



Time management tips for chairs

NGA provides a range of [information, guidance and development opportunities](#) to support chairs of governing boards in what is a complex and challenging role.

We used our [research into how chairs spend their time](#) to create these time management tips. Each chair has unique skills, experience and circumstances - everyone works differently but we hope our tips offer helpful suggestions.

1. Develop strong working relationships that set reasonable expectations

- A relationship with your vice chair that's built on understanding one another's strengths will likely lead to efficient sharing of workload and build the leadership capacity of the governing board. [Find out more about the role of vice-chair here](#).
- The relationship between chair and school leader is fundamental. Planning from the outset how your routine engagement will work (e.g. a monthly 'catch-up' meeting) helps build realistic routines that work alongside one another's commitments.
- Be prepared to speak up and say if the workload of the chair is becoming unmanageable for you – what can be changed, done differently, adjusted to make it more manageable?

2. Delegate

- Tasks like new governor induction and mentoring could be shared across the governing board.
- [Model role descriptions](#) can be adapted to document the delegation decisions you make - governing boards are most effective when everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- If you're a chair within a multi academy trust, our [scheme of delegation guidance](#) provides an opportunity to reflect on how delegation works in your trust.

3. Fully utilise your clerk's services and expertise

- A good clerk/governance professional is fundamental to the smooth running of meetings and the overall effectiveness of all governing boards.
- Work efficiently with your clerk and draw on their services fully, allowing you to focus on leadership of the board and strategic responsibilities (rather than administrative tasks).
- You can't be knowledgeable about all education issues – your clerk should be able to locate key information to support you when required.
- For more information about the role of clerk or governance professional, you can [read model role descriptions here](#).

4. Concentrate on what's important

- Given the responsibility attached to the role of chair, it might feel like you have a duty to participate in all aspects of school life.
- Focusing on strategic priorities rather than operational activities helps make the most of the time you have available and maximises the overall impact of your board.
- Our [Being Strategic guide](#) provides a framework for strategy development and a focused monitoring approach.



5. Don't govern at more than one layer in a multi academy trust

- If you're chair of a MAT trust board, avoid taking up additional positions on a local academy committee or as a member of the trust. The role of chair in a MAT is substantial and so taking up multiple positions isn't recommended.
- It's also important that members are independent of trustees in order to carry out effective oversight and hold trustees to account for good governance – this is difficult to achieve if trustees are also members.
- Learn more from our guide [academy trusts: the role of members](#)

6. Take time to reflect

- We asked a number of chairs to keep a diary of how they spend their governing time; many participants found the diary a useful self-evaluation tool.
- If you step back from your to-do list, you may find an opportunity to do things differently - perhaps when you reflect on the work you've done, you can see where you've made the biggest impact.

NGA support and development

- The NGA [Leading Governance leadership development programme](#) provides chairs, vice chairs, committee chairs and future chairs opportunities for developing leadership skills and confident governance. The programme provides opportunities for networking and peer support.

Further reading

- [The Chair's Handbook](#) - essential reading for chairs (also suitable for vice chairs and committee chairs)
- [Preparing you board for the future](#) - a practical guide to succession planning
- [What governing boards and school leaders should expect from each other](#)
- [Being strategic: a guide for governing boards](#) includes an annual cycle for creating, monitoring and reviewing strategy
- [Skills audit and matrix](#) - tools for governing board self-review
- [Model role descriptions](#) for chairs, governors, trustees, clerks and governance professionals