

Bury Governors Association

Effective school governance: Meeting the challenges

Feb 2016

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Chief Executive
National Governors' Association



NGA is a membership organisation

- NGA is an independent charity representing governors and trustees in all state funded schools in England, both academies and LA maintained schools
- our aim to improve the effectiveness of governing boards by providing expert and tailored information, guidance and advice, and challenge when appropriate

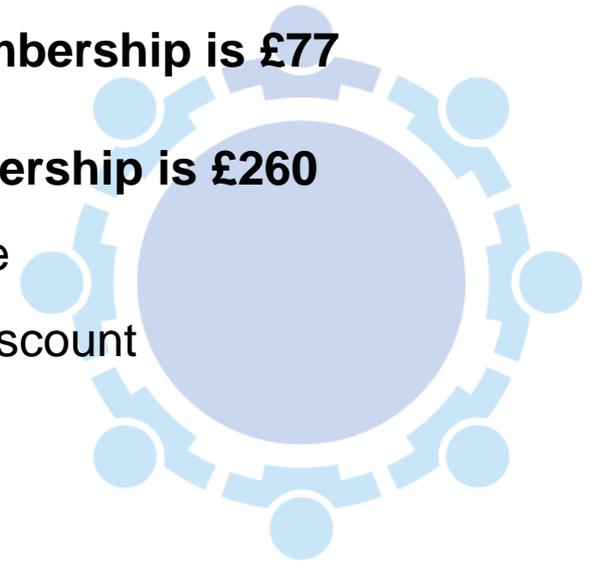


Standard Governing Body membership is £77

GOLD Governing Body membership is £260

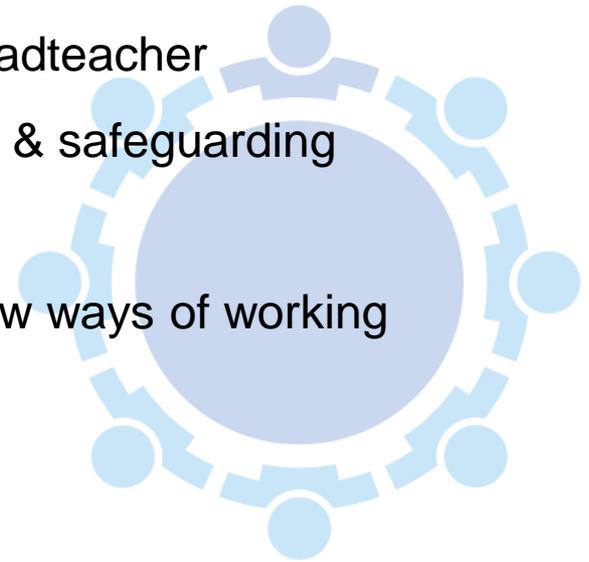
and includes an advice line

See final slide for details & discount



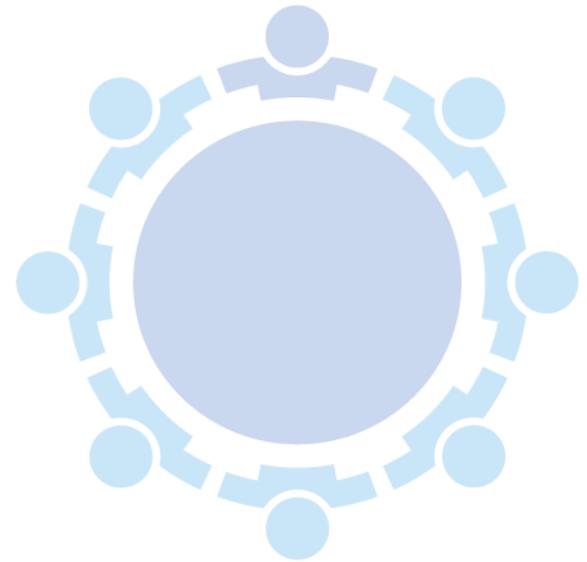
Lots of challenges?

