

nlgla National
Governance
Association

Outstanding Governance AWARDS 2021



Celebrating the best
of school and trust
governance



Thursday 9 September 2021
2pm to 4:30pm

Terrace Pavilion
House of Commons



Outstanding Governance AWARDS 2021



Governing boards and governance professionals make a substantial and valuable contribution to the education of children and young people. These biennial awards celebrate their important role and recognise the very best practice in school and trust governance. Our finalists lead the way as exemplars of good governance and have met rigorous judging criteria to reach the final of the Outstanding Governance Awards 2021.

We will recognise achievements in six award categories:

- Outstanding clerk to a governing board
- Outstanding lead governance professional
- Outstanding vision and strategy
- Outstanding governance in a single school
- Outstanding governance in a multi academy trust
- Outstanding governance in a federation

Awards presented by

Baroness Berridge
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the School System.

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Foreword

The commitment and contribution of those governing our schools and trusts is often overlooked, their hard work usually carried out behind closed doors. NGA's Outstanding Governance Awards offer an opportunity to celebrate the very best in school and trust governance practice and share this work far and wide. This year the awards complement our Visible Governance campaign, which aims to champion and raise the profile of the impact of good governance on schools. With a record number of entries, this year's nominations were particularly competitive, and we were delighted by the willingness of people to nominate themselves and others and share their achievements.

We know that governors and trustees quietly get on with their role to benefit children and young people, not to put themselves in the limelight. Of course, this will always be the priority, but making the role more prominent can only further improve the education of pupils – through increased volunteer recruitment, more effective engagement with stakeholders, and a better understanding of the benefits of good governance.

Our finalists each show commendable examples of improvement and achievement; of facing and overcoming challenges; and innovating and engaging to create positive outcomes. They show us the opportunities and challenges faced by governing boards often unseen by the outside world and that awe-inspiring governance is required in those circumstances. Stories of excellence and sharing best practice are vital to avoid the sector just talking about governance when things go wrong; they help underline that governance truly contributes to the success and sustainability of our schools and the educational achievement and wellbeing of children and young people.

NGA will support all our finalists to share their achievements far and wide: they should be proud of all they have done.

Emma Knights, Chief Executive, NGA

For this year's awards, the achievements of our finalists are set against a backdrop of such an exceptional and difficult time for our schools and wider communities. Throughout the pandemic, governors, trustees and governance professionals have worked tirelessly to support their staff, pupils and families. It is fitting to be able to come together to celebrate that extraordinary dedication and commitment.

Our six categories showcase the breadth and changing landscape of schools and governance. Our board categories recognise excellence in governance in all state school types, acknowledging the different challenges and opportunities each can face as well as how boards create and deliver inspiring visions. Recognising the expanding roles and responsibilities of governance professionals we now have two awards – highlighting the best in clerking and leading governance provision across multiple schools.

What unites all of our finalists is their passion for achieving the best for the children and young people they serve. Each board, clerk and lead governance professional has shown an outstanding quality in their practice, and a belief and total commitment in what good, strong governance can achieve for their schools now and in the future.

Lynn Howard, Chair of Trustees, NGA

Outstanding clerk to a governing board

This award celebrates the integral role of the professional clerk. Our finalists each demonstrate outstanding practice in providing administrative support and legal and procedural advice, and go above and beyond to have a significant impact on the effectiveness of their governing board. Judges commended the passion these individuals have for their role, for improving governance, and for improving outcomes for children and young people. They were heartened by the excellent practice that goes on across the country and how valued clerks are by their boards.

Thank you to our category judges Mandy Parsons, Head of Governor Services, Hampshire County Council and co-chair, NCOGS and Charlotte Harding, Head of National Leaders of Governance Support, NGA.

Winner

Sarah Steven, The Galaxy Trust, Kent

In just two years, Sarah has transformed governance at The Galaxy Trust. Starting her role by conducting surveys and gaining feedback to identify areas for improvement, she has gone on to write handbooks and welcome packs for governors and trustees, draft new schemes of delegation and redefine the role of local governing boards. She ensures that the trust and its committees are focused, stay strategic and effectively carry out their duties. She supports and encourages cross-trust working, from termly chair's meetings to implementing a cross-trust curriculum and standards committee. Highly valued by both by trustees and leaders, the trust CEO praised her diligence, efficiency and above all "unwavering dedication to the pupils and staff". Judges were struck by the impact Sarah has had in her short time at the trust, and how the education and wellbeing of the children is the driver behind all of her work.

