



Department  
for Education

# **A Competency Framework for Governance**

**The knowledge, skills and behaviours  
needed for effective governance in  
maintained schools, academies and  
multi-academy trusts**

**January 2017**

# Contents

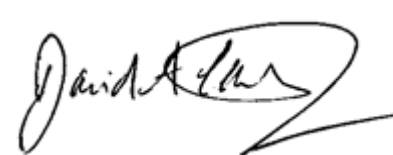
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
About this framework	4
Structure	4
Terminology	4
Who is this publication for?	5
Review date	5
<b>A competency framework for governance</b>	<b>6</b>
Principles and personal attributes	7
Knowledge and skills	8
1. Strategic leadership	8
1a. Setting direction	8
1b. Culture, values and ethos	9
1c. Decision-making	10
1d. Collaborative working with stakeholders and partners	11
1e. Risk management	12
2. Accountability for educational standards and financial performance	14
2a. Educational improvement	14
2b. Rigorous analysis of data	15
2c. Financial frameworks and accountability	16
2d. Financial management and monitoring	17
2e. Staffing and performance management	18
2f. External accountability	19
3. People	20
3a. Building an effective team	20
4. Structures	22
4a. Roles and responsibilities	22
5. Compliance	23
5a. Statutory and contractual requirements	23
6. Evaluation	25
6a. Managing self-review and development	25
6b. Managing and developing the board's effectiveness	25

## Foreword

The importance and significance of outstanding governance and leadership across our education system, in every school in England, has never been greater. The role of governing boards in defining and implementing strategy whilst holding the leaders of schools and trusts to account has to be the foundation upon which a world class education system is built. Governors or trustees who work as a team, who are able to bring their skills and experience to the role and who blend challenge and support to hold their workforce to account, will improve standards.

Our shared ambition is to ensure that there are enough good school places for every child in England. What we have attempted to do in this *Competency Framework for Governance* is to define more clearly the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for governance to play its full part in this vision.

The development of this framework was informed by great practice, evidence of what governance at its best can deliver and a deep understanding of the role that clarity of vision, purpose and action contributes to school improvement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Carter', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

**Sir David Carter**

National Schools Commissioner for England

## Introduction

Effective governance provides strategic direction and control to schools, academies and Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). It creates robust accountability, oversight and assurance for their educational and financial performance and is ambitious for all children and young people to achieve the very best outcomes.

## About this framework

The framework sets out the competencies needed for effective governance. It is non-statutory guidance and should be read alongside the [Governance Handbook](#), particularly the section explaining the key features of effective governance. Academy trusts should also refer to the [Academies Financial Handbook](#).

The framework is applicable to all boards in proportion to the scale and complexity of the organisation they are governing. Boards will need to consider which knowledge and skill areas outlined in the framework are most important for their context. They will also need to determine the extent to which it applies to any committees they have appointed, including within multi-academy trusts to any local governing bodies, depending on the range of functions delegated to them.

The framework does not aim to apply specifically to the Members of academy trusts. Members are not directly involved in governance, which is the responsibility of the board of trustees. However, as they appoint trustees and oversee the success of the board of trustees they have appointed, members will want to understand the skills, behaviours and knowledge trustees need to be effective.

The framework does not apply directly to pupil referral units, sixth-form colleges and general further education (FE) colleges though they may find its general principles helpful.

## Structure

The framework begins with the principles and personal attributes which, alongside the commitment of time and energy to the role, underpin effective governance. Following on from this, the knowledge and skills required for effective governance are organised into those which are essential for everyone on the board; those which are required of the chair and those which at least someone on the board should have. In this way, the knowledge and skills required for chairs build on and complement the skills for everyone.

## Terminology

Throughout the document references to:

- *the board* should be taken to mean the accountable body for the school or group of schools. In local authority maintained schools, this will be the governing body; and in a single academy trust (SAT) or MAT, it will be the board of trustees

- *organisation* should be taken to mean the school; federation; SAT or MAT being governed as appropriate
- *executive leaders* should be taken to mean those held to account by the board for the performance of the organisation. This may be the CEO, executive headteacher, headteacher or principal, as well as other senior employees/staff, depending on the structure of the organisation
- *trustees means those that sit on the board of an academy trust (who in some trusts are known as directors) and*
- *Local governing body (LGB)* means a committee of a multi-academy trust board that is established as such under the trust's articles of association.