1. Finances: revenue & capital – staffing structure
2. Setting the vision and engaging with the strategic : deciding the priorities
3. Measuring what we value & is our data meaningful?
4. ‘Triangulation’ - do you have more than one source of information
5. Ensuring quality of teaching, development & retention of staff
6. Protecting the breadth and depth of the curriculum
7. Recruitment & performance management of the headteacher
8. Implications of Trojan Horse : British values, Prevent & safeguarding
9. Culture of wellbeing : eg adolescent mental health
10. Reviewing & improving GB effectiveness : finding new ways of working
11. Finding the time & finding the volunteers
12. Additional challenges for the chair: leading the GB
13. Joining & forming a group of schools



Discuss

What are your challenges?



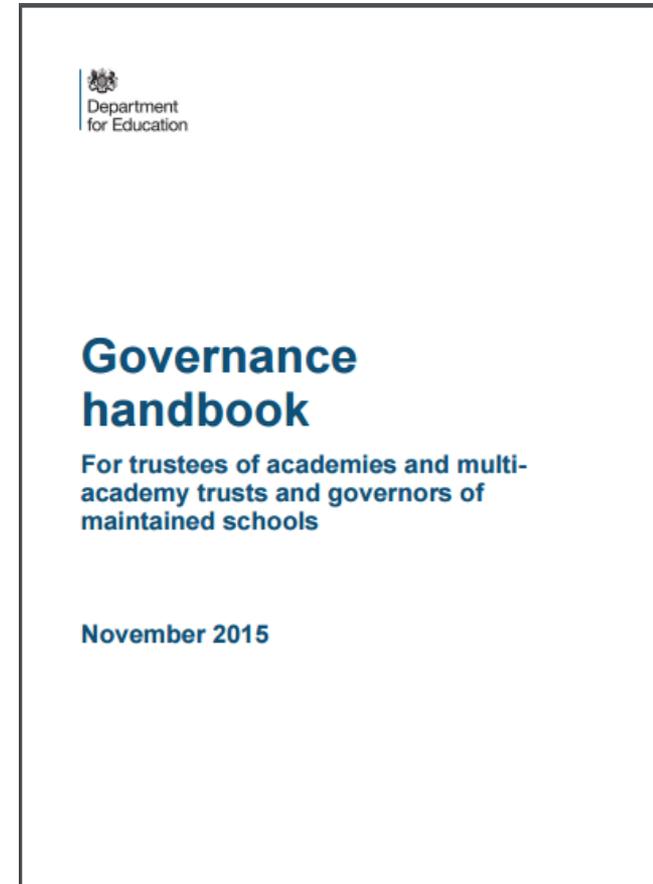
The core functions of school governance

In all types of schools, governing boards have three core functions:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and performance management of staff
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

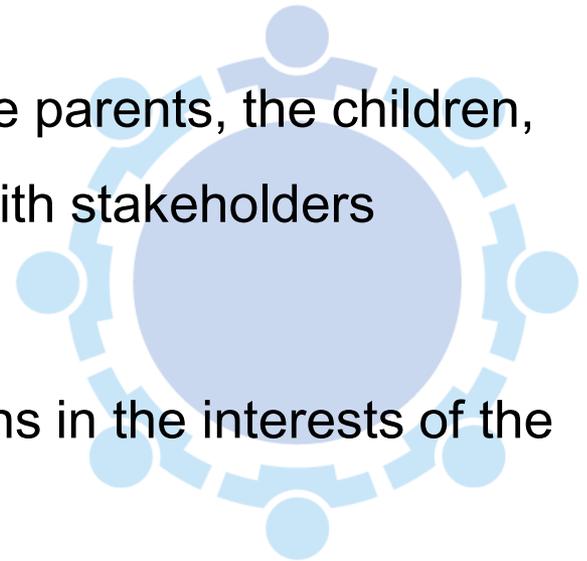
But in a MAT how much is delegated to the academy level?