Highly commended

Lesley Hardwick, The Education People Clerking Service, schools in Kent

Lesley is recognised for outstanding practice and considerable expertise, in clerking both the maintained and academy sectors, as well as the positive impact she has had on those she mentors and supports. Her experience of conflict management, balancing relationships and personalities and her calming and professional demeanour all allow her to provide first-class support services. Her designed reports, templates and monitoring schedules – allowing governors to effectively triangulate information they are given – have been hugely successful and used as examples of outstanding practice across the county. Judges were impressed by her dedication in supporting and mentoring governors, trustees and clerks in and outside of meetings. One example stood out. Taking the initiative to lead on a board self-evaluation, Lesley guided them in its completion, following up with skills analysis and training recommendations, all while mentoring the new chair to become more confident in leading the process the following year.

Finalists

Kate Williams, South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust, Cornwall

Relatively new to the world of education, Kate has quickly become a trusted voice for governance within her trust. Clerking both the trust board and the six local committees, she has provided additional levels of communication between boards. Kate is adept in supporting and balancing the priorities of each school, the trust board and senior leaders. Judges heard many examples of where her meticulous research to improve processes resulted in more efficient and strategic governance, and how she employs strategies to ensure the ideas and passions of individual governors and trustees are respected while order of business and ethos of meetings are maintained. Judges were impressed with Kate's introduction of a precis of the minutes from each local governing board to support trustees with what they needed to be aware of within each setting.

Beth Yap, Frontier Learning Trust, London

Beth has been instrumental in redesigning the governance structure at her trust and has worked tirelessly to embed new practices. Judges were impressed with her approach to supporting outward-facing governance and facilitation of chairs observing others' practice, recognising the importance of chairs learning from each other and creating their own support framework through buddy systems. Judges heard multiple examples of where she has dealt with challenging circumstances with care and in a manner to affect positive change. Beth's skills, the advice she gives and the manner in which she provides it all are highly valued by the board, including the work she completed through the academisation process and the appointing of a new CEO. Beth holds central a quest for continuous development and sees every meeting and task as an opportunity to improve on previous work.

Outstanding lead governance professional

This award recognises individuals leading and managing clerks, clerking services and governance support in academy trusts, local authorities, and other service providers. Our finalists each show outstanding leadership and have had a demonstrable impact on governance compliance, efficiency, and effectiveness across several schools. Judges described the finalists as “role models for governance professionals” who are value driven leaders, highly skilled practitioners and who conveyed a passion for governance that was truly inspiring.

Thank you to our category judges Peter Swabey, Policy and Research Director, The Chartered Governance Institute and Amy Wright, Clerking Development Manager, NGA.

Winner

Carina Sawyer, Head of Governance, Magna learning Partnership, Wiltshire

Carina is described by the trust CEO as having elevated governance leadership to another level with exceptional professionalism, attention to detail and knowledge of governance. She has overseen the growth of the trust, achieved outstanding clerking through training and developing her clerking team and worked with people across the trust to build a governance structure fit for purpose and the trust's future. Carina demonstrates insightfulness and commitment to achieving excellence in governance, including working hard on recruiting people with the right skills for governance and sharing her knowledge and expertise beyond her trust. She provides appropriate challenge to the chair and CEO, reflects on the effectiveness of governance and implements change. Carina's commitment, skill and clear leadership epitomises the essence of the lead governance professional award.

Highly commended

Becky Poynter, Head of Governance, Unity Schools Partnership, East of England and East London

Becky lives and breathes the values of her trust. She ensures they are embedded within all schools through their governing bodies including introducing a governors' code of conduct, holding clerks' briefings, scrutinising minutes and in the recruitment of governors and trustees. Her role has evolved from working for the trust on a consultancy basis to leading governance, and her effective leadership is evidenced particularly in her work to ensure local governing bodies are not seen as just advisory panels but have a strong focus on school improvement. Becky is proactive in holding regular meetings with chairs to discuss ideas, policies and processes, and developed due diligence tools for new schools joining the trust. From writing handbooks to introducing tailored training for governors and an annual conference, her commitment to empowering others through her support and guidance is clear.

