Buckswood School Quality Assurance Advisory Board

Our Purpose

The Buckswood School Quality Assurance Advisory Board exists to strengthen the governance framework of the school by providing independent expertise, strategic guidance, and professional oversight in key areas that underpin quality, compliance, and the Buckswood ethos.

The Board acts as a **critical friend** supportive yet challenging ensuring that the school's vision, values, and policies are enacted with integrity, transparency, and consistency across all aspects of daily life.

Alignment with Standards and Ethos

The work of the Advisory Board is designed to meet and exceed the expectations of:

- **ISSR (Independent School Standards Regulations)** – providing structured oversight of leadership, management, safeguarding, and educational provision.
- **NMBS (National Minimum Boarding Standards 2022)** – ensuring boarders' welfare, safety, and development are fully supported and regularly reviewed.
- **AGBIS (Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools)** – embedding best practice in governance, delegation, and accountability.
- **The Buckswood 12 Pillars** – ensuring that every decision, policy, and review reflects our holistic approach to education, particularly in the areas of leadership, wellbeing, and internationalism.

Structure and Membership

The Local Advisory Board comprises a team of highly qualified professionals who bring a wealth of experience from education, compliance, and safeguarding sectors. Their independent insights provide robust oversight while nurturing a culture of excellence and accountability.

Advisor	Specialism	Linked Areas	Role in Governance
Dale Wilkins FTIOB	Executive Director, BSA	Boarding, Safeguarding	Advises on boarding standards, compliance with NMBS, and safeguarding practice. Supports training, policy review, and quality assurance across residential life.

Advisor	Specialism	Linked Areas	Role in Governance
Elizabeth Brown NPQH	School Principal, Former ISI Inspector	Safeguarding, Boarding	Provides oversight of child protection systems, DSL practice, and culture of care. Ensures that safeguarding leadership is effective, transparent, and fully compliant with statutory guidance.
Jacqueline Morris. NPQH	Educational Leader and Compliance Consultant	Compliance, Health & Safety, Action Plans	Oversees strategic action planning, school development reviews, and health and safety compliance. Provides feedback on continuous improvement and inspection readiness.
MEd Mike Rickner MS	Headteacher, ISI Inspector	Academic, Co-Curricular, Pastoral	Advises on academic and co-curricular provision, ensuring that the curriculum, teaching, and learning align with Buckswood's ethos and inspection standards.

Scope of Responsibilities

The Advisory Board contributes to governance through:

1. **Oversight and Compliance** – Reviewing the school's compliance with ISSRs, NMBS, safeguarding and health and safety regulations.
2. **Safeguarding Assurance** – Monitoring the effectiveness of policies, training, and DSL oversight to ensure the welfare of all students.
3. **Quality and Standards** – Supporting the continuous improvement of teaching, learning, boarding provision, and pastoral care.
4. **Strategic Reflection** – Offering independent insight on inspection readiness, school improvement, and the alignment of strategy with the 12 Pillars.
5. **Accountability and Reporting** – Providing structured reports to the Proprietor, advising on areas of strength and development, and helping to embed good governance practices into everyday routines.
6. **Advisory Support for the Senior Leadership Team** – Acting as a bridge between the Proprietor and school operations, ensuring clarity of communication, purpose, and shared responsibility.

Link to Day-to-Day Governance

The BSLAB works closely with the **Principal, Designated Safeguarding Leads, Bursar, and Heads of Department**, meeting regularly to:

- Review safeguarding logs, risk assessments, and boarding provision.
- Support policy review cycles and staff development initiatives.
- Evaluate school self-assessment and action planning documents.
- Advise on inspection preparation and follow-up actions.
- Reflect on how decisions uphold Buckswood's distinctive values and ethos.

Each advisor's specialist area connects directly to a strand of daily school life, ensuring that oversight is **meaningful, active, and rooted in the lived experience of the students and staff.**

Tone and Ethos
This is not a bureaucratic body but a **living part of Buckswood's leadership fabric**—a circle of trusted experts who embody our values of integrity, compassion, curiosity, and international mindedness.

Through the Advisory Board, Buckswood demonstrates its ongoing commitment to governance that is **transparent, accountable, and deeply human**—governance with heart and purpose.

