

Joanne Sanchez-Thompson

I wish to put myself forward as a trustee of the National Governance Association because I am deeply committed to ensuring that governance drives meaningful outcomes for children and young people. Having recently retired as CEO of a multi-academy trust comprising six primary schools, I am eager to contribute my experience to the NGA and its mission to strengthen governance and leadership across the education sector. Throughout my career, improving the life chances of children and young people has been the primary driver of my work, guiding every leadership and governance decision I have made.

My career in education spans more than forty years, including teaching, leadership, and governance roles in both primary and secondary schools. I began as a classroom teacher, progressing to senior leadership and headship, which gave me first-hand insight into the challenges faced by schools, staff, and governors. I have served as a teacher governor in a maintained middle school, community governor and chair of a maintained primary school, headteacher member of a governing body, trustee of a single-academy trust, CEO and trustee of a multi-academy trust, and trustee of another MAT. These roles have enabled me to develop a deep understanding of strategic planning, accountability, compliance, and risk management, always viewed through the lens of maximising educational outcomes for learners.

I recently completed a four-year term as a member of the National Executive of the NAHT, the union's governing body. In this role, I helped set national strategy, shape policy, and oversee governance arrangements. The experience reinforced my belief that effective governance requires clear vision, transparent decision-making, and collective responsibility, all with the basis of improving educational opportunities and outcomes.

As CEO of a MAT, I led the trust through growth, external scrutiny, and strategic development. I worked closely with trustees to develop and embed shared vision and values, ensure robust financial oversight, and foster a culture of continuous improvement. In every decision, the guiding question was: "How will this improve the life chances of the children in our schools?" This values-driven approach ensured governance, leadership, and operational priorities were aligned to maximise impact for our children.

Beyond school leadership, I have worked as a local authority school improvement partner, supporting headteachers and governing boards to strengthen leadership capacity and accountability. As an independent consultant, I have worked with over twenty schools on headteacher performance management reviews and delivered numerous governor/trustee training sessions, helping boards develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make a measurable difference for children.

I bring to the NGA a combination of strategic insight, practical experience, and a values-driven perspective. I understand that trusteeship involves ensuring strategic clarity, holding the executive to account, compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks, prudent management of assets, and fostering high standards of governance. Above all, I will ensure that the ultimate focus of all decisions remains the enhancement of life chances for children and young people, helping the NGA continue to influence national policy, strengthen governance practice, and support its members effectively.