

# Our achievements in 23/24

Championing good governance to  
improve the education and wellbeing  
of children and young people

National Governance Association  
November 2024



# Foreword



**Emma Balchin**  
Chief executive  
NGA



**Lawayne Jefferson**  
Co-chairs of trustees  
NGA



**Alastair Cowen**  
Co-chairs of trustees  
NGA

**This past year, the National Governance Association (NGA) has made exciting strides in strengthening governance across schools and trusts.**

**We continue to shine a spotlight on the vital role that governance plays – not only within education but also in wider society.**

Our members tell us that, in the face of significant financial pressures, schools are navigating rising costs, high levels of child poverty, increasing special education needs and complexity and the subsequent need to provide an expanded range of services amidst falling pupil numbers. Despite efforts to prioritise staff wellbeing and mitigate recruitment and retention challenges, some school and trust boards also have to consider redundancies or a reduced curriculum. Making the role of governance ever more critical to the success of school communities.

To this end, the National Governance Association (NGA) has made significant strides in strengthening governance across schools and trusts over the past year.

We have invested our charitable resources in supporting boards to address governance workload, board recruitment, and diversity, addressing common governance pitfalls and structural challenges, supporting pupil attendance, handling increasing parental complaints, and minimising exclusions. Our efforts include hosting conferences and webinars and producing new guidance.

School funding remains a central element of our advocacy, and we continue to support our members with resources, training, and policy updates to navigate today's complex educational landscape confidently. Throughout all our initiatives, NGA remains committed to empowering governance volunteers and professionals across the sector.

This report aims to highlight our key areas of work over the year to demonstrate our positive achievements aligned to our members' priorities. It is not a record of all the work of the organisation, whilst it does attempt to cover all aspects of NGA's work.

# About us

NGA is the national membership body for governors, trustees, and governance professionals in England's schools and trusts. We provide expert support, resources, and e-learning to strengthen governance and help every pupil thrive.

We adapt to evolving governance needs, represent your views nationally, influence policy, and drive change through media and partnerships.

"My membership enables me to feel I belong to a national body that is providing for my needs and helping to shape and move governance forward nationally."

NGA member

"The most valuable support has been training, support, and updates. Would recommend it to others as good value for money."

NGA member



working either from our Birmingham office or remotely across the country.



**68%**  
of our team govern in schools or trusts.



In October 2024, the staff engagement score was reported as 4 out of 5.



**1:2.99**  
Our current pay ratio is 1:2.99 between the highest and lowest paid staff.



**10**  
trustees  
representing all the regions of England

The reporting period of 'this year' is from November 2023 to October 2024. All other figures and information are correct as of 31 October 2024.

\*\* This report of our achievements complements the formal report and accounts published on the Charity Commission website for the year up to 31 March 2024.

# Our year in numbers

## The majority of schools benefit from NGA membership and services

**3,738**

attendees at  
our events



NGA has represented  
governance on

**32**

Stakeholder  
groups



**66,114**

members receive  
our weekly  
newsletter



**76%** of Gold  
Advice  
queries are answered  
the same or next  
working day



**2,257**

Gold Advice queries  
resolved, up 5%  
from last year



**270**

resources  
on Knowledge  
Centre



**190**

governance  
professional jobs  
advertised for free



**90,958**

copies of Governing  
Matters magazine  
distributed



**23,727**

Learning Link  
modules  
completed





# A new dawn for NGA

In September, Emma Balchin stepped into the role of chief executive at NGA, following six years with the organisation. With over 25 years of experience in education, leadership, and school improvement, Emma brings extensive expertise in maintained school and academy governance.

At the start of the academic year, NGA moved to a new, modern office at Boutique Workplace, 102 Colmore Row, in the heart of Birmingham.

The space features contemporary and flexible work areas that promote collaboration, support our expanding team, and boost productivity.

This relocation underscores our commitment to providing a dynamic, professional environment for our staff, empowering us to serve our members better and advance our mission.