## Who is this publication for?

This competency framework is for:

- the boards of local authority (LA) maintained schools and academy trusts in England
- training providers designing and delivering governance training and development
- others with an interest in the governance of schools<sup>1</sup>.

Some of the ways in which boards<sup>2</sup> may want to use the framework include:

- informing how they carry out a skills audit
- in individual performance review discussions, identifying training needs and/or developing a training and development programme
- putting together a role specification and determining interview questions for recruiting to the board and/or in selecting or recruiting a chair
- planning induction for people new to the board
- supporting a review of the board's effectiveness and identifying strengths and areas for development
- demonstrating the key characteristics and expectations of their role to others
- ensuring the expected behaviours are included in the board's code of conduct.

## Review date

The competency framework will be kept under regular review and updated as necessary, including to reflect changes to policy.

---

<sup>1</sup> For example: the LA of a maintained school; parents of registered pupils; and the appropriate diocesan authority or appropriate religious body if the school is designated as having a religious character under s.69(3) of the Schools Standard and Framework Act 1998

<sup>2</sup> Boards of maintained schools may liaise, where appropriate, with the relevant LA since it must secure, free of charge, certain information and training for governors under [s.22 of the Education Act 2002](#)..

# A competency framework for governance

The framework is made up of 16 competencies underpinned by a foundation of important principles and personal attributes. The competencies are grouped under the headings of the six features of effective governance, which are set out in the [Governance Handbook](#): strategic leadership; accountability; people; structures; compliance and evaluation.



## Principles and personal attributes

The principles and personal attributes that individuals bring to the board are as important as their skills and knowledge. These qualities enable board members to use their skills and knowledge to function well as part of a team and make an active contribution to effective governance.

All those elected or appointed to boards should fulfil their duties in line with the seven principles of public life (the [Nolan principles](#)). They should also be mindful of their responsibilities under equality legislation, recognising and encouraging diversity and inclusion. They should understand the impact of effective governance on the quality of education and on outcomes for all children and young people. In addition, all those involved in governance should be:

- Committed** Devoting the required time and energy to the role and ambitious to achieve best possible outcomes for young people. Prepared to give time, skills and knowledge to developing themselves and others in order to create highly effective governance.
- Confident** Of an independent mind, able to lead and contribute to courageous conversations, to express their opinion and to play an active role on the board.
- Curious** Possessing an enquiring mind and an analytical approach and understanding the value of meaningful questioning.
- Challenging** Providing appropriate challenge to the status quo, not taking information or data at face value and always driving for improvement.
- Collaborative** Prepared to listen to and work in partnership with others and understanding the importance of building strong working relationships within the board and with executive leaders, staff, parents and carers, pupils/students, the local community and employers.
- Critical** Understanding the value of critical friendship which enables both challenge and support, and self-reflective, pursuing learning and development opportunities to improve their own and whole board effectiveness.
- Creative** Able to challenge conventional wisdom and be open-minded about new approaches to problem-solving; recognising the value of innovation and creative thinking to organisational development and success.

# Knowledge and skills

## 1. Strategic leadership

**Why it's important:** Effective boards provide confident, strategic leadership to their organisations; they lead by example and 'set the tone from the top'. These competencies relate to the core function of boards to set vision, ethos and strategic direction.

### 1a. Setting direction

The knowledge and skills required for effectiveness in setting the strategic direction of the organisation, planning and prioritising, monitoring progress and managing change.