Buckswood School Local Advisory Board – Individual Role Descriptions

1. Dale Wilkins FTIOB

Independent Boarding and Safeguarding Advisor
Linked Areas: Boarding, Safeguarding, Pastoral Care, Compliance
Relevant Standards: NMBS Standards 1–6, 10–12, 13, 15; ISSR Part 3 (Welfare, Health and Safety)
Linked Buckswood Pillars: Pillar 2 – Sport; Pillar 4 – Spirituality; Pillar 11 – Home & Wellbeing

Purpose of Role:

To provide expert oversight and strategic assurance in boarding, welfare, and safeguarding practice, ensuring that Buckswood's pastoral systems meet statutory and moral responsibilities.

Key Responsibilities:
- Monitor safeguarding and boarding practice to ensure compliance with NMBS and KCSIE.
- Support the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and review safeguarding logs, case management, and record-keeping.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of boarding routines, duty rotas, induction processes, and the wellbeing framework.
- Provide advice and training on boarding culture, inclusion, and residential staff development.
- Advise the Proprietor and Principal on compliance findings and action planning.
- Participate in termly safeguarding audits and policy reviews.
- Act as the external point of assurance that the school's safeguarding and boarding provision is robust, safe, and caring.

Outputs:
- Termly Safeguarding and Boarding Report

- Contribution to the Safeguarding Annual Review
- Attendance at Board and Safeguarding Committee meetings

2. Elizabeth Brown NPQH

Independent Safeguarding and Leadership Advisor
Linked Areas: Safeguarding Leadership, Staff Culture, Pastoral Governance
Relevant Standards: NMBS Standards 2, 4, 11, 12; ISSR Parts 1 & 3
Linked Buckswood Pillars: Pillar 5 – Manners, Appropriateness & Tradition; Pillar 6 – Leadership; Pillar 11 – Home & Wellbeing

Purpose of Role:
To provide high-level oversight of safeguarding leadership and culture, ensuring that all adults at Buckswood understand and enact their responsibilities to protect children and young people.

Key Responsibilities:
- Support and mentor the school's safeguarding leadership team (DSL, DDSLs, Proprietor).
- Review the school's safer recruitment and induction procedures.
- Ensure safeguarding and welfare systems are embedded in daily practice across boarding and academic operations.
- Oversee reporting consistency, culture of vigilance, and professional boundaries among staff.
- Participate in policy reviews and advise on alignment with current KCSIE and ISI expectations.
- Provide independent reflection on the culture of safeguarding and leadership accountability.
- Act as a sounding board for senior leadership in sensitive safeguarding or welfare matters.

Outputs:
- Termly Safeguarding Culture Report
- Annual Review of Safer Recruitment and Induction Practice
- Attendance at Leadership Oversight and Inspection Preparation meetings

3. Jacqueline Morris NPQH

Independent Compliance, Health & Safety, and Action Plan Advisor
Linked Areas: Whole-school Compliance, Risk Management, Inspection Action Planning
Relevant Standards: NMBS Standards 10, 13, 14, 17, 19; ISSR Parts 3, 5 & 8
Linked Buckswood Pillars: Pillar 9 – Digital Literacy; Pillar 10 – Ecology & Sustainability; Pillar 12 – Internationalism

Purpose of Role:
To support the Proprietor and Principal in monitoring and developing a robust compliance culture across all operational and academic areas, ensuring readiness for inspection and sustainability of systems.

Key Responsibilities:

- Lead independent audits of compliance against NMBS, ISSR, and ISI inspection frameworks.
- Support the creation, monitoring, and evaluation of the school's action plans following inspection or self-review.
- Review and advise on Health and Safety practices, risk assessments, and regulatory documentation.
- Oversee progress in school improvement priorities linked to compliance and policy alignment.
- Advise on staff training needs and systems for embedding sustainable compliance.
- Support the school in digital record-keeping, compliance logs, and reporting lines.
- Ensure the school maintains a continuous cycle of review, reflection, and readiness.