What is the focus of your GB?



The eight elements of effective governance

1. The right people round the table
2. Understanding role and responsibilities
3. Good chairing
4. Professional clerking:
5. Good relationships based on trust
6. Knowing the school – the data, the staff, the parents, the children, the community - & ensuring engagement with stakeholders
7. Committed to asking challenging questions
8. Confident to have courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people





There are 3 national free volunteer banks

1. **SGOSS**
2. **Academy Ambassadors**, a head hunting service for academy trustees
3. **Inspiring the Future**, the on-line matchmaking service that connects state schools and colleges with over 26,000 volunteers across the country.
 - Simply logon at www.inspiringthefuture.org to approach volunteers interested in becoming governors or trustees in your area.
 - Many of the volunteers are highly skilled professionals in areas such as finance, law, HR and marketing.

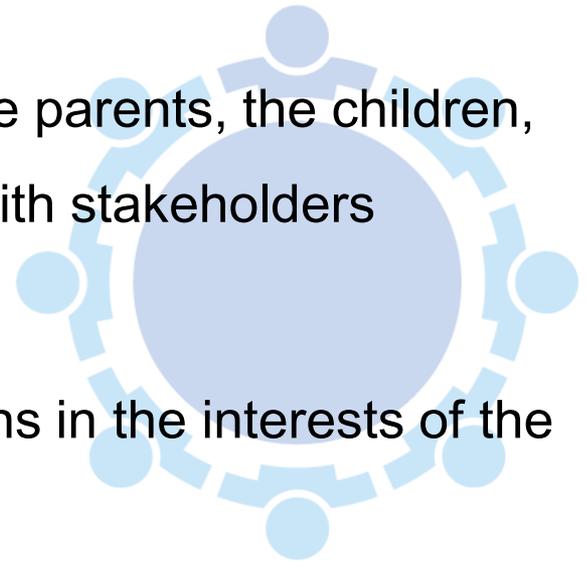


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The challenge for chairs

Chairing is a leadership role: delegate & build the team

Trusting relationship with the head

The time to make all this happen: join our research

Meet with each of the other governors

Review your own performance: NGA has a chair's 360 review

Good practice: six years maximum at one school

Succession planning

Share good practice with other chairs & join the Chairs' Development Programme: licensed by the National College

New edition of the Chair's Handbook



Changing models of governance

Governing a single school

- A LA maintained school
- A stand alone academy: a trust with members, a board of trustees and directors of a limited company
- An interim executive board

Governing a group of schools: one board responsible for more than one school ie one organisation, not just a collaboration:

- A LA maintained federation
- Multi academy trust (MAT)

‘Chains’ of schools – not a legal term, often used for big groups, but they are almost always MATs. But here are some partnerships with an overarching trust e.g. an umbrella trust; a co-operative trust



Number of schools in MATs is rising

- One quarter of state funded schools in England are now academies
- End of 2015: 59% (3250 out of 5444) of academies (including free schools) are in MATs, up from 53% at the end of the 2013/14 academic year.
- 81% of academies that opened in the 2014/15 academic year did so as part of a MAT, up from 73% in 2013/14

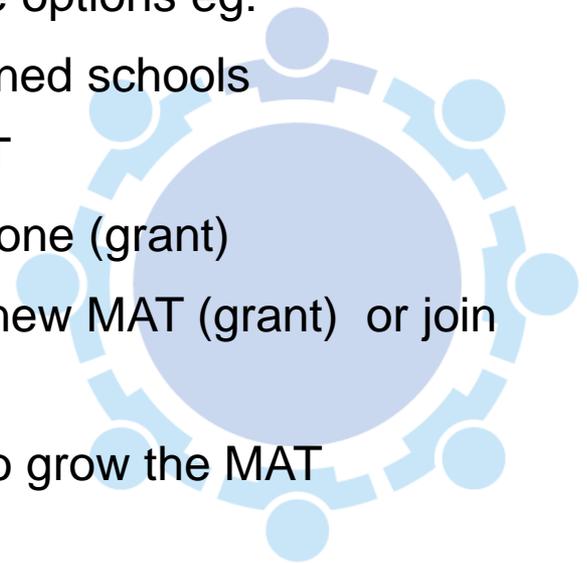
As of 31 Dec 15:

- 11 MATs have 30+ schools; includes 8% of academies (2% of schools)
- 11% of academies in MATs of 10-29
- 39% academies in MATs of 2-10 (similar size to federations)
- 41% of academies are still standalone

No data on federations kept centrally : NGA's surveys suggest they are between 5.5% - 7% with some new ones forming & some becoming MATs

Staying in control of your school's destiny

- The Prime Minister has said the Government wants all schools to become academies, but currently it is still the governing board's decision
- Under performing schools will be converted to join MATs or swop MATs
- We expect a White Paper and another Bill later this year – but it is not expected that it will mandate good schools to convert
- If you form a group now, you can choose your own partners
- If you are an LA maintained school, you have more options eg:
 - Form or join a federation with other LA maintained schools
 - The federation could then convert to be a MAT
 - Convert to join an existing MAT or form a new one (grant)
- If you are a stand-alone academy you can form a new MAT (grant) or join an existing one
- If you are part of a MAT, the Trustees can decide to grow the MAT
- What future is there for stand alone schools?



Governing groups of schools

Multi-academy trusts (MATs) and maintained federations have one board governing a number of schools: it is one organisation

There is now a considerable amount of information about governing groups:

[NCTL report: The governance of federations](#)

[Leadership of more than one school](#) Ofsted 2011

[The Road to Federation](#) NGA Dec 2013

[Introduction to multi academy trusts](#) NGA updated June 15

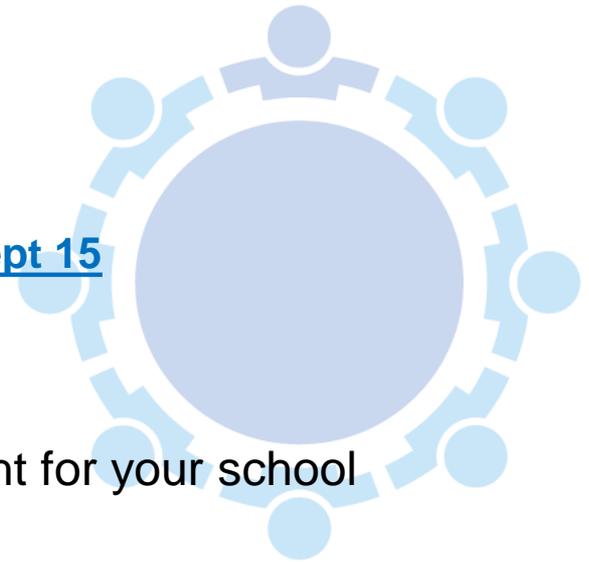
[Guidance March 2015: NGA, ASCL & BrowneJacobson](#)

[Forming or joining a group of schools: NGA, ASCL & BJ Sept 15](#)

NGA also has Q&As on federations and academies.

You should be considering whether joining a group is right for your school

And who your partners might be.



