every activity in the remit of individual stakeholders; rather it is concerned with the core activities that are carried out within each area of operational delivery and how they are coordinated between the various decision makers.

The overriding legal assumption that sits behind this work is that all Arks academies are governed by one trust and a single board of directors. The board of directors is the legally

accountable body but can delegate many of its functions (for example to a local governing body or an executive team). The MAT remains accountable for these functions.

This Framework does not dictate when responsibilities may be further delegated within sets of stakeholders – for example by a Principal to other staff within the school, or the Ark Schools Chief Executive to other staff within the central team. Some regions operate with an Executive Principal/Head of School model; where this is the case, a separate document will set out how Principal responsibilities are discharged.

There will be circumstances where the rules may change – for example in crisis situations, Ark central may take on a much more involved role or where stakeholders may go above and beyond the level of support that is articulated here – for example the LGB may be engaged on a range of other aspects not explicitly referenced here. The Decision Making Framework is reviewed on an annual basis in order to ensure that delegated responsibilities can be aligned with organisational need.

2. High-level division of responsibilities

This table sets out responsibilities and decision making authority in areas where it is important to define the role of different leaders across the network. It does not prescribe every activity in the remit of individual leaders.

Where a school is led by an Executive Principal alongside a Head of School/Principal a separate document will set out how the Principal responsibilities are distributed and discharged.

Policies listed are indicative - a full list of policies is available on the [Policies Library](#) on the Ark Library.

Functional area	Board	Ark Executive	Regional Directors	School Principal	Local governing body (LGB)
Teaching & learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the strategic vision for education • Accountable for the overall quality and impact of teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the overall quality and impact of teaching across the network • Responsible for maintaining a view of the quality of teaching in all schools through effective Teacher Evaluation • Development and implementation of the Great Teacher Rubric • Delivery of network Professional Development • Development of the Teaching School Alliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support school Principals in setting the strategic vision and model for teaching, arranging CPD/ coaching and reporting on teacher performance • Evaluate and review the quality of teaching, assessment and student attainment within schools, using the Great Teacher rubric • Line manage and deploy regional Teaching and Learning Leads (if in post) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement network wide approaches to Teacher Evaluation through the Great Teacher Rubric • Set and deliver the vision and model for developing teaching and approach to improving teacher quality • Arrange CPD and coaching for teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor school approach to securing the quality and impact of teaching, including the effectiveness of CPD and coaching for teachers
Curriculum & assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve network pupil performance targets • Accountable for all curriculum and assessment practices meeting requirements laid out in statutory guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for network targets, approve school and regional targets • Responsible for all curriculum and assessment practices, meeting requirements laid out in statutory guidance • Determine the Ark Base Curriculum and cross-phase progression model • Determine the network assessment cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable for regional targets • Review and propose school targets to executive in line with the network target setting model • Undertake Achievement Reviews in line with review cycle • Provide guidance to schools on approaches to assessment, curriculum and inclusion • Approve school curriculum and assessment models • Commission SEND & PP audits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable for meeting school targets • Propose school targets to Ark executive via RD • Ensure that school targets relate to individual pupil targets • Implement the network assessment cycle • Develop school approaches to assessment, curriculum and inclusion • Contribute to the ongoing development and resourcing of the Ark Base curriculum • Engage with SEND & PP audit process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review school approaches to assessment, curriculum, inclusion • Consulted on SEND & PP audits (SEND link) • Consulted on school targets (Chair) • Monitor progress towards school targets

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Culture, ethos & wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve Exclusions and Safeguarding policies • Accountable for exclusions, pastoral and safeguarding arrangements meeting national requirements laid out in statutory guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree Exclusions and Safeguarding policies • Responsible for exclusions, pastoral and safeguarding arrangements meeting national requirements laid out in statutory guidance • Set network Exclusions and Safeguarding policies • Responsible for ensuring network practices around Exclusions, pastoral and Safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements • Arrange Exclusions training and independent review panels (IRPs) • Undertake annual safeguarding audits and report to the Board • Respond to issues flagged by DBS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance to schools on a positive approach to culture, ethos and wellbeing • Facilitate regional SEND network • Respond to any complaints against Principal and support school in event of complaints against staff • Provide guidance to Principals to ensure effective pastoral arrangements and adherence to safeguarding and child protection policies • Sign off Permanent Exclusions and review fixed term exclusion data • Review school mobility trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set school approaches to culture, ethos and wellbeing including the behaviour model and routines, attendance and inclusion practices • Ensure compliance with network policies and guidance on statutory responsibilities • Implement effective school attendance, inclusion and safeguarding procedures inc. training and DBS processes within network policies • Set internal exclusions procedures and ensure exclusion administration fulfils all relevant requirements for these, fixed term and permanent exclusions • Respond to safeguarding and other complaints against staff • Oversee referral of at-risk children to Local Authority and other agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review school approach to culture, ethos and wellbeing including behaviour model and routines, attendance and inclusion • Review Exclusion decisions through governor panels and engage in IRP process if required • Informed of safeguarding complaints, referrals and training within school
Our people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve all relevant People policies • Accountable for meeting statutory reporting requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set all network People policies including recruitment, performance management, capability, disciplinary/ grievance, pay, leave and reorganisation • Undertake an annual staff wellbeing and workload survey • Set overarching approach to attraction & recruitment & performance appraisal • Set central staff structure and structure of regional staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop People plans for schools within their region to ensure staffing structures, skills sets and future workforce plans are in place and within budget, and that risks identified in HR monitoring and reports are acted upon • Oversee Principal appointments • Be responsible for Principal induction • Line manage Principals in line with performance targets; support with coaching & mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a culture and level of organisation which actively contributes to staff wellbeing • Engage with JCC (Joint Consultation Council – local unions) • Recruit for and induct to school roles in line with overall Ark approach to attraction and recruitment • Implement Ark approach to performance appraisal, probation, leadership development, pay and benefits, disciplinary and grievance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor compliance with SCR (Single Central Record) process • Consulted on Principal appointment and appraisal (Chair) • Consulted on restructure proposals