Outputs:
- Termly Compliance Audit Report
- Updated Whole-School Action Plan Tracker
- Attendance at Risk & Compliance Oversight meetings

4. MEd Mike Rickner MS

Independent Curricular and Co-Curricular Advisor
Linked Areas: Academic Standards, Curriculum, Co-Curricular Development
Relevant Standards: ISSR Part 1 (Quality of Education), Part 2 (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development), NMBS Standards 18 & 19
Linked Buckswood Pillars: Pillar 1 – Academic; Pillar 2 – Sport; Pillar 3 – Talent & Individuality; Pillar 8 – BEAT (Adventure & Travel)

Purpose of Role:
To provide strategic insight into academic quality, enrichment, and co-curricular life, ensuring that Buckswood's education remains distinctive, inspiring, and globally relevant.

Key Responsibilities:
- Review curriculum planning, assessment systems, and co-curricular integration.
- Advise on the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils.
- Support the school in embedding global education and the Buckswood 12 Pillars into learning.
- Review academic tracking and progress systems.
- Provide guidance on staff development, teaching quality, and inspection preparation.
- Evaluate how co-curricular programmes (e.g. sport, arts, BEAT) enhance student wellbeing, confidence, and leadership.
- Support alignment of academic outcomes with pastoral and boarding aims.

Outputs:
- Termly Academic & Co-Curricular Report
- Contribution to Self-Evaluation and Development Plan

- Attendance at Academic Oversight and Inspection Meetings

5. Governance and Oversight Summary

Area of Oversight	Lead Advisor	Supporting Pillars & Standards
Boarding & Safeguarding	Dale Wilkins	NMBS 1–6, 10–12; Pillars 2, 4, 11
Safeguarding Leadership & Staff Culture	Elizabeth Brown	NMBS 2, 4, 11; Pillars 5, 6, 11
Compliance, Health & Safety, Action Plans	Jacqueline Morris	NMBS 10, 13, 14, 17, 19; Pillars 9, 10, 12
Academic & Co-Curricular	Mike Rickner	ISSR Parts 1–2; NMBS 18–19; Pillars 1, 2, 3, 8

Meeting and Reporting Protocol

- The Advisory Board meets **termly** (minimum), with additional sessions as needed for inspection or safeguarding reviews.
- Each advisor provides a **written report** summarising observations, strengths, risks, and recommendations.
- The **Chair (Proprietor or delegated Principal)** compiles these into a **Governance Summary Report** for presentation to inspectors and the Proprietor's annual review.
- Minutes, action points, and updates are stored within the **Governance and Compliance Evidence File**.

Buckswood School Advisory Board

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Updated October 2025

1. Purpose

The **Buckswood School Advisory Board** exists to strengthen the governance, oversight, and accountability of Buckswood School.

The Board provides **independent professional guidance** and **constructive challenge** to ensure that the school's leadership and management systems meet the requirements of the **Independent School Standards Regulations (ISSR)**, the **National Minimum Standards for Boarding (NMBS 2022)**, and the expectations of **AGBIS** for best practice in governance — all while reflecting the distinctive values of the **Buckswood 12 Pillars**.

The Board acts as a **critical friend** to the Proprietor and Senior Leadership Team, providing expert insight, ensuring compliance, and helping the school to embed sustainable, ethical, and holistic governance.

2. Vision and Ethos

The Advisory Board is rooted in Buckswood's belief that **education is about character, curiosity, and compassion**.

The Board's role is to uphold the 12 Buckswood Pillars through its oversight — ensuring that academic excellence, wellbeing, leadership, internationalism, and environmental responsibility are not just ideals but daily practice.

Every action and decision taken by the Advisory Board must support the school's mission to create a nurturing, globally minded community that equips every learner to thrive.

3. Scope of Responsibilities

The Advisory Board's areas of oversight include, but are not limited to:

1. **Safeguarding and Welfare**

- Oversight of the safeguarding culture, policy implementation, and DSL/DDSL performance.
- Reviewing compliance with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*, NMBS Standards 1–6, and ISSR Part 3.
- Ensuring safe recruitment, staff induction, and child protection systems are embedded and effective.

2. **Boarding and Pastoral Care**
   - Reviewing boarding provision, routines, and welfare systems in line with NMBS 2022.
   - Monitoring the boarding environment, student voice, and wellbeing initiatives.
3. **Academic and Co-Curricular Quality**
   - Providing independent advice on teaching and learning, curriculum design, assessment, and enrichment.
   - Monitoring how the academic and co-curricular programmes uphold the Buckswood ethos and Pillars.