Advantages

- Better & wider offer for pupils , curricula & extra curricula
- Sharing of staff: more specialist teachers, business staff & SEN expertise
- Opportunities for staff development
- Better staff recruitment & retention
- Moderating & benchmarking : same systems of assessment, data & finances
- Learning from each other
- More capacity for innovation
- Cross phase: better transition

Plus encourages better strategic governance, financial efficiencies, and a reduction in bureaucracy, such as central determination of policies

All this = better outcome for pupils = school improvement

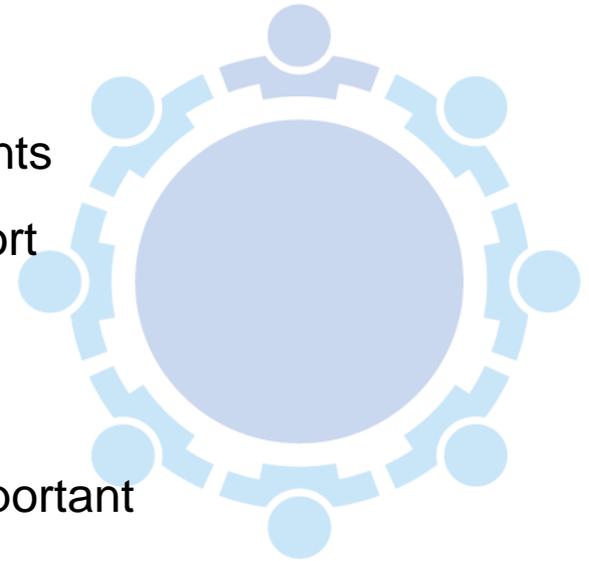


Drivers have been in past years:

- Small schools fearful for future
- Inability to recruit a headteacher
- Weak performance of one school
- Aim of improving transition to the next phase of school

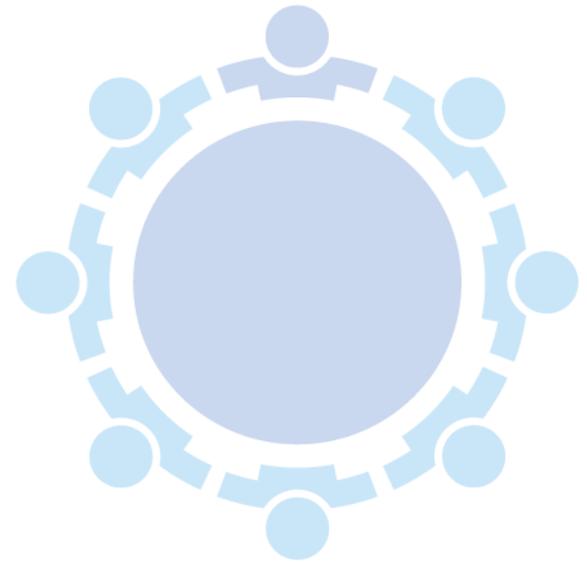
Challenges have been:

- Fear of take-over
- Fear of loss of identity of school
- Fear of change from heads, governors, staff & parents
- Lack of independent information , expertise & support
- Not wanting to give up local governance
- Different types of school eg VC & VA schools
- Finding natural partners: geography & ethos are important



Barriers: why don't we do it?

Discuss



What size of federation/MAT?

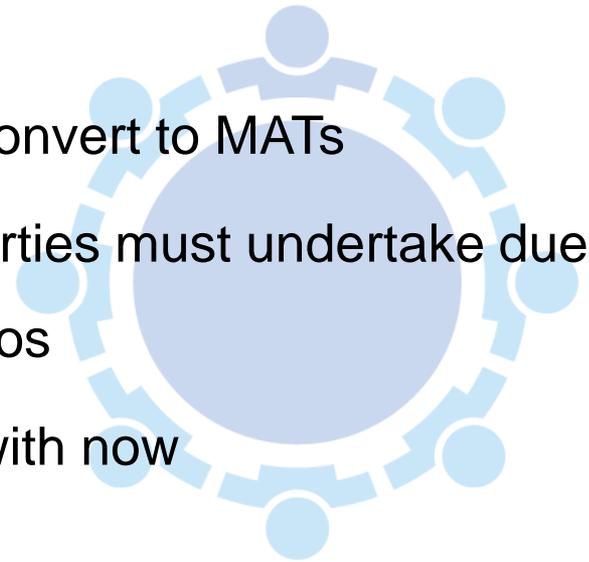
- How many schools or how many pupils can one board govern well?