Everyone on the board
<b>Knowledge</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• key themes of national education policy and the local education context</li><li>• key features of effective governance</li><li>• the strategic priorities (and where appropriate, charitable objects) for their organisation</li><li>• tools and techniques for strategic planning</li><li>• principles of effective change management</li><li>• the difference between strategic and operational decisions</li></ul>
<b>Skills and effective behaviours</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• thinks strategically and contributes to the development of the organisation's strategy</li><li>• can articulate the organisation's strategic priorities (and where appropriate, charitable objects) and explain how these inform goals</li><li>• can put in place plans for monitoring progress towards strategic goals</li><li>• supports strategic change having challenged as appropriate so that change is in the best interests of children, young people and the organisation (and aligned with charitable objects, where appropriate)</li><li>• is able to champion the reasons for, and benefits of, change to all stakeholders</li></ul>

The chair
<b>Knowledge</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• national and regional educational priorities and the implications of these for the board and the organisation</li><li>• leadership and management processes and tools that support organisational change</li></ul>



### ***Skills and effective behaviours***

- thinks strategically about the future direction of the organisation and identifies the steps needed to achieve goals.
- leads the board and executive leaders in ensuring operational decisions contribute to strategic priorities
- adopts and strategically leads a systematic approach to change management, that is clear, manageable and timely
- provide effective leadership of organisational change even when this is difficult

## **1b. Culture, values and ethos**

The knowledge and skills required to set the culture, values and ethos of the organisation successfully; demonstrate these in the conduct and operation of the board; embed them through the whole organisation; and monitor the impact on outcomes for children and young people and on the reputation of the organisation in the wider community.

### **Everyone on the board**

#### ***Knowledge***

- the values of the organisation and how these are reflected in strategy and improvement plans
- the ethos of the organisation and, where appropriate, that of the foundation trust including in relation to any religious character
- the code of conduct for the board and how this embodies the culture, values and ethos of the organisation

#### ***Skills and effective behaviours***

- Can set and agree the distinctive characteristics and culture of the organisation or, in schools with a religious designation, preserve and develop the distinctive character set out in the organisation's trust deed
- acts in a way that exemplifies and reinforces the organisation's culture, values and ethos
- ensures that policy and practice align with the organisation's culture, values and ethos

### **The chair**

#### ***Skills and effective behaviours***

- is able to recognise when the board or an individual member is not behaving as expected and take appropriate action to address this
- leads board meetings in a way which embodies the culture, values and ethos of the organisation

## 1c. Decision-making

Boards which operate effectively as strategic decision-makers are able to provide the foundation for creativity, innovation and improvement in the organisation. Effective decision-making is about moving from free and frank discussion to specific, measurable actions.

### Everyone on the board

#### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- identifies viable options and those most likely to achieve the organisation's goals and objectives
- puts aside vested or personal interests to make decisions that are in the best interests of all pupils/students
- acts with honesty, frankness and objectivity taking decisions impartially, fairly and on merit using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias
- brings integrity, and considers a range of perspectives and diverse ways of thinking to challenge the status quo, reject assumptions and take nothing for granted
- identifies when to seek the advice of an independent clerk/governance professional for guidance on statutory and legal responsibilities and ethical aspects of the board's decision-making
- abides by the principle of collective-decision making and stands by the decisions of the board, even where their own view differs
- encourages transparency in decision making and is willingly answerable to, and open to challenge from, those with an interest in decisions made

### The chair

#### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- ensures the board understands the scope of issues in question and is clear about decisions they need to make
- summarises the position in order to support the board to reach consensus where there are diverging views
- ensures that different perspectives, viewpoints and dissenting voices are properly taken into account and recorded
- facilitates decision-making even if difficult and manages the expectations of executive leaders when doing so
- recognises the limits of any discretionary chair's powers and uses them under due guidance and consideration and with a view to limiting such use
- ensures the board seeks guidance from executive leaders or others in the senior leadership team and from the clerk/governance professional before the board commits to significant or controversial courses of action

## 1d. Collaborative working with stakeholders and partners

Effective boards are well-informed about, and respond to, the views and needs of key stakeholders, particularly parents and carers. They enable productive relationships, creating a sense of trust and shared ownership of the organisation's strategy, vision and operational performance.