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct the schools Pay Award and Pay Scales process annually in consultation with unions • Provide employee relations, KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe in Education) checks and SCR (Single Central Record) reporting, payroll, pensions and recruitment training and guidance to schools • Liaise with unions, manage the NJC • Oversee all HR monitoring and reporting • Accountable for meeting statutory reporting requirements • Review and approve proposed changes to network-wide systems and processes (e.g. Vacancy Request process) • Responsible for managing levels of TUPE risk identified during due diligence for new schools • Decide on tribunal and settlement strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review regional talent and growth opportunities • Provide strategic guidance to Principals to support staff line management according to performance targets • Ensure effective use of resources across the region to the benefit of all schools within that region • Engage in Disciplinary and Grievance panels and appeals 	<p>including investigations at school level and other People policies as relevant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure effective SCR (Single Central Record) procedures are being followed • Determine the school staffing structure in line with budget requirements 	
Parents & community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable for meeting statutory admissions and publication requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for meeting statutory admissions and publication requirements • Oversee admissions arrangements including policies and appeals • Oversee compliance with website publication requirements • Provide advice/guidance on media communications, ensuring consistency • Manage crisis communications • Set school brand guidelines and website design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage external relationships with local authorities and Regional Schools Commissioner • Support school engagement with parents and the wider community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage school admissions appeals in line with Ark guidance • Maintain effective engagement and communication with parents and the wider community • Maintain school website in line with compliance requirement • Plan and deliver open days, offer and acceptance process and parental engagement • Manage local media, community, LA relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support engagement with parents, community and LA

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance and examples of best practice on communication with parents 			
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve all relevant Finance policies • Approve central senior staff remuneration • Approve Principal remuneration • Accountable for meeting statutory requirements around reporting, budget submissions and financial controls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set all Finance policies including policies and best practice around financial control • Propose the Ark Scheme of Delegation to the Risk & Audit Committee • Approve Principal pay and benefits • Set school and central finance targets and budgets including setting holdback charge • Approve funding from endowments and reserves • Prepare network budgets, forecasts, reports, statements & tax returns • Manage internal and external audits • Accountable for meeting statutory requirements around reporting and budget submissions to Companies House and ESFA • Decide procurement strategy, including mandating contracts and frameworks for tenders. • Approve all contracts £50k+ and all exceptional spend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFDs oversee all regional accounting and finance teams • RFDs oversee all regional accounting and finance procedures, including Scheme of Delegation • RDs sign off school budgets and staffing structures • RFDs sign off on year end packs for all schools • RD Review Principals' pay recommendations for staff • RD Sign off on expenditure for "at risk" finance schools • RD Sign off on all items of exceptional spend (move to outsource/capital items/Founding Partner Spend etc.) • RD set regional school improvement budget and agree with Principal's school funding arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and propose school revenue and capital budget and 3 year plan • Deliver financial targets • Ensure compliance with the financial Scheme of Delegation • Determine school staffing structure • Engage in internal audit activities at school level • Deliver finance administration and internal controls arrangements in line with Ark approach • Identify and engage in activities to generate additional income, including actively engaging in letting opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed of finance policies and budget targets (Chair & Finance Link) • Consulted on use of school reserves for school or network use (Chair) • Consulted on draft budget and 3year plan • Monitor management accounts • Review capital plans and proposed funding • Informed of procurement activity • Informed of internal audit outcomes • Support activities to generate additional income
Recruitment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit for central & Principal roles • Conduct pre-appointment checks for central/ Principal roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RD sign off for all new recruitment (replacement and new roles) for positions where base salary is £70k+ • RD sign off any new roles outside the agreed budget model staffing structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve all new recruitment (replacement and new roles) for positions where base salary is less than £70k and within agreed budget model staffing structure 	Review updates on recruitment and retention data
Procurement and Contract Approval		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide procurement strategy, including mandating contracts and frameworks for tenders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFDs coordinate procurement tenders within their region, signing off all contracts £30k+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve all contracts under £30k 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review reports of annual supplier spend > £25k to ascertain