Finalists

Karen Froggatt, lately Chief Governance Officer, currently Clerk to the Trust Board, Wellspring Academy Trust, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire

During her five years as Chief Governance Officer, Karen has embedded effective governance throughout a growing number of schools. Drawing on her experience of governance in a commercial role she worked to address the lack of awareness of governance in schools, setting up procedures to professionalise the governance function. From spearheading an ethical audit and analysing the trust's compliance with articles of association to raising the subject of the trust's diversity profile and suggesting actions, Karen's professionalism and dedication to being a custodian of good governance practice is clear. The trust chair emphasised the privilege it is to work with Karen, seeing the results of her hard work both within the trust and in how she has clearly passed on knowledge and expertise to ensure the continued effectiveness of governance throughout the trust.

Ann Adams, Service Manager, Support Services for Education, Somerset

Ann is held in high esteem for her service to governance across Somerset. Ann caters for service users across different governing structures, putting relationships and genuine collaboration at the centre. She reflects on how current practices can be improved, anticipates changes needed and quickly implements new systems and procedures to ensure continued effective governance. She holds regular meetings with chairs from different settings, embraces social media to aid communication and is a voice for governance on many committees with local authorities. In addition to her achievements, she works to raise the profile of the governance professional, working with chairs and ensuring clerks have an annual appraisal. Her passion for providing governance advice, training and support was described by colleagues as contagious.

Outstanding vision and strategy

Setting vision and strategy is a core function of the governing board, and this award recognises a board that has an inspiring vision and can demonstrate how it is effective in practice. What shines through in each of our finalist's work is how they have collaborated with their school community to create a truly shared vision that makes clear an ambitious and aspirational expectation for their pupils. They all demonstrate a clear commitment to strategy development.

Thank you to our category judges Paul Aber, Head of Training Development, NGA and Emma Knights, Chief Executive, NGA.

Winners

Learn Academies Trust, Leicestershire

Creating an effective professional learning community where colleagues thrive and pupil flourish is central to this board's vision. Their decision to apply for teaching school status and associate research status is a clear example of how the trust's vision and strategy manifests. While united by a shared vision, trustees work to preserve the unique character of each school – for example their staff designed curriculum framework sets out principles for each school to design its own bespoke curriculum. The framework exemplifies how partnership working instigates change that builds upon learning and experience from within the trust. The trust's overarching ambition that all children achieve well and that year-on-year more pupils reach age-related standards or above is being realised. Trustees appreciate that any gains in key performance measures should be rooted in the context of rich learning experiences and unconditional positive regard for all pupils, and a sense of shared learning drives ambition for pupils and staff.

Riccall Community Primary School, North Yorkshire

This board's consistent efforts to build its profile among the school community came to life when developing and embedding their new vision for 2021. Taking an innovative and outward-looking approach, the board learned from local schools, worked collaboratively with the leadership team and found ways to engage even the youngest pupils in the process. Virtual assemblies focused on areas of the vision and maintained the board's visibility despite the pandemic. Their efforts were rewarded. Pupils at Riccall speak confidently and with pride about the Riccall values of perseverance, enthusiasm, teamwork and success, with a clear understanding of the board's role. Central to the school's plan is their 'fifty things to do' initiative – a list of extra-curricular tasks or activities for pupils to do during their time at Riccall. The school's journey to develop their vision has brought the school community together. Staff, governors and pupils have a sense of togetherness and work with clarity and purpose to achieve their goals.

Finalists

Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust, Teesside and North Yorkshire

Two years ago, the trust embarked on an exciting journey to reaffirm its vision and build a strategic plan to deliver on their ambitions. The new strategy has delivered renewed enthusiasm and energy, and an upward trajectory in the quality of education offered. Students were given a voice and influence through a new student council and feel invested in the common goals. The board ensure that the right systems and processes are in place to deliver on the vision and strategy, with the school improvement framework intrinsically linked to the strategic plan. A link governance framework supports robust monitoring of strategic priorities and drop-in sessions for academy committee members, trustees and trust leaders are a key method of identifying and overcoming challenges. Trustees are committed to continuous development, keeping the vision under constant review by continuing consultation with stakeholders to ensure it remains relevant to the diverse communities that make up the trust.

