

NGA's External Review of Governance

Your questions answered

What is an external review of governance?

Our external review of governance (ERG) is **a supportive process** designed to help a board, whether governing a trust or a school, improve its effectiveness and work smarter.

It is not an audit or an inspection. It is an independent assessment of your current governance practices which provides you with a baseline for improvement.

The detailed review not only provides information on the evidence of governance found but also detailed recommendations on areas for development and links to pertinent NGA resources.

It is one of the ways we support those governing to promote high standards, as per our charitable objective:

NGA's charitable objective is:

To improve the educational standards and wellbeing of young people by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards and promoting high standards.

When to commission an ERG?

The DfE recommend that ERGs are conducted routinely as part of a wider programme of self-assessment and improvement. A review **every three years is recommended**, but a review can be organised at any time.

A review can be particularly beneficial when change is happening or needed. Specific circumstances that may prompt a board to seek a review include:

- A new chair, or new governors or trustees, or new leadership of the school or trust
- There has been no history of board evaluation and so the review provides a baseline
- There are specific issues, for example with standards, financial management or complaints
- The board is struggling or going through a period of change
- The board is finding it hard to recruit or retain governors or trustees
- A MAT wishes to grow and wants to ensure its governance is strong enough to support this growth

What are the benefits of an ERG?

The Department for Education (DfE) explains that an ERG can:

- ✓ be a more powerful diagnostic tool than self-evaluation
- ✓ bring an independent perspective
- ✓ identify areas for capacity and capability building for all those involved in governance
- ✓ identify areas for further learning and development
- ✓ provides a list of recommendations and actions
- ✓ provide support to a governing body at key growth or transition points

An ERG helps improve the board's effectiveness and identify areas for capacity and capability building for all those involved in governance. This includes members, trustees and local governors in single academy trusts or multi academy trusts, or governors in maintained schools or federations.

What is NGA's ERG process?

Once you decide to commission an ERG with the NGA, we will work with you to understand the drivers for the review, your context, and your desired timeframes.

We will share the pen portrait of the NGA consultant that we feel is a good fit for you. This will be based on their experience, previous projects and physical location.

The selected consultant will work with you to complete a detailed plan for the review. This covers what they will do, what they will need to see, and who they will need to speak to.

We have different processes dependent on whether you are a maintained school, federation, single academy trust or multi academy trust.

When completing multi academy trust reviews, we can tailor the review to meet your needs, for example, focusing more on local boards than the trust board or reviewing both in detail.

There are also add-on services you might find useful, such as:

- Advice on future governance structures as your MAT grows
- Reviewing the sustainability of your current practices

A typical review will include:

- ✓ a desktop review of the evidence of governance, looking at board meeting agendas, papers and minutes and other evidence of governance
- ✓ conversations with the chair, headteacher or CEO, the clerk or governance professional, and other key individuals working on or with the board
- ✓ an online self-assessment by those governing
- ✓ observation of at least one board meeting
- ✓ a comprehensive written report reviewing findings against best practice and recommendations to improve governance
- ✓ a workshop with the board to share best practice and empower those governing to own the actions recommended to develop their governance

What does NGA review during an ERG?

Our ERG framework reflects all relevant statutory guidance and DfE assessment frameworks and our years of experience in developing best practice guidance for governance.



Culture and engagement

How the board creates an inclusive environment for all stakeholders by listening, communicating well and respecting all backgrounds.



Strategic leadership

How the board works with leaders to establish a clear vision and plan for school improvement which addresses risks and opportunities.



Accountability and assurance

How the board uses accountability frameworks to assure high quality inclusive education, a safe and happy learning environment, and financial sustainability and value for money.



Employer responsibilities

How the board ensures it is an employer of choice, attracting, retaining and developing a motivated and valued high performing team.



Governance structure

How governance is led and structured to ensure efficient and effective discharging of its responsibilities.



Governance processes

How those governing are recruited, inducted, developed and supported and the effectiveness of relationships, communication and processes.



Compliance

How well those governing understands their legal duties and discharge them effectively.

What experience does NGA have completing ERGs?

NGA is at the forefront of thought leadership and provides guidance on governance to both maintained schools and academy trusts. NGA has been undertaking external reviews since they were introduced in 2013 and has built up extensive experience of supporting and improving governance practice in all types of schools and trusts. **We successfully complete hundreds of ERGs every year for MATs, academies, federations and maintained schools.**

NGA has a team of 40 consultants around the country who are practicing governance experts with a comprehensive understanding of best practices in leadership. Between them, they have more than 700 years of consultancy experience in every governance setting.

Our consultants are quality assured by NGA senior staff and bring NGA's wealth of **knowledge and best practice leadership** to the ERG. Many of our consultants also deliver governance training.

We have consultants with experience governing:

- Nurseries
- Infant and primary schools
- Junior schools
- Secondary schools
- Post-16 settings
- University technical colleges
- CofE, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Methodist, mixed faith schools and MATs
- Special schools and alternative education settings
- Cooperative academies
- Hospital schools
- Federations
- Maintained schools
- Single academy trusts
- Multi academy trusts (from 2 to 30+ academies)

How long does an ERG take?

The aim is that all reviews are concluded **8 to 12 weeks** after the initial contact is made with NGA, so typically within a term. This depends on the extent of the review, the availability of governors and trustees, and how term times and board meeting schedules impact on the review timetable. Our consultant will work with you during the initial scoping meeting to agree the timeline.

What is the impact of an ERG?

Within a year of the review having taken place, the board should be:

- ✓ Effectively fulfilling its core governance functions
- ✓ Sustainable, with routine self-evaluation established, and succession planning in place
- ✓ Seeing evidence of organisational improvement as a result of improved governance

We are proud to have a record of **100% client satisfaction** with our external reviews of governance.

“The consultant was amazing, and she added a lot of value and insights into governance in areas other than what was expected.”

“The review has already put governors on a track to improvement and focus on what is their role and how to go about carrying it out. This will therefore impact on the effectiveness of the board as a whole and, in time, the whole school.”

“The ERG of our MAT has helped trustees focus on what is most important and ensure structures and processes are effective and scalable as we grow. Thank you.”

“Many thanks for your invaluable contribution to our development over the past year and beyond.”

What does an ERG from the NGA cost?

Fees are outlined in the table below – our fees are not subject to VAT.

Options and fees 2025/26		
Single school or single academy trust (SAT)	Federation or multi academy trust (MAT)	Progress review 9-12 months after your ERG
Maintained school NGA members - £2,205 Non-members -£2,450 Single academy trust (SAT) NGA members - £2,750 Non-members - £2,950	Multi academy trust (MAT) (all layers of governance) Sliding scale dependent on size & complexity Federations Each review is scoped to reflect size and complexity	For single school governing boards NGA members - £899 Non-members - £950 For MATs and Federations Sliding scale dependent on size and complexity

Please note NGA's [terms and conditions](#) which include details of our cancellation policy.

What makes NGA's ERGs the best?

- Quality assured 360-degree review process
- Quality assured report and recommendations
- Service backed by NGA's 20 years of experience
- Workshop to develop governance and action plan
- Opportunity to trial NGA's member service
- Access to NGA's Knowledge Centre resources
- Highly experienced trained consultants
- Signposting to NGA training

Next steps

Please contact us at consultancy@nga.org.uk to discuss your ERG requirements, or book a meeting with our head of consultancy to [discuss your project here](#).

We look forward to working with you.