

Our achievements in 2022

Championing good
governance to improve
the education and
wellbeing of children
and young people

National Governance Association
November 2022



Foreword



Lynn Howard
Chair of trustees
National Governance
Association

This has been a challenging year for England's schools and for many of our pupils. The cost-of-living crisis alongside unfunded pay increases has squeezed budgets, while staff recruitment and retention becomes harder. A greater level of uncertainty about the future, makes it harder for boards to plan. We await seeing how much of the Government's schools white paper remains, and for the next stage of the long awaited SEND green paper. Yet one thing remains absolute: NGA continues to support, champion and adapt to our members' needs and challenges.

We continue to expand our resources and events whilst shaping them to ensure our offer is bespoke to your setting, from multi academy trusts to maintained schools. Our Knowledge Centre, Learning Link e-Learning platform and publications offer practical guidance firmly based on evidence, expertise and experience. Our track record combines the tried and tested with learning from other sectors, innovation and cutting edge thinking.

Our membership continues to grow, with more members opting for GOLD membership, some in order to take advantage of the Welcome to Governance LIVE sessions for new governors and trustees. This growth enabled us to expand the number of our Regional Leads who extend our support and help us to understand governance at a local level.

I am proud to lead an organisation which is so firmly centred on a desire to influence, shape and support the practice, culture and impact of school and trust governance from a position of such knowledge. Despite changing structures, NGA continues to be the experts on the governance of state schools and academy trusts, leading the way in providing data and insight through our survey reports. Yet we continue to make efforts to listen to you in a range of ways. Please do keep telling us what you think is most important.



Emma Knights OBE
Chief Executive
National Governance
Association

This report lays out the range of topics that NGA has prioritised over the past twelve months, and here I can only pick out a few highlights. It has been a year of much discussion with members and with the DfE about the shape of the future school system and I am pleased that NGA was so instrumental in helping shape the definition of strong trust governance, and ensuring local governance was central to that vision.

Our first year of running the National Leaders of Governance (NLGs) programme for the DfE has been successful with verification by an independent audit. Support is provided by NLGs to those schools and trusts that are deemed to need it most. As with all our services the end goal is to create sustainable change at a governance level to positively shape what schools and trusts provide their pupils.

Our Leading Governance development programmes enable chairs, future chairs and clerks to bring about positive change to their boards through bespoke training relevant to their setting. And we are now adding to them with two new programmes for trustees of MATs and SATs. We have also developed training for trust executives and headteachers providing not just the basics, but how to make the best from working with their governing board.

In 2022 we have expanded our range of resources for governance professional and have developed with the help of our members a soon to be published career pathway for the professional.

We aim to improve the recruitment challenges faced up and down the country by promoting your work and its impact on the community. Our Visible Governance campaign encourages more skilled and enthusiastic people to join governing boards and make a difference in their schools and trusts.

As we approach 2023, we build upon what we have achieved this year. Our promise is to offer the same quality and range of resources so that your board can deliver the best for your community. It is a privilege to serve you in your mission to oversee the best possible education for children and young people.

About us

The National Governance Association (NGA) is the membership organisation for governors, trustees and governance professionals of state schools in England. We are expert leaders in school and trust governance, providing information, advice and guidance, professional development and e-learning. Our charitable aim is to improve the educational standards and wellbeing of young people by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards and promoting high standards. As well as embracing the Nolan Principles of Public Life (selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; leadership) and the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education, we aim to be courageous, creative, visionary and light on our feet. There are around 250,000 governance volunteers and approximately 10,000 governance professionals in state-funded schools and trusts in England.

Our Values: Voices of all, evidence expertise and independence.

Information, advice and guidance

Our Knowledge Centre provides resources that cover a wide range of topics, give insight, and share best practice with practical examples. They are designed to give members the guidance, templates and information and more that they need to be effective in their role. Our GOLDLine service, provides independent and timely legal, procedural and strategic advice to boards, often on the same day.