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve all contracts £50k+ and all exceptional spend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RD Sign off on all contracts £50k+ for approval by executive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve all contracts up to £50k in agreement with RFD Recommend for approval all contracts +£50k 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> correct sign off and approval process followed
IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve IT policy Approve network IT outsourcing strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set network IT policies Set the network's IT strategy Lead on engagement with IT contractors/ service providers at school level Set schools IT and Acceptable Use policy Lead on contract management for overall IT service Set standardised solutions Lead on IT procurement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorise regional IT Programme Delivery Support positive engagement with the IT Service so that schools and IT service work effectively and plan appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set school IT strategy (in line with network scope) Implement the Acceptable Use policy amongst pupils and staff Approve IT Project budgets Engage and approve decisions for IT Projects Ensure that procurement is in line with the IT Catalogue and procurement Inform filtering policy of what can and cannot be whitelisted in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed of IT strategy including capital investments Authorise asset disposals
Estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountable for meeting statutory requirements around health and safety (H&S) Approve all relevant H&S policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for meeting statutory requirements around health and safety (H&S) Set network H&S policy Arrange H&S and fire risk audits Oversee all aspects of initial capital build inc. procurement, legal and project management Support schools in arranging contracts e.g. school catering, M&E, energy Set network's capital strategy and SCA allocation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the school's routine compliance audits and the implementation of action plans Input into long term strategic site/ capital priorities RFDs to work with Estates to realise regional procurement opportunities Approve capital expenditure plans to Executive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement school H&S policies and procedures Maintain an up to date asset register Ensure that appropriate risk assessments are in place Engage in H&S and fire risk audits Ensure compliance with procurement and building maintenance regulations at school level Engage in capital build projects as required Determine and deliver ongoing maintenance and capital works strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed of H&S arrangements Monitor H&S incidents at school Review audit (including fire safety) outcomes Informed of capital build project updates
Projects* <i>*Separate Pre-Opening DMF</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve the strategy for growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibility for network growth Accountable for pre-opening financial approvals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support with the development of regional pipeline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed of development of pipeline in school's region (and network) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed of development of pipeline in school's region (and network)

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<i>with further detail will be developed</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign off five stage approvals for new schools • Accountable for signing new school legal documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve pre-opening legal documentation • Approve transition and new school plans as part of Project Board (CFO to chair) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide educational and leadership strategy for transition and new schools • Approve transition and new school plans as part of Project Board 		
Monitoring & Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review network wide improvement plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set network improvement planning templates • Generate network tiered reports • Set standards for schools in terms of their use of data to support decision making • Maintain systems map and support schools in designing their approach to data • Publish guidance and training materials on how to use data systems • Support third party data integrations and procure data tools for use across the network • Monitor quality of data through annual audit and share findings with RDs and Principals for action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop RIP (Regional Improvement Plan) • Sign off school SEFs and AIPs • Lead on annual external monitoring and lead regional peer review • Support Principals preparing for Ofsted inspections & monitoring visits (RDs) • Provide training to LGBs on Ofsted inspections • Provide an annual report to LGBs on school performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Self Evaluation and Academy Improvement Plan • Provide regular analysis of school performance data to the RD and LGB via Principal's report • Ensure that any issues with data collection (as highlighted through annual audit) are actioned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review school performance data • Informed of the outcomes of external monitoring • Informed of any issues with data quality • Undertake Ofsted training and attend inspection where possible (Chair and Safeguarding link)
Governance & Accountabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve Scheme of Delegation, Terms of Reference, Risk Framework and Policy Framework • Accountable for meeting statutory requirements around data protection and security • Accountable for meeting statutory requirements for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Scheme of Delegation, Terms of Reference and Policy Framework • Responsible for meeting statutory requirements around data protection and security • Approve data protection policy • Provide data protection guidelines and standards and oversee network approach to data protection controls • Lead response in event of data breach • Develop Risk Framework and register 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the school's routine compliance audits website, data protection safeguarding, SCR and pathways and enrichment) • Responsible for identifying regional risks arising from individual school risk registers and reporting on them to Ark central • Support Principals with preparation of school Business Continuity Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure required policies are in place and communicated to all staff according to overall Ark approach • Conduct routine annual audits (website, data protection safeguarding, SCR and pathways and enrichment) • Responsible for individual school risk register and provide timely information to Ark central on status of risks and controls • Ensure school meets and implements data protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree additions to school level policies, school [risk register] and individual audit reports (where relevant) • Reviews school risks • Informed of overall approach to DP and security • Informed of data breaches and status of Subject Access Requests

Functional area	Board	Ark Executive	Regional Directors	School Principal	Local governing body (LGB)
	governance arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for oversight and review of school risk registers • Accountable for meeting statutory requirements around governance arrangements • Responsible for Business Continuity Plan • Accountable for oversight of school Business Continuity Plan 		requirements and standards at school level in line with overall Ark approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop school Business Continuity Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review school Business Continuity Plan