Wellspring Academy Trust, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire

Overseeing an amalgamation of what were five separate trusts, this board maintains a deep understanding of its diverse community and the identity of each academy. The trust adopted a renewed vision and strategy in 2021, with work done at academy level to inform and consult stakeholders and build ownership of the trust's vision. Their chair's network and innovative communication methods provide a platform for engaging stakeholders across the trust. While celebrating independence, trustees value and promote collaboration – in policy development, sharing best practice within and beyond the trust, links with other trusts and social enterprise initiatives for pupils. Pupils take on the trust vision to become responsible citizens at home, at school and in the community. Judges were impressed with the board's long-term view and ambition – as far as 100 years when it comes to environmental planning – and their commitment to working together for the betterment of themselves and of one another.

Outstanding governance in a single school

Our finalists each demonstrate how the eight elements of effective governance enable them to fulfil their core responsibilities and go beyond the basics of their role to have a significant impact on the education provided to pupils in their school. Facing a range of challenges and circumstances, they all display outstanding strategic leadership, effective support and challenge to executive leaders, and the courage and dedication to make bold decisions in the interest of their pupils.

Thank you to our category judges Lynn Howard, Chair of Trustees, NGA and Emma Balchin, Director of Professional Development, NGA.

Winner

Cleeve School, Gloucestershire

Cleeve School demonstrates what can be achieved with an engaged and effective governing board. The board is energetic and focused on driving improvement and ensuring the best for each pupil at the school. From deep dives into pupil attendance and exclusions to ensuring school trips and educational experiences are accessible to all, the board places inclusion at the heart of improvement. Decision-making is informed by listening to the experiences and ideas of pupils and staff, with each board meeting beginning with a pupil presentation. They value the importance of engaging with parents and their place in the local community, reviewing social media platforms used by parents to pinpoint key areas to improve relationships and the perception of the school. Mandatory governor development, succession planning and one-to-one discussions on development demonstrate their commitment to improving their practice and the judges were struck by the strength of the board in carrying out its duties with enthusiasm.

Highly commended

Pathways Learning Centre, South Gloucestershire

This board excels in its outward-looking strategy and child-centered approach. Priding itself on provision for children both in and outside of their setting, the centre has made a considerable contribution to the local community, working to reduce exclusion rates and develop a network of support for the most vulnerable children. The board has a deep understanding of the dynamic nature of their setting, established through a comprehensive use of data and engagement with stakeholders. This enables it to provide effective, tailored support to meet the needs of each pupil who comes to the centre, including overseeing the development of a bespoke enriching curriculum offer for each pupil. The board understands the important and challenging work done by staff and prioritise their wellbeing and invest in their development. They know when courageous conversations are needed and how to strike the right balance between support and challenge to continue to grow and be a centre of excellence for alternative provision.

Finalists

Caroline Haslett Primary School, Milton Keynes

Overseeing significant improvement of the school and its pupils, this board continues to look and think ahead. From board self-reflection and training to regularly reviewing strategy and vision, it is proactive in looking for ways to improve and achieve what they want the school to be in the future. Judges were impressed with the board's use of exit interviews when pupils come to the end of their journey at Caroline Haslett to evaluate if the school's intended outcomes have been achieved and to identify areas of improvement. The board understands and actively works to ensure they reflect the community they serve, seeking out a diverse range of volunteers who bring skills which means that individually and collectively the board's skillset compliments the school's vision. This is a clearly passionate board that strives to promote high standards and ensuring each child has the best experience of their school.

Snaith Primary School, East Riding of Yorkshire

Judges were particularly impressed with this board's strategic approach and balance of support and challenge. The strategy is intrinsically linked to the school's development priorities. Monitoring activities through data, collaborative working, subject deep dives and their awareness of changes to the education system lead this to be a highly focused board. Able to adapt their approach effectively, the board changed its monitoring approach due to the pandemic to ensure it could meet its responsibilities without compromising staff wellbeing or adding to staff workload. At board level there is a commitment to embracing diversity of thought and identifying and filling skills gaps. Aware of the importance of diversity both on the board and in school life, they actively work to ensure pupils and staff are aware of the diversity existing outside of their immediate community. An engaged and well-informed board, they show their willingness to identify and tackle areas for improvement both in school and at board level.

Outstanding governance in a multi academy trust

Category sponsor

ForumStrategy

This award recognises outstanding governance across a multi academy trust.

Finalists evidenced how their governance practice across the trust has evolved over time, demonstrated a solid strategic approach, and have promoted a healthy culture and positive change. They demonstrate the stories of success where central and local governance works together as one organisation to best serve their schools.

Thank you to our category judges Sam Henson, Director of Policy and Information, NGA and Clare Collins, Head of Consultancy, NGA.