Reporting period of 'this year' is 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022. All other figures and information correct at 10 October 2022. ** This report of our achievements complements the formal report and accounts which are published on the Charity Commission website for the year up to 31 March 2022.

Professional development

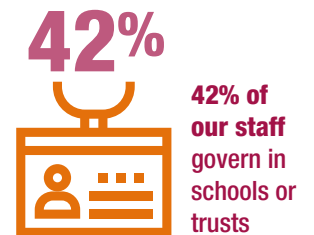
Through bespoke training and consultancy our professional development service supports those involved in school and trust governance, individually or at a board level, to improve their practice and effectiveness.

Our Learning Link e-Learning platform offers essential education and governance topics such as equality, inclusion and diversity, and many others that members can choose based on their interests or needs. Our Leading Governance development programmes are in-depth training offers that focus on the skills and behaviours needed to perform governance roles effectively. For boards, we provide training and consultancy, self-evaluation tools and bespoke support through National Leaders of Governance (NLG) support.

Influencing and representation

Representing and creating change for the governance community is essential to delivering on our charitable objective. Our policy and research reports explore governance in schools and trusts and make best practice recommendations. We collect the views and experiences of our membership and beyond through surveys, events and informal feedback. NGA continues to expand the sector's understanding of school and trust governance by adapting to your changing responsibilities and representing your views on a national stage. We achieve this by working with partners and influencing policy at a governmental level.

We have a team of **52 staff** based at our office in **Birmingham**, or remotely **across the country**.



77 National leaders of Governance (NLGs) provide expertise, external reviews of governance and bespoke support to school across England



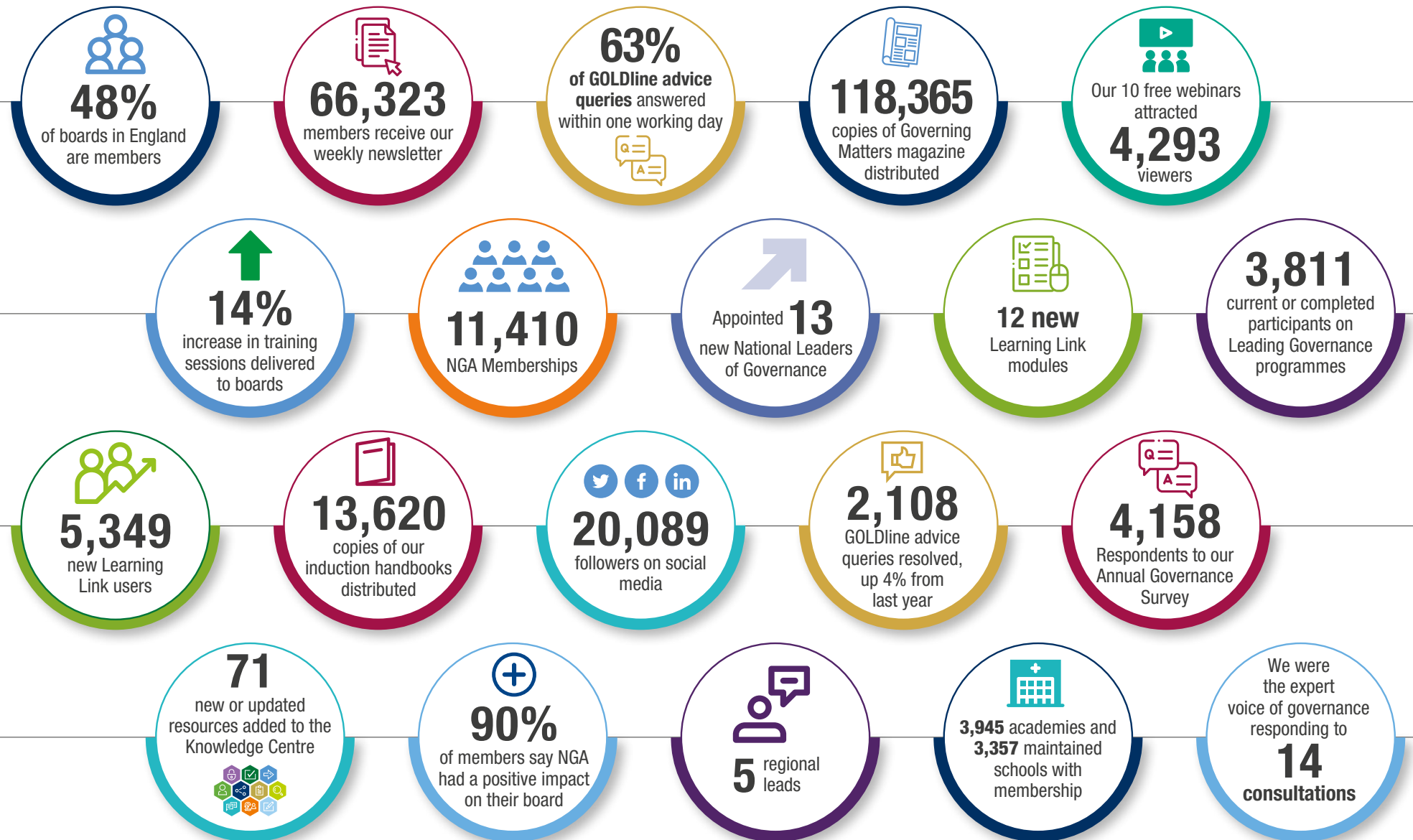
10 trustees sit on the NGA board, 9 of which are elected by members