<b>Everyone on the board</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• key stakeholders and their relationship with the organisation</li><li>• principles of effective stakeholder management</li><li>• tools and techniques for stakeholder engagement, particularly with regard to engaging parents and carers</li></ul>
<b>Skills and effective behaviours</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• is proactive in consulting, and responding to, the views of a wide group of stakeholders when planning and making decisions</li><li>• anticipates, prepare for and welcome stakeholder questions and ensures that these are answered in a relevant, appropriate and timely manner</li><li>• works in partnership with outside bodies where this will contribute to achieving the goals of the organisation</li><li>• uses clear language and messaging to communicate to parents and carers, pupils/students, staff and the local community</li><li>• is credible, open, honest and appropriate when communicating with stakeholders and partners including clear and timely feedback on how their views have been taken into account</li><li>• considers the impact of the board's decisions and the effect they will have on the key stakeholder groups and especially parents and carers and the local community</li><li>• acts as an ambassador for the organisation</li><li>• supports and challenges leaders to raise aspiration and community cohesion both within the wider community and with local employers</li></ul>

<b>The chair</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the links that the organisation needs to make with the wider community</li><li>• the impact and influence that a leader in the community has particularly on educational issues</li></ul>
<b>Skills and effective behaviours</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• communicates clearly with colleagues, parents and carers, partners and other agencies and checks that their message has been heard and understood</li></ul>

## The chair

- consider how to tailor their communications style in order to build rapport and confidence with stakeholders
- is proactive in seeking and maximising opportunities for partnership working where these are conducive to achieving the agreed strategic goals
- is proactive in sharing good practice and lessons learned where these can benefit others and the organisation
- demonstrates how stakeholder concerns and questions have shaped board discussions if not necessarily the final decision
- when appropriate, seeks external professional advice, knowing where this advice is available from and how to go about requesting it

### 1e. Risk management

Effective boards play a key role in setting and managing risk appetite and tolerance. They are able to ensure that risks are aligned with strategic priorities and improvement plans and intervention strategies provide a robust framework for risk management. These competencies enable those on the board to identify, evaluating and prioritise organisational risks and ensure appropriate action is taken to mitigate against them.

## Everyone on the board

### *Knowledge*

- the principles of risk management and how these apply to education and the organisation
- the process for risk management in the organisation and especially how and when risks are escalated through the organisation for action
- the risks or issues that can arise from conflicts of interest or a breach of confidentiality

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- is able to identify and prioritise the organisational and key risks, their impact and appropriate countermeasures, contingencies and risk owners
- ensures risk management and internal control systems are robust enough to enable the organisation to deliver its strategy in the short- and long-term
- advises on how risks should be managed or mitigated to reduce the likelihood or impact of the risk and on how to achieve the right balance of risk
- ensures the risk management and internal control systems are monitored and reviewed and appropriate actions are taken
- actively avoids conflicts of interest or otherwise declares and manages them

## The chair

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- leads the board and challenges leaders appropriately in setting risk appetite and tolerance
- ensures that the board has sight of, and understands, organisational risks and undertakes scrutiny of risk management plans
- leads by example to avoid, declare and manage conflicts of interest
- knows when the board needs external expert advice on risk management

## 2. Accountability for educational standards and financial performance

**Why it's important:** These are the competencies that the board needs in order to deliver its core functions of holding executive leaders to account for the educational and financial performance of the organisation.

### 2a. Educational improvement

These competencies enable the board to know that the information that they are receiving about the educational performance of children and young people is accurate, to challenge appropriately where necessary and to hold leaders to account for improving outcomes for all young people. Holding leaders to account is about establishing clear expectations, ensuring clear lines of responsibility, putting in place systems for monitoring appropriately, ensuring evaluation and taking action in response to that evaluation.