4. **Compliance, Risk, and Health & Safety**
   - Auditing compliance against ISSR, NMBS, and other statutory requirements.
   - Monitoring risk management, health and safety standards, and action plans arising from inspection or self-review.

5. **Governance and Inspection Readiness**
   - Supporting the Proprietor and Principal in developing governance systems that demonstrate sustainability and transparency.
   - Assuring the school's readiness for inspection, including alignment of documentation, training, and communication across all levels.

6. **Culture, Leadership, and Staff Development**
   - Advising on the leadership culture and professional conduct of staff.
   - Supporting the embedding of the Buckswood 12 Pillars into professional practice and decision-making.

4. Membership and Composition

The Advisory Board comprises the following independent advisors, each bringing specialised expertise in line with their professional experience:

Name	Role Title	Specialism
Dale Wilkins FTIOB	Independent Boarding & Safeguarding Advisor	Boarding, Safeguarding, Pastoral Oversight
Elizabeth Brown NPQH	Independent Safeguarding & Leadership Advisor	Safeguarding Culture, Leadership, Staff Development
Jacqueline Morris	Independent Compliance & Action Plan Advisor	Compliance, Health & Safety, Risk & Inspection Readiness
MEd Mike Rickner MS	Independent Academic & Co-Curricular Advisor	Curriculum, Co-Curricular, Teaching & Learning

5. Reporting and Accountability

- The Advisory Board operates **under delegated authority from the Proprietor**.
- The Board provides **termly written reports** to the Proprietor and Principal summarising key findings, commendations, and recommendations.
- Each advisor contributes to a **Governance Summary Report**, compiled by the Principal, for presentation at Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Proprietor review meetings.
- The Proprietor retains overall accountability for compliance and decision-making. The Advisory Board's role is **advisory and oversight-based**, not executive.

6. Meetings and Protocols

- **Frequency:** The Advisory Board meets *at least once per term*, with additional meetings scheduled before and after inspections or significant school reviews.
- **Format:** Meetings may be held in person or virtually, with agendas distributed in advance and minutes recorded for the Governance File.
- **Quorum:** A minimum of two independent advisors plus one member of the Senior Leadership Team (usually the Principal or DSL).
- **Confidentiality:** All members are bound by the Buckswood confidentiality policy and GDPR standards.
- **Attendance:** Advisors may visit the school, observe lessons or boarding houses, and meet staff or students as appropriate to their remit.

7. Documentation and Records

The following documents are maintained within the **Governance and Compliance Evidence File**:

- Advisory Board Terms of Reference
- Member Role Descriptions
- Meeting Agendas and Minutes
- Termly Advisor Reports
- Annual Governance Summary Report
- Compliance Action Plans and Follow-up Logs
- Safeguarding and Boarding Audit Reports

8. Lines of Communication

- The **Chair** of the Advisory Board (Proprietor or delegated Principal) coordinates communication between advisors and the school leadership.
- Advisors liaise directly with their linked department heads (e.g., DSL, Head of Boarding, Bursar, Academic Head).

- Key findings are discussed with SLT and, where appropriate, actioned via the school's self-evaluation and development plan.
- Inspectors will be introduced to advisors during inspection to confirm clarity of oversight and sustainability of governance.

9. Review of Effectiveness

- The effectiveness of the Advisory Board is reviewed **annually** by the Proprietor in consultation with advisors and the Principal.
- This review evaluates:
  - Impact of advisory oversight on school improvement and compliance
  - Quality and timeliness of reporting
  - Training and development needs of the Board
  - Alignment with Buckswood's ethos and inspection outcomes

10. Alignment with the Buckswood 12 Pillars

The Advisory Board champions the **Buckswood 12 Pillars** as the foundation of good governance, ensuring that every policy, decision, and oversight action reflects:

- Academic excellence
- Sporting spirit
- Talent and individuality
- Spiritual and moral grounding
- Manners and tradition
- Leadership and responsibility
- Charity and service
- Adventure and travel (BEAT)
- Digital literacy
- Ecological awareness
- Home and wellbeing
- Internationalism

Approval and Adoption

This Terms of Reference was approved by the Proprietor and formally adopted on:
Date: _____
Signed (Proprietor): _____
Signed (Principal): _____
Signed (Advisory Chair): _____