Our current pay ratio is **3.82:1** between the highest and lowest paid staff



Our year in numbers



Information, advice and guidance

Publications

The 9th edition of our best-selling guide, [The Chair's Handbook](#) and the 13th edition of [Welcome to Governance](#) were published this year alongside [Welcome to a Multi Academy Trust](#). NGA has distributed **13,620** publications through our membership offer and sales this year.



Our GOLDline advice service resolved **2,108** queries from boards on a range of legal and procedural topics over the year. This is a **4% increase** in cases since last year. Despite the increase, **63%** of queries were answered on the same day, an increase of **5%** from last year. A further **18%** were answered the day after receipt. Some queries are more complex and involve extra research or input from our legal partners.

[NGA's Knowledge Centre](#) is an essential hub of information resources and best practice guidance for governors, trustee and governance professionals no matter their setting or experience.



1 November 2021-10 October 2022

Webinars

Our popular monthly webinars covered essential governance practice topics from recruitment and Ofsted to safeguarding, SEND and the government schools' white paper. The webinars are free and available to members and non-members. They are vital tools to convene changes in legislation and governance responsibility.

This year we held **ten** webinars that attracted **1,727** live attendees and a further **2,526** online on demand.



Our Governing Chatters podcast is a fantastic platform to share more indepth discussions about the issues facing those involved in school governance. With a host of great guests and great topics, the NGA team have had some great discussions this year as they explored school inspection, the future of education, how edtech can work for you and how you can create a culture of development with your board.

We have published **22 episodes** since we started making podcasts in 2020. This year, we attracted more than **4,800 listeners** across those episodes. You can download the latest podcasts from the NGA website or wherever you get your podcasts.

Membership reach

Almost half of schools and trusts boards (48%) in England are members of NGA in some form.

We reach around two-thirds of schools and trusts through all our services including professional development. Our membership has grown significantly and steadily over the past decade.



Member voice

Every year we ask NGA members their opinions on NGA membership along with what they liked about what we offered to them.



This year the response from 1525 members told us:

Impact of NGA on effectiveness of board

3.5 out of 5 (90%) agreed that NGA membership had a positive impact on the board.