Everyone on the board
<b>Knowledge</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the importance and impact of high-quality teaching to improving outcomes and the systems, techniques and strategies used to measure teaching quality, pupil progress and attainment</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the importance of a broad and balanced curriculum</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the rationale for the chosen curriculum and how this both promotes the ethos of the organisation and meets the needs of the pupils/students</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the relevant national standards for the phase and type of education and how these are used for accountability and benchmarking</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the relevant statutory testing and assessment regime</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the purposes and principles of assessment outlined in the final report of the <a href="#">Commission on Assessment Without Levels</a>.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the rationale behind the assessment system being used to monitor and measure pupil progress in the organisation</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the key principles, drivers and cycle of school improvement</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the relevant indicators for monitoring behaviour and safety including information about admissions, exclusions, behaviour incidents, bullying and complaints</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the role of behaviour in maintaining a safe environment and promoting learning</li></ul>
<b>Skills and effective behaviours</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>establishes clear expectations for executive leaders in relation to the process of educational improvement and intended outcomes</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>defines the range and format of information and data they need in order to hold executive leaders to account</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>seeks evidence from executive leaders to demonstrate the appropriateness and potential impact of proposed improvement initiatives</li></ul>

## Everyone on the board

- questions leaders on how the in-school assessment system in use effectively supports the attainment and progress of all pupils, including those with a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND)

## Someone on the board

### **Knowledge**

- the requirements relating to the education of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- the requirements relating to the safeguarding of children in education including the Prevent duty
- the duties and responsibilities in relation to health and safety in education

### **Skills and effective behaviours**

- Is confident in their challenge to executive leaders on strategies for monitoring and improving the behaviour and safety of pupils/students

## 2b. Rigorous analysis of data

Board members are required to develop specific knowledge to allow the monitoring of school performance and improvement. It will also assist them in holding leaders to account.

## Everyone on the board

### **Knowledge**

- the DfE performance tables and school comparison tool
- RAISEOnline for school and pupil data
- the evidence base that data is derived from e.g. pupil attainment and progress data and how it is collected, quality assured and monitored across the organisation
- the context of the school and in relation to other schools
- information about attendance and exclusions in the school, local area and nationally
- the importance of triangulating information about pupil progress and attainment with other evidence including information from, executive leaders (e.g. lesson observations, work scrutiny and learning walks), stakeholders including parents, pupils, staff) and external information (benchmarks, peer reviews, external experts)

### **Skills and effective behaviours**

- analyses and interprets data in order to evaluate performance of groups of pupils/students
- analyses and interprets progression and destination data to understand where young people are moving on to after leaving the organisation

## Everyone on the board

- uses published data to understand better which areas of school performance need improvement and is able to identify any further data that is required
- questions leaders on whether they are collecting the right data to inform their assessment and challenges appropriately when data collection is not adding value.
- challenges senior leaders to ensure that the collection of assessment data is purposeful, efficient and valid.

## Someone on the board

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- reviews and analyses a broad range of information and data in order to spot trends and patterns

## The chair

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- works with the clerk, to ensure the right data is provided by executive leaders, which is accessible to board and open to scrutiny
- promotes the importance of data interrogation to hold executive leaders to account

## 2c. Financial frameworks and accountability

These are the skills, knowledge and behaviours which enable the board to ensure that the organisation is in a strong and sustainable financial position to achieve its strategic goals. It is about ensuring the sustained financial health and efficiency of the whole organisation.

## Everyone on the board

### *Knowledge*

- the financial policies and procedures of the organisation, including its funding arrangements, funding streams and its mechanisms for ensuring financial accountability
- the organisation's internal control processes and how these are used to monitor spend and ensure propriety to secure value for public money
- the financial health and efficiency of the organisation and how this compares with similar organisations locally and nationally

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- has a basic understanding of financial management in order to ensure the integrity of financial information received by the board and to establish robust financial controls



## Everyone on the board

- has confidence in the arrangements for the provision of accurate and timely financial information, and the financial systems used to generate such information
- interprets budget monitoring information and communicate this clearly to others
- participates in the organisation's self-evaluation of activities relating to financial performance, efficiency and control
- is rigorous in their questioning to understand whether enough being done to drive financial efficiency and align budgets to priorities

## Someone on the board

### *Knowledge*

- the organisations' current financial health and efficiency and how this compares with similar organisations both locally and nationally

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- uses their detailed financial knowledge and experience, which is appropriate for the scale of the organisation, to provide advice and guidance to the board

## The chair

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- ensures the board holds executive leaders to account for financial and business management, as much as educational outcomes
- leads the board to identify when specialist skills and experience in audit, fraud or human resources is required either to undertake a specific task or more regularly to lead committees of the board

## 2d. Financial management and monitoring

The competencies required will ensure that the board is able to make sufficiently informed and effective decisions on the use of resources and allocation of funds to improve outcomes for children and young people. It will also ensure that public money is utilised efficiently and in the best interest of the organisation.