Winners

Anglian Learning, East of England

This trust is driven by a strong moral purpose to provide the best educational outcomes and experiences for their pupils. The board's commitment to this purpose is reflected in the deliberation and challenge in every part of the trust's governance. When taking on a smaller trust of five schools, the board balanced moral purpose with effective challenge, scrutiny and risk management in considering the proposals, ensuring plans were in place to manage the transition successfully. The board ensures excellent communication between the central team and local tier, with trustees attending local tier meetings and chair governance forums which has enabled them to tap into local knowledge and have a deep understanding of their schools. Those governing locally also value the support and capacity provided by the trust which drives improvement. Anglian Learning excels in all aspects of governance, driven by the experience on the board from other sectors and their commitment to training and development which informs and strengthens governance.

STEP Academy Trust, South London and East Sussex

STEP's story epitomises how governance in a growing organisation needs to evolve and change. Judges were impressed by the board's ongoing reflection about the effectiveness of its practice. Reflection resulted in changes to local governance which ensures valuable central support is given through organised training, forums and central clerking support while local boards retain the flexibility to adapt to their context. The trust's culture and ethos – characterised as the STEP way – is evident in every discussion, with the board active in formulating and refining the approach and understanding the challenges of exporting culture to new academies within the trust without imposing on them. The board led the development of trust-wide roadmap to becoming an anti-racist organisation, underlining STEP's commitment to equality, social justice and how the board leads change across the trust. With its impressive record of school improvement, this board understands how to export its excellent practice while continually reflecting on how to improve.

Finalists

Nexus Multi Academy Trust, Yorkshire

Comprising predominantly of special all-through schools, the trust had a particular challenge to meet the complex needs of pupils and their families during the pandemic. With the support of the board, the trust rose to the challenge. Throughout, the board's strategic mindset helped the trust

to continue to look ahead with ambition. Standing out for its effective approach to stakeholder engagement, the board demonstrates a commitment to putting the voices of pupils, parents and staff at the heart of decisions including through surveys and its 'trust parliament'. Engagement tests where the culture and ethos are realised in practice and the board understand the engagement challenges of largely serving children with special educational needs. Judges were encouraged by the emphasis placed on local governance as the ambassadors and eyes and ears of the trust, with strong evidence for the trust being active in consulting with and listening to their local governing boards, including a forum for local governing board chairs.

Northern Star Academies Trust, North and West Yorkshire

In 2020 this board launched a new vision and strategy for the trust. The 'NSAT promise' – which promotes academic achievement along with care, kindness and empathy – informs decision-making and demonstrates a gold standard in a trust board setting a culture which permeates the trust. The trust understands the importance of governance CPD and how to do this effectively, for example by providing short forums in the evening. Attendance for these sessions has been very high, reflecting and contributing to the broader strength of local governance throughout the trust. Judges were pleased to see a healthy balance between central support for local governing boards and protecting the individual characters of schools, ensuring local insights are heard. Judges were also impressed by the support provided by the trust's governance professional who offers effective support to boards at all levels within the trust.

Unity Schools Partnership, East of England and East London

As the trust continues to grow, the board has proven itself to be highly effective in driving school improvement. Having expanded into specialist provision in recent years, the board has ensured sufficient internal capacity to do this effectively, balancing this with the needs of their other schools. Judges were impressed by the board's approach to self-evaluation and reflection – working closely with external partners and using external reviews and reports to provide an important source of triangulation and assurance for the board. Termly chair's briefings keep local governing boards informed, alongside an annual conference for all of those governing in the trust. This, complemented by local tier contributions to the trust's strategy, finance briefings and termly clerks' briefings shows the value placed on local governance. The relationship between the chair and CEO is also highly effective, being professional, honest and supportive, both with a keen understanding of the role of governance in school improvement.

Outstanding governance in a federation

This award is to recognise the outstanding governance and strategic leadership of those governing a federation. Our two winners clearly demonstrate the benefits of having one governing board with responsibility for more than one maintained school. They balance a commitment to work together as one organisation with remaining outward-facing and retaining school identity. These are both federations whose boards have faced real challenges and the strength of governance is making a difference.

Thank you to our category judges Emma Knights, Chief Executive, NGA and Rani Kaur, Head of Advice, NGA.