Representing your voice

3.8 out of 5 agreed that 'NGA is effective in representing governors, trustees and governance professionals in the national education arena' – **the highest increase in 5 years.**

Value for money

3.7 out of 5 say membership was good value for money with **58%** scoring **4 out of 5** or above.

How likely would you recommend NGA membership

59% said they were very likely to recommend us.

Most membership benefits scored **4 out of 5** for satisfaction, including our Knowledge centre, webinars, and GOLDLine service.

Top 3 reasons members join NGA

- Broaden awareness of issues and good practice
- To keep up to date with changes
- To have independent information, guidance and resources

Governing Matters

Sent out **five** times a year, our member magazine includes contributions from NGA staff, policymakers, government ministers, governors and trustees, governance professionals and others involved in education. We sent out **118,365** copies this year – an average of **23,673** copies per issue. In addition, many more members choose to read the magazine online.



Welcome to Governance LIVE

We hosted **12** Welcome to Governance LIVE events for NGA GOLD members and MAT trustee members during the academic year. The sessions support members in making an impact in their first six months as a new governor or trustee outlining what to expect, identifying the support available and giving tips on how to make the most of the first 6-12 months as a governor or trustee.



Newsletter

Our popular weekly e-newsletters continues to make its way to **66,323** members email. It includes the latest education and NGA news and helps all our members fulfil their role.



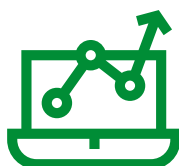
Professional development

n|g|a learninglink

Our e-learning platform is a fantastic way to develop your governance skills and knowledge with over 50 easy to use, informative modules covering every aspect of your role. Learning Links continues to be the market leader for e-learning in the school governance sector.



18 new modules
since 1 Nov 2021



User increase
13%
(5,349 new users)



Positive feedback

96% would recommend Learning Link,
96% say the modules have improved
their knowledge

Really interesting – made me think particularly how subconsciously I may make biased decisions and how to think more 360 degree approach.

User describing the Learning Link module Equality Diversity and Inclusion: Beyond compliance

n|g|a leading governance

Our [Leading Governance](#) development programme continues to share expert guidance and training, after funding from the DfE was withdrawn in March 2021. Since then, we have continued to offer training to vice chairs, committee chairs and aspiring chairs and governance professionals.

This year **217** Chairs and Governance professionals are currently completing the programme. **397** have fully completed the programme and since its launch, **3,811** have benefitted from the programme.

n|g|a National Governance Association

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our training and consultancy offer continues to build upon the success of last year. We are asked by schools and trusts from every background and setting to supply virtual and face to face training. In 2022 we saw an increase of **14%** in training activity for **74** organisations. We increased our ERGs by **83%** for **64** organisations. We hired **26** new consultants and completed other consultancy activities for **29** organisations.

New Development for MAT and SAT trustees

NGA's two new workshop programmes provide practical, convenient and relevant training for current, new and future trustees in MATs and SATs.

Led by experienced facilitators with expertise in MAT and SAT governance, the two programmes offer small group interactive workshops that allow trustees to build their knowledge of what good trust governance looks like in essential areas of regulation and practice.

Development for MAT trustees

- 8 workshops
- From 'Introduction to good MAT governance' to 'How trust boards work' and 'Setting expectations for local governance'
- MATs can commission for their own trustees enabling a programme that is bespoke for your trust

Booking now open for January 2023

[Book your place and find out more here](#)

Development for SAT trustees

- 7 workshops
- From school improvement, compliance, and effective meetings to financial oversight, good employer practice, organisational growth and MAT options

Bookings are open for January 2023.

[Book your place and find out more here](#)

Improving governance

NLG | NATIONAL LEADERS OF GOVERNANCE

“ We wouldn’t be where we are now without the NLG – this has really accelerated our plans for improvement ”
Senior Leader

Since being awarded the contract to deliver the National Leaders of Governance (NLG) support in May 2021 by the Department for Education, NGA and our expert NLGs have supported hundreds of boards in all regions across the country and school type.