## Everyone on the board

### *Knowledge*

- the organisation's process for resource allocation and the importance of focussing allocations on impact and outcomes
- the importance of setting and agreeing a viable financial strategy and plan which ensure sustainability and solvency
- how the organisation receives funding through the pupil premium and other grants e.g. primary sport funding, how these are spent and how spending has an impact on pupil outcomes

## Everyone on the board

- the budget setting, audit requirements and timescales for the organisation and checks that they are followed
- the principles of budget management and how these are used in the organisation

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- assimilates the financial implications of organisational priorities and use this knowledge to make decisions about allocating current and future funding
- interprets financial data and asks informed questions about income, expenditure and resource allocation and alignment with the strategic plan priorities

## 2e. Staffing and performance management

The knowledge and behaviours required by the board to oversee executive leaders in their responsibility to ensure that the organisation has the right staff who are managed and incentivised to perform to the best of their abilities.

## Everyone on the board

### *Knowledge*

- the organisation's annual expenditure on staff and resource and any data against which this can be benchmarked against
- how staff are recruited to the organisation and how this compares to good recruitment and retention practice
- how staff performance management is used throughout the organisation in line with strategic goals and priorities and how this links to the criteria for staff pay progression, objective setting and development planning
- the remuneration system for staff across the organisation

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- ensures that the staffing and leadership structures are fit for purpose
- takes full responsibility for maintaining, updating and implementing a robust and considered pay policy
- feels confident in approving and applying the system for performance management of executive leaders
- identifies and considers the budgetary implication of pay decisions and considers these in the context of the spending plan
- pays due regard to ensuring that leaders and teachers are able to have a satisfactory work life balance

## Someone on the board

### *Knowledge*

- human resource (HR) education policy and the organisation's processes in relation to teachers' pay and conditions and the role of governance in staffing reviews, restructuring and due diligence

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- monitors the outcome of pay decisions, including the extent to which different groups of teachers may progress at different rates and checks processes operate fairly

## The chair

### *Knowledge*

- the process and documentation needed to make decisions related to leadership appraisal

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- is confident and prepared in undertaking leadership appraisal
- is able to explain to the board their proposals on leadership pay awards for approval

## 2f. External accountability

This section is about managing the organisation's relationship with those who have a formal or informal role in holding it to account. It enables the board to use their skills and knowledge confidently and effectively to be accountable for the delivery of the organisation's strategic plan, their own decision-making and their oversight of executive leaders.

## Everyone on the board

### *Knowledge*

- the purpose, nature and processes of formal accountability and scrutiny (e.g. DfE, Ofsted, EFA etc.) and what is required by way of evidence
- the national performance measures used to monitor and report performance – including the minimum standards that trigger eligibility for intervention

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- ensures appropriate structures, processes and professional development are in place to support the demands of internal and external scrutiny
- values the ownership that parents and carers and other stakeholders feel about 'their school' and ensures that the board makes itself accessible and answerable to them
- uses an understanding of relevant data and information to present verbal and written responses to external scrutiny (e.g. inspectors/RSCs/EFA)

## The chair

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- is confident in providing strategic leadership to the board during periods of scrutiny
- ensures the board is aware of, and prepared for, formal external scrutiny

## 3. People

**Why it's important:** People that govern need to form positive working relationships with their colleagues to function well as part of a team. They need to be able to relate to staff, pupils/students, parents and carers and the local community and connect to the wider education system in order to enable effective delivery of the organisations strategic priorities.

### 3a. Building an effective team

These are the skills and behaviours necessary to ensure effective relationships and dynamics around the table. They help to foster a learning culture where constructive challenge is welcomed; thinking is diverse; a variety of experiences and perspectives are welcomed; and continuous improvement is the norm.