Federation constitution regulations are being reviewed by DfE

- Growing your own: start by keeping it small & local

Lord Nash: schools in a group should be within half a lunchtime or period's travel of each other. NGA agrees most benefit accrues to pupils when they are relatively close.

- Can grow further in time, and federations can convert to MATs
- If considering joining an existing group, both parties must undertake due diligence, beginning with vision, values and ethos
- Do not take on more than the group can cope with now
- Review governance arrangements regularly

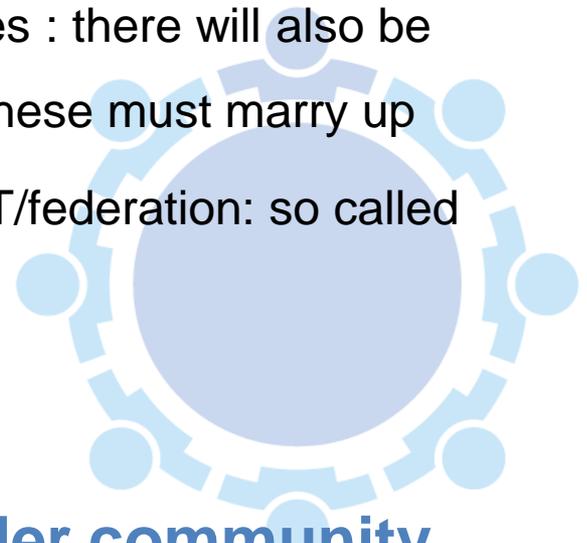


What to delegate?

- This will be decided by the board of trustees (MAT) or federation GB
- Need to think whole organisation: one overall strategy, not 'my' school
- There will be need to be cross-MAT/federation committees
- Do not assume you have to have school level governance: lots of layers may be confusing and duplicate, and lead to break down of relationships
- Not just about delegation to governors/non-executives : there will also be delegation to the executive leaders/management - these must marry up
- Can allow different amounts of delegation within MAT/federation: so called 'earned autonomy' to 'rapid improvement boards'

Challenge: knowing what you are governing

Listening & involving parents & the wider community



MATs must have a Scheme of Delegation

- Each MAT board of trustees must agree a scheme of delegation (SoD) – from September 15 they should have published it on their website
- If you are thinking of joining a MAT, ask to see their SoD before you decide
- If you are already part of a MAT, you might want to review the SoD as many are flawed: e.g they don't include delegation to the executive, they duplicate function; they are unclear about decision levels
- MATs often want to introduce levels of governance but beware too many
- Very rough estimate: but what about one local governing committee for every 2000 pupils (i.e every ten form entry) but with advisory councils and/or parent councils covering every school to ensure there is some external scrutiny and a lot of parental engagement