In 2022, we added **13** expert NLGs and continued to support the schools and trust that require it the most with governance expertise, external reviews of governance and bespoke support.

Since November 2021

Number of new NLGs	(77 in total) 13
Multi academy trust commissions	133
Single academy trusts commissions	41
Maintained commissions	107
External reviews of governance (ERGs) reports completed	141
Progress reports completed	27

Governance professionals

We have continued to develop resources for governance professionals, including Learning Link modules on conducting panel meetings, Knowledge Centre guidance on annual planning, and a template policy review schedule.

NGA’s [governance professional jobs service](#) has also been upgraded to include the designation of vacancies as one of the three governance professional levels and clearer information on salary and working hours. In late 2022, we will launch our career pathway for governance professionals in partnership with over 100 governance professionals who responded to our request for focus group members and input.



104

focus group members



363

attendees at June’s network meeting



297

attendees at December’s network meeting



491

attendees the governance professional conference in March

Multi academy trust (MAT) governance



MAT governance continues to be a major area of our work. In the last 12 months we launched a new [Academy trust CEO job description](#) with Forum Strategy, new MAT specific guidance including on academy trust finance and published a new edition of the popular [Taking the Next Step guidance](#) – a joint publication with Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) and Browne Jacobson for schools looking at joining or forming a MAT.

We held a webinar on organisational identity in MATs and published various insight pieces and blogs throughout the year, from the setting the standard on local governance, to exploring three sector debates for MAT governance to exploring the argument for joining or forming a MAT.

We continued to explore MAT governance through our research programme, publishing a MAT specific report from our annual governance survey findings and conducted a survey of 100 MAT trustees on their views on system reform in August. All of our guidance and resources are appropriate for those governing in MATs.

Over the past year, our events have continued to bring together MAT trustees, governance professionals and executive leaders through our MAT network and Governance Leadership Forums. These have provided an opportunity for those governing in MATs to have their say on the white paper and system reform with the DfE in attendance.

Our voice, your voice

Annual school and trust governance survey

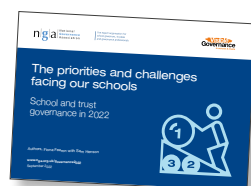
For the 12th consecutive year, NGA has sought the views of those who govern to fill the gaps that exists in understanding the challenges, views and experiences of those involved in school governance. This year, our annual governance survey saw responses from **4,158** respondents.

Their responses were used to produce three key reports: which have received **1,945** page views and **963** downloads. They are:

The priorities and challenges facing our schools

– explores the wider views, experiences and challenges of governors and trustees in England.

It highlighted their strategic priorities and practices of trustees and governors as they fulfil their core functions.



Governing in a multi academy trust

– explores the views, experience and practice of those governing in a multi academy trust (MAT) both at trust board and local academy committee level.



Governance volunteers and board practice

explores the recruitment challenges, composition and practices of all school governance volunteers.



Influence

NGA is engaged with the developments across the sector and shares our views and evidence to advocate for a strong education system that meets the needs of all pupils. We also hold regular meetings with government ministers.

White Paper

MAT governance came under the spotlight this year with the publication of the schools white paper. NGA was delighted when the DfE made clear its intention to strengthen its focus on strategic governance in MATs and local governance.

This year, we published [MAT governance: the future is local](#), a thought piece exploring the local tier's story over the last ten years. We have put forward our suggested 12 expectations for making the local tier of MAT governance meaningful. We have used these alongside our wide evidence base on MAT governance to influence the DfE's ongoing sector conversations resulting from the white paper release.

Ofsted

Following NGA research into Ofsted inspections, NGA has written to, and subsequently met with His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman. The open letter highlights NGA's concern that visibility of governance through the new Education Inspection Framework has declined.

Representation

NGA meet with over **20** stakeholder groups to advise and influence on various areas of education policy. You can find details on our website.