## Everyone on the board

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- demonstrates commitment to their role and to active participation in governance
- ability to acquire the basic knowledge that they need to be effective in their role
- uses active listening effectively to build rapport and strong collaborative relationships
- welcomes constructive challenge and is respectful when challenging others
- provides timely feedback and is positive about receiving feedback in return
- seeks to resolve misunderstanding at the earliest stage in order to prevent conflict
- raises doubts and encourages the expression of differences of opinion
- is honest, reflective and self-critical about mistakes made and lessons learned
- influences others and builds consensus using persuasion and clear presentation of their views
- demonstrates professional ethics, values and sound judgement
- recognises the importance of, and values the advice provided by, the clerk/governance professional role in supporting the board.

## The chair

### *Knowledge*

- the importance of succession planning to the ongoing effectiveness of both the board and the organisation

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- ensure that everyone understands why they have been recruited and what role they play in the governance structure
- ensures new people are helped to understand their non-executive leadership role, the role of the board and the vision and strategy of the organisation enabling them to make a full contribution
- sets high expectations for conduct and behaviour for all those in governance and is an exemplary role model in demonstrating these
- creates an atmosphere of open, honest discussion where it is safe to constructively challenge conventional wisdom
- creates a sense of inclusiveness where each member understands their individual contribution to the collective work of the board
- promotes and fosters a supportive working relationship between the: board, clerk/governance professional, executive leaders, staff of the organisation and external stakeholders
- identifies and cultivates leadership within the board
- recognises individual and group achievements, not just in relation to the board but in the wider organisation
- takes a strategic view of the skills that the board needs, identifies gaps and takes action to ensure these are filled
- develop the competence of the vice-chair to act as chair should the need arise.
- builds a close, open and supportive working relationship with the vice-chair which respects the differences in their roles
- values the importance of the clerk/governance professional and their assistance in the coordination of leadership and governance requirements of the organisation
- listens to the clerk/governance professional and takes direction from them on issues of compliance and other matters

## 4. Structures

**Why it's important?** Understanding and designing the structures through which governance takes place is vital to avoid unclear and overlapping responsibilities that can lead to dysfunctional or ineffective governance arrangements.

### 4a. Roles and responsibilities

Everyone on the board
<b>Knowledge</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the role, responsibilities and accountabilities of the board, and its three core functions</li><li>the strategic nature of the board's role and how this differs from the role of executive leaders and what is expected of each other</li><li>In academy trusts, the role and powers of Members and how these relate to those of the board</li><li>the governance structure of the organisation and particularly how governance functions are organised and delegated, including where decisions are made</li><li>how the board and any committees (including local governing bodies in a MAT) are constituted</li></ul>
<b>Skills and effective behaviours</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>able to contribute to the design of governance and committee structures that are fit for purpose and appropriate to the scale and complexity of the organisation</li><li>able to adapt existing committee structures as necessary in light of learning/experience including evaluation of impact</li></ul>

The chair
<b>Knowledge</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the importance of their non-executive leadership role, not just in their current position but in terms of their contribution to local and, where appropriate, national educational improvement priorities</li></ul>
<b>Skills and effective behaviours</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>lead discussions and decisions about what functions to delegate</li></ul>

## 5. Compliance

**Why it's important:** to ensure all those involved in governance understand the legal frameworks and context in which the organisation operates and all of the requirements with which it must comply.

