

Simon Philip Blackburn

I have been an enthusiastic advocate of the role of governors and latterly, trustees, since my own experience as the headteacher of a secondary school with a group of compliant and overly accepting governors. Through recruitment and training my governors became the strong force for positive change in the school that all the pupils, parents, and the community needed. I immediately joined the governing body of my own daughter's school and have been a governor or trustee with varying committee and board leadership responsibilities for the last 30 years.

As a mentor to new headteachers in challenging schools through the Ambition Institute, I have championed the support and challenge of governors and trustees as well as the invaluable relationships with the community that the role fosters. As a lead Ofsted inspector, I was always keen to understand just how governors and trustees contributed to the efficient running and effective outcomes of a school, rather than just quizzing them on the school priorities or their understanding of their role.

I chaired an Interim Executive Board in a secondary school in the north-east of England. This was a huge commitment but one which was incredibly rewarding and taught me so much about delegated authority and working within complex administrative structures.

More recently, as an education consultant with specialist interest in helping schools to support disadvantaged learners, I have spent many happy hours in conversation with governors, helping them to understand how they can ensure that disadvantaged learners are always a priority for every school.

Alongside my consultancy work I helped to found a charity returning the profits from our business through grants to schools to support projects for disadvantaged learners. Seeing the work of trustees from the operational side of a charity has been a very useful insight and one which will help me to provide clear oversight within the NGA.

Most recently, I have become a governor of two special schools in the West Midlands which is a departure from mainstream for the first time for me and a steep and welcome learning curve. I am chair of the Curriculum and Achievement committee. I will be very proud to represent the interests of special schools, where appropriate, on the NGA Trust Board.

The role of the NGA has never been more important. Helping schools to find motivated individuals and developing their skills to secure effective challenge for executives and leadership teams is more vital than ever. My experience as a governor, as a trustee of 8 years, chairing curriculum committees, leading an Interim Executive Board, allied to the skills I have developed in my education career give me confidence in executing this role.