Consultations

NGA has acted as the expert voice of governance responding to **14** consultations this year including:



- Exams and assessments
- SEND
- School funding
- Admissions, exclusions and suspensions
- Children and young people mental health and wellbeing
- Behaviour and attendance

Parliamentary Activity

NGA has submitted evidence to parliament contributing to discussions around funding, exams and assessments, pupil mental health and wellbeing. We have also written and co-signed letters to ministers and MPs calling for action on issues such as free school meals and rising costs for schools, trusts and colleges. We also held briefings and put forward amendments to the government's Schools Bill.

NGA is represented at various All Party Parliamentary Groups offering contributions and sharing views of members to influence policy and change on topics including parental engagement and teaching and staffing.

Our voice, your voice

Equality, diversity and inclusion

[Equality, diversity and inclusion \(EDI\)](#) continues to be a priority for NGA. We are one of many education sector organisations who have updated and set out their 2022/23 commitments to action in a joint statement of intent on equality, diversity and inclusion in education.

Governing boards must have the tools and knowledge needed to create an inclusive and welcoming school and trust culture; therefore, we partnered with ASCL to develop [free e-learning modules](#) focused on going beyond compliance to create an inclusive culture.

We continue to work with other national representative organisations to ensure that as a sector, we make progress. In collaboration with BAMEd, the member-led steering group on governance and race, we meet to discuss and develop practical resources to further race equality in schools and trusts.

In supporting governing boards, we continue to ensure that EDI is threaded throughout our events and resources.

We produced a variety of resources, such as [NGA's governing board diversity indicators form](#), which is used to gather diversity data on board membership and inform discussion and action. We have also joined several sector bodies to produce guidance on provisions for transgender pupils.



Greener governance

[The Greener Governance campaign](#) aims to ensure all schools and trusts have a strategy for their contribution to environmental sustainability and to equip governing boards to play their role in overseeing this work. As such it has featured in an array of outputs:



Nearly 1,000 downloads of our guidance documents

- 1,975 governors/trustees have taken action according to our annual governance survey
- 1 new training offer
- 1 new audit tool developed with National Association for Environmental Education (NAEE) and School Improvement and Performance (SchoolIP)
- Created the Greener Governance Pledge
- Held 7 events on the topic: leadership forums, seminars, webinars, Young Governors Network
- 5 Governing Matters articles
- Collaborated with 10 organisations
- Signed open letter to the Education Secretary
- Consultation with the Department for Education

Visible Governance

in schools & trusts



In 2020, NGA launched its [Visible Governance in Schools and trusts campaign](#) to celebrate, champion and raise the profile of the impact of good governance on schools. In July, we launched a short, animated film designed to highlight school and trust governance and explain what you do and your role.

The film can help volunteers share what they do, the difference they make, as well as help boards, schools, trusts and other organisations recruit new volunteers. Since it was published in July, the film has been viewed **3,851** times and shared by our members and partners. It has appeared on and trust websites, shared by local authorities and newsletters both internal and external and featured in national education and industry press.

Our voice, Your voice, One Voice

In our annual governance survey, we asked our members what the biggest challenges and strategic priorities for their school or trust were. This enables us to support members, their boards and their school or trust with bespoke resources, training and guidance and helps shape our influencing across the sector. This helps to ensure your board can meet your priorities and overcome the challenges your school or trust is facing. The voice of our members continues to shape what we as an organisation concentrate on.

Top challenges facing schools and trusts

1. Balancing the budget
2. The attainment of disadvantaged children
3. Staff wellbeing including workload
4. Improving attainment
5. Support for pupils with special education needs
6. COVID-19 recover



Top strategic priorities for governing boards

1. Ensuring a broad and balance curriculum
2. Improving attainment
3. Support for pupils with special educational needs
4. Pupil mental health and wellbeing
5. Staff wellbeing including workload
6. Ensuring best use of resources



Our partners

In addition to working with government ministers we regularly partner with the following organisations to support our work and widen our reach.