### 5a. Statutory and contractual requirements

Everyone on the board
<b>Knowledge</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the legal, regulatory and financial requirements on the board</li><li>the need to have regard to any statutory guidance and government advice including the <a href="#">Governance Handbook</a></li><li>the duties placed upon them under education and employment legislation, and, for academy trusts, the <a href="#">Academies Financial Handbook</a> and their funding agreement(s)</li><li>the articles of association or instrument of government and where applicable, the Trust Deeds</li><li>the Ofsted inspection/regulatory framework</li><li>where applicable<sup>3</sup>, denominational inspection carried in accordance with s.48 of the Education Act 2005</li><li>the board's responsibilities in regard to Equalities and Health and Safety legislation</li><li>duties relating to safeguarding, including the Prevent Duty; duties related to special education needs and disabilities (SEND); and duties related to information, including in the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000</li><li>the school's whistleblowing policy and procedures and any responsibilities of the board within it</li><li>the importance of adhering to organisation policies e.g. on parental complaints or staff discipline issues</li></ul>
<b>Skills and effective behaviours</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>is able to speak up when concerned about non-compliance where it has not been picked-up by the board or where they feel it is not being taken seriously</li><li>explain the board's legal responsibilities and accountabilities</li><li>is able to identify when specialist advice may be required</li></ul>

---

<sup>3</sup> This is relevant to any voluntary or foundation school and any academy in England designated under s.69(3) of School Standards and Framework Act 1998

## The chair

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- sets sufficiently high expectations of the clerk/governance professional, as applicable, ensuring the board is compliant with the regulatory framework for governance and, where appropriate, Charity and Company Law
- ensures the board receives appropriate training or development where required on issues of compliance



## 6. Evaluation

**Why it's important:** Monitoring the boards effectiveness is a key element of good governance. The board needs to assess its effectiveness and efficiency and ensure ongoing compliance with its statutory and legal duties under review. Individuals should also reflect on their own contribution helping to create a stronger and more motivated board.

### 6a. Managing self-review and development

The skills and behaviours that help individuals on the board to reflect on how they personally are demonstrating the agreed values and culture of the organisation and what impact their individual contribution to making to effective governance.

Everyone on the board
<i>Knowledge</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>recognises their own strengths and areas for development and seeks support and training to improve knowledge and skills where necessary</li></ul>
<i>Skills and effective behaviours</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>is outward facing and focused on learning from others to improve practice</li><li>maintains a personal development plan to improve his/her effectiveness and links this to the strategic aims of the organisation</li><li>is open to taking-up opportunities, when appropriate, to attend training and any other opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours</li><li>obtains feedback from a diverse range of colleagues and stakeholders to inform their own development</li><li>undertakes self-review, reflecting on their personal contributions to the board, demonstrating and developing their commitment to improvement, identifying areas for development and building on existing knowledge and skills</li></ul>

The chair
<i>Skills and effective behaviours</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>actively invites feedback on their own performance as chair</li><li>puts the needs of the board and organisation ahead of their own personal ambition and is willing to step down or move on at the appropriate time</li></ul>

### 6b. Managing and developing the board's effectiveness

It is essential for the board to reflect on its own effectiveness including the effectiveness of its processes and structures. This will assist in building relationships and improving accountability, and will enable the board to ensure that there is a clear distinction between strategic and operational leadership. It will also assist in setting the tone and culture of the board.

## Everyone on the board

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- evaluates the impact of the board's decisions on pupil/student outcomes
- utilises inspection feedback fully to inform decisions about board development
- contributes to self-evaluation processes to identify strengths and areas for board development

## The chair

### *Knowledge*

- different leadership styles and applies these appropriately to enhance their personal effectiveness

### *Skills and effective behaviours*

- sets challenging development goals and works effectively with the board to meet them
- leads performance review of the board and its committees
- undertakes open and honest conversations with board members about their performance and development needs, and if appropriate, commitment or tenure
- recognises and develops talent in board members and ensures they are provided with opportunities to realise their potential
- creates a culture in which board members are encouraged to take ownership of their own development
- promotes and facilitates coaching, development, mentoring and support for all members of the board
- is open to providing peer support to other chairs and takes opportunities to share good practice and learning



Department  
for Education

© Crown copyright 2017

This publication (not including logos) is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

To view this licence:

visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3)

email [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

write to Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London, TW9 4DU

About this publication:

enquiries [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)

download [www.gov.uk/government/publications](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications)

Reference: DFE-00021-2017



Follow us on Twitter:  
[@educationgovuk](https://twitter.com/educationgovuk)



Like us on Facebook:  
[facebook.com/educationgovuk](https://facebook.com/educationgovuk)