# Information, advice and guidance

## Guidance

The NGA **Knowledge Centre** is the essential resource hub, providing comprehensive information and best practice guidance for governors, trustees, and governance professionals at all levels and across all settings.

Number of views  
**299,394**

Number of resources  
**270**

Number of downloads  
**108,951**

Number of new resources  
**37**

## Gold Advice

Gold Advice is NGA's independent and confidential advice service.

Number of queries responded to  
**2,257**



A **5%** increase from, last year



**76%** queries are answered the same or next working day



## Events

Over **30** membership events

**12** open access webinars

National Governance Conference for Schools and Trusts had **300** registered attendees

"This is a great event for members; learning, gathering inspiration and networking. All essential for an effective governing board."

Attendee

"Such a worthwhile day with some superb relevant articulate brave speakers. Great to meet in real life with people from different places and share different experiences."

Attendee

# Membership survey 2024

**1,539** members shared their views on their NGA membership experience, providing valuable insights into the support, resources, and advocacy that matter most to them. Their feedback guides our efforts to enhance member value and impact in governance.

## Impact of NGA on effectiveness of board

**9 out of 10** of respondents said that NGA membership had a positive impact on the effectiveness of their governing board

## Representing your voice

‘NGA’s policies and positions represent my views on governance’

**4 out of 5**

‘NGA is effective in representing governors, trustees and governance professionals in the national education arena’

**4 out of 5**

## Value for money

**4 out of 5**

## Satisfaction

**4 out of 5**

Learning Link (e-learning platform)  
Knowledge Centre on NGA’s web-site  
Publication – The Chair’s Handbook

**“I feel the resources the NGA offer for governors is invaluable.”**



## Top reasons why members join

- To broaden awareness of issues and good practice
- To stay updated with changes
- To access e-learning (NGA Learning Link)

## Governance Professionals



**190**

Governance professionals jobs advertised



**321**

Attended June’s network meeting



**504**

attended December’s network meeting



**460**

Attended the Governance professional conference

## Governing Matters

This year, we distributed **90,958** copies of our popular membership magazine. Additionally, many members opted to read the magazine online.

To encourage member engagement with Governing Matters, we sent four issues of the Governing Matters bulletin to members who chose the **digital option**, reaching approximately **33,000 people**.





# Professional development

## Learning Link

Our e-learning platform offers **60 easy-to-use**, informative modules to help you develop your governance skills and knowledge. As the market leader in school governance e-learning, Learning Link covers every aspect of your role.

**16**   
new modules

**53%**   
increase in users

  
**23,727**  
modules completed since October 2022

  
**65**  
modules

**95%** of governors and trustees would recommend our new modules to others



## NGA training and consultancy

Over 250 bespoke training and consultancy assignments delivered.

“Thank you to the consultant for the manner in which he performed the review and for the quality of his analysis, findings and recommendations.”

“It was a hugely helpful and informative review, undertaken in an efficient, professional and collaborative manner.”

“The set of recommendations will be of great value in strengthening our school governance.”

Dave Pearce, Chair, The Vale Federation

“Great session which highlighted for me what governors should be asking of the schools from the ‘other side’ after being a recent Senco. Thank you.”

Rachel Parkin, Community Governor, Maltby Hilltop Special School

“Loved how interactive it was and learned a lot of practical skills to approach my role.”

School governor



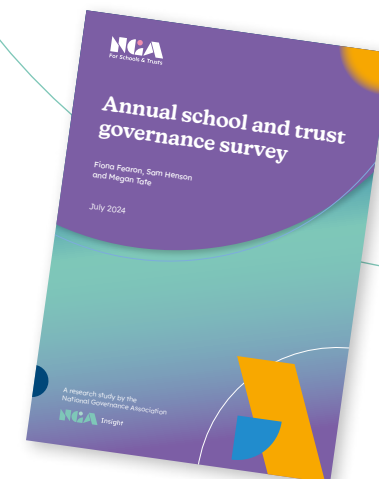


# Annual School and Trust Governance Survey 2024

The NGA annual school and trust governance survey is the largest of its kind. It is a self-selecting, online survey conducted by NGA for 14 consecutive years.