Winners

Castle Church of England Federation, Hertfordshire

Since federating in 2018, the board has overseen a transformation for the staff and pupils in both their schools. Prior to the federation, one school had a long period of leadership and financial instability. A new leadership structure together with one governing board with a common desire to deliver high quality education has benefitted both schools. Staff retention is good, communication with parents is improved and streamlined, and pupil numbers are increasing for reception against the local trajectory. Pupils with SEND often exceed expectations on progress and this can be tracked back to the board's focus on improving practice on SEND. The work of the board has raised the profile of the schools in the local community, with lots of focus put on engaging stakeholders, from termly 'visit week' meetings with staff and pupils to communicating with parents and the church community through termly newsletters. The values and vision of this board shine through all that they are doing, alongside a professionalism, commitment and practice which ensure that they take bold decisions when needed to improve provision for pupils and ensure its sustainability.

Islington Futures Federation of Community Schools, London

Islington Futures' board is driven by a core vision to make a difference to the life chances of young people in the local community. There is a strong focus on stakeholder engagement with pupil, staff and parent surveys reported both locally and at high level to the board. A blend of central and local governance has resulted in robust accountability and oversight, while retaining individual school identity. From rotating governors around school committees to sharing best practice and successful initiatives, the board has a clear understanding of the priorities, characteristics, and challenges of each school – and how to tailor their approach to achieve the best for all. This board took a significant decision to take on a school requiring improvement, and the judges recognised the consideration of the board in weighing up the difficulty of the school's circumstances with the potential to benefit more pupils. The board ensured measures were in place to improve behaviours, reduce exclusions and improve staff retention. The board show outstanding practice, are fully engaged, and retain both an outward perspective and an internal focus. Their enthusiasm, expertise and ambition is infectious: their recent executive head recruitment confirms their trajectory of travel.



Our mission

Our mission is to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in England by improving the effectiveness of governance and promoting high standards.

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.

We represent the views of governors, trustees and governance professionals at a national level and work closely with, and lobby, UK government and educational bodies.

To find out more about NGA, our services and membership, please visit www.nga.org.uk

ForumStrategy

Good governance and leadership is at a premium unlike ever before

Forum Strategy is proud to sponsor this year's Outstanding Governance Awards. As an organisation that has supported executive leaders in trusts for many years now, we know how fundamentally important good governance is to both trusts' and schools' long-term success. Chief Executives, executive leaders, and head teachers depend on your direction, guidance, support and constructive challenge to thrive in their roles – not least in these demanding and uncertain times. Young people also depend on you to create the vision and internal accountabilities for an educational experience that is responsive to the changing environment they are growing up in, whilst at the same time based on high quality learning and teaching.



As someone with a particular interest in supporting CEOs in their roles, I know from speaking to those who have achieved sustained success in trusts over a number of years that the quality of their board has played a crucial part in that. They tell me that having diverse, expert, and committed trustees and governors – who are willing to balance informed support with thoughtful challenge – is an essential ingredient in effective trust leadership. Where we have seen trusts fail or struggle, you can almost always pin some of it down to a lack of high quality governance. This is why we must champion, encourage, and promote good governance where we find it; and there are many examples.

For Forum Strategy, we are committed to ensuring that CEOs and Chief Operating Officers in particular continue to receive high quality support in the months and years ahead. We do this through our national

leadership development networks – connecting trust leaders with one another, as well as with expert leaders and thought-leaders across other sectors; through our acclaimed Being The CEO programme (now into its fifth cohort in 2021); and through high quality executive coaching.

This support is more important than ever because the context has changed rapidly. Due to demographics, more leaders are reaching retirement age at a time when the system needs to retain their experience – and inevitably we will rapidly need to support an incoming new generation of Chief Executives and Chief Operating Officers. We also know that trusts themselves have some big tasks not only in supporting pupils post-pandemic, but also in addressing diverse and strategically important areas from cyber-security and environmental sustainability, to organisational growth.

I believe good governance will be characterised by the quality of the opportunities you provide for leaders to access high quality and relevant professional development. Our leaders have faced the leadership challenge of a generation, now they face the leadership opportunity of a generation – and they depend on your support and constructive challenge more than ever to realise these opportunities so they benefit young people.

Thank you for all that you do for our education system and for the difference you make.

Michael Pain is the Founder of Forum Strategy and author of 'Being The CEO' (John Catt Educational, 2019). You can find out more about Forum Strategy at www.forumstrategy.org

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