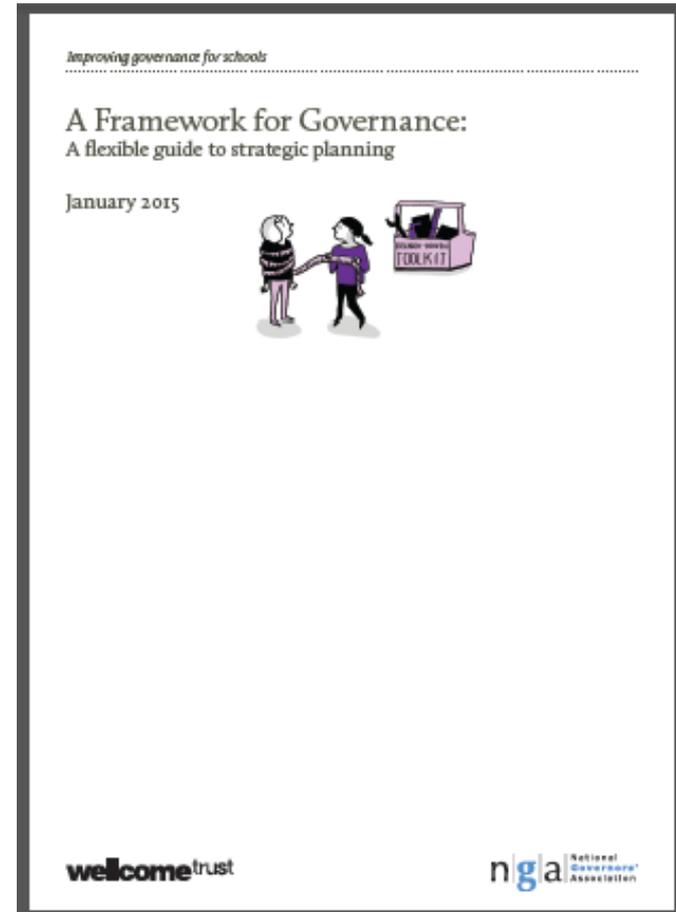
Turning vision into reality

Core function of the
Governing Board:

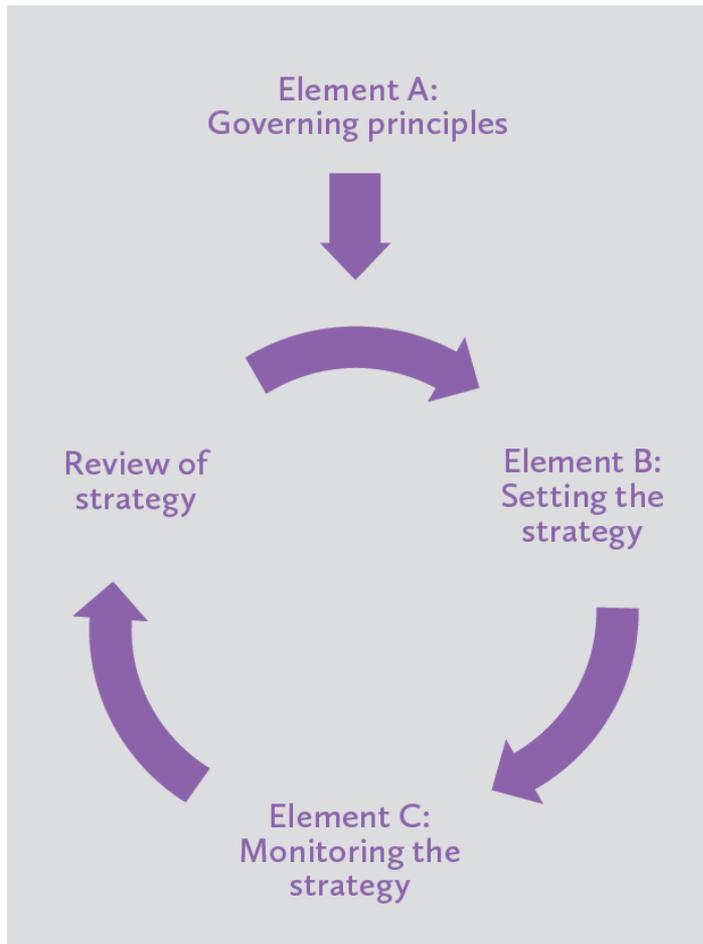
Setting vision, ethos and
strategic direction

But are we good at it?
How do we do that?

Published in January 2015



Framework for governance



Governing Principles:

Lots to ways to undertake self-review

– eg. Evalua8

see www.nga.org.uk

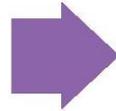
When did you last look to see if you were making an impact?

Element B: setting the strategy

School strategy

Agreed by governing board. Setting out the vision for the school and its broad ambitions.

Developed in discussion with leaders, teachers, parents and learners.

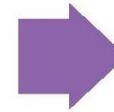


School development plan

Developed by senior leaders based on the strategic plan.

With details of how the strategy will be turned into reality.