Over 3,000 governors, trustees, and local governors participated in this year's survey, which provided a comprehensive overview of school and trust governance the survey was hosted by Edurio, England's leading stakeholder feedback platform for schools and multi-academy trusts.

edurio



## Governance volunteers and recruitment challenges

**52%**

of governors and trustees are over 60. The highest it's been since this survey began

**30%**

of respondents are considering resigning

**95%**

of respondents identify as white

**76%**

of respondents report difficulty in recruiting new governors and trustees

**29%**

of respondents now receive paid time off for governance duties

**76%**

of respondents agree their governance role is manageable

## Funding

**19%**

of schools and trusts perceive themselves as financially sustainable in the medium to long term

**60%**

of governing boards now cite balancing the budget as their top challenge

**39%**

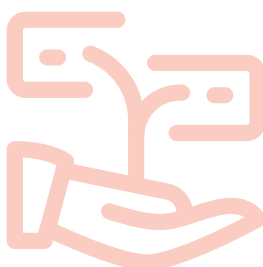
of respondents report that falling pupil numbers have impacted their finances

**59%**

of respondents report having to reduce teaching or cut certain subjects due to budget constraints

**74%**

cite access to funding for SEND as their top challenge



## Pupil, family and community needs



**37%**

of boards identified support for children with SEND as a top challenge, up from 25% in 2022

**32%**

say attendance is a top challenge, and 33% said it is a key strategic priority

**51%**

said there has been an increase in the support provided by their school or trust due to societal needs

**49%**

of respondents report an increase in safeguarding concerns in the past 12 months

## Staffing, resources and accountability

**66%**

of secondary schools grapple with acute recruitment challenges. 43% also report retention issues

**54%**

reported regularly reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of their organisation's CPD programmes

**49%**

% of respondents agree that the condition of their school buildings negatively impacts the learning environment

**51%**

of respondents identify Ofsted as the single most significant factor shaping practice within their school or trust

# Influence

As the national membership body for governors, trustees, and governance professionals in England's schools and trusts, NGA actively engages with sector developments and advocates for a strong education system that meets the needs of all pupils. We regularly meet with government ministers, adapt to evolving governance needs, represent members' views nationally, influence policy, and drive change through media and partnerships.

## Policy and research reports

### Total: 5

- Learning from the National Leaders of Governance Part 2
- The mature MAT model: Success, innovation and challenges
- the time it takes to govern
- Annual Governance Survey 2024
- Taking stock of governance workload

## Additional research work

- Time it takes to govern - time use diaries
- Exit interviews, thematic analysis
- Disadvantage snap survey, NAO consultation
- STRB snap survey, consultation
- Minimum service levels consultation survey

Plus 16 briefing papers for us/civil servants/partners on specific survey topics

## Working groups/round tables/stakeholder groups

### Total: 32

- DfE Taskforce Tech Solutions Subgroup
- Parental participation in education APPG
- Teaching profession APPG
- School food APPG
- DfE/Anna Freud toolkit working group

ANNUAL SURVEY  
RESPONSES  
**3,043**

## Initiatives supported

### Total: 12

- Joint open letter to Prime Minister: Two child benefit cap
- Letter to Gillian Keegan: Governance support
- Joint open letter to Gillian Keegan: Mental health and attendance
- Joint letter to Damien Hinds: auto-enrolment to FSM
- School Cuts Campaign



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[nga.org.uk](https://nga.org.uk)

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**NGA is the national membership association for governors, trustees and governance professionals in England's state schools and trusts.**

We empower those in school and trust governance with valuable resources, expert support and e-learning. Together, we're raising standards and shaping stronger governance to ensure every pupil can thrive today – and tomorrow.