Agreed by governing board.



Implementation in practice

Done by senior leaders and staff.

Monitored by governors, parents and learners.

The school strategy

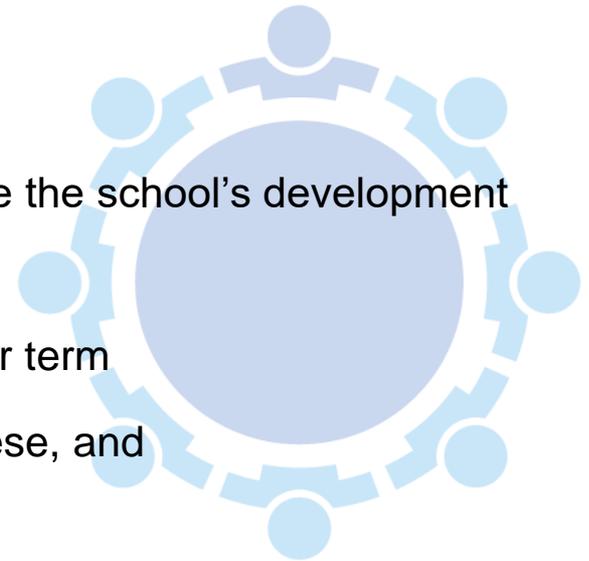
Where do we want the school to be in 3-5 years time?

To achieve that, how do we:

- position the school to succeed,
- take advantage of opportunity,
- minimise risks and
- use resources?

How do we get there?

- having decided the vision, the GB must set goals and agree the school's development priorities (between 4 and 6)
- each of these priorities needs a target for the short & longer term
- most of the GB business is monitoring progress against these, and
- at the end of the year formally review



Element C: monitoring the strategy

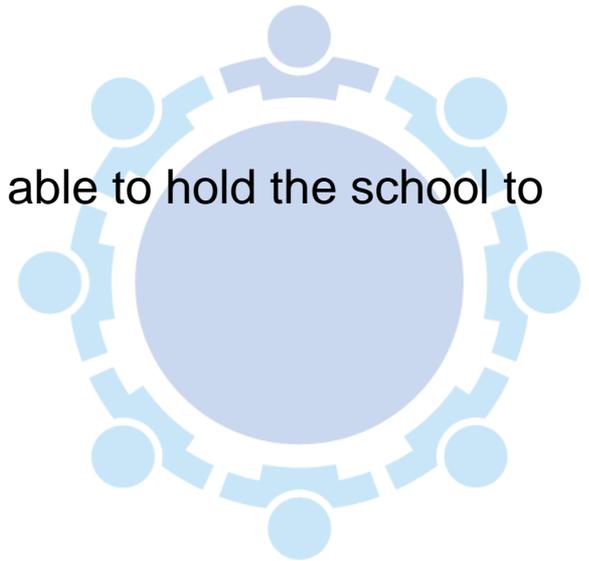
Governors need data and information to help them judge how well the school is performing against the criteria that the governing board and senior leaders have agreed. This relates to the governing board's core functions of holding the headteacher to account and ensuring financial probity.

Question

What data and information do you need in order to be able to hold the school to account?

Are you getting it?

Do you know if your strategy is achieving your vision?



Join us: **GOLD** membership

n|g|a| **GOLD**line
The NGA Advice Service

As a **GOLD** member of NGA the school is entitled to:

- Access to the guidance centre on NGA's website for all governors & the clerk;
- the bi-monthly 40 page NGA members' magazine Governing Matters for all;
- A weekly e-newsletter for all governors/trustees & clerks;
- free places at NGA regional and national conferences;
- Access to NGA's advice line and legal advice:
- A Chair's Handbook, and Welcome to Governance induction guides for all new governors/trustees

For a £30 discount from GOLD membership,

quote **DIS0091** when joining on www.nga.org.uk

or when you ring 0121 237 3780 or email membership@nga.org.uk

