

Governance glossary

Specialist terms and abbreviations used in the education sector.

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A

Academy

Academies are publicly funded independent schools. Academies have different governance arrangements from local authority-maintained schools.

Academy committee

The body to which trustees delegate local governance functions within a multi academy trust. NGA refers to these bodies as academy committees, but they are often called local governing bodies (LGBs), academy councils or similar.

Academy converter

A school which converted to academy status voluntarily (usually high performing at the time of conversion), having previously been a local authority-maintained school.

Academy sponsor-led

A school which converted to academy status with the support of a sponsor (usually lower performing at the time of conversion).

Admissions Code

A document providing statutory guidance on school admissions with which all schools must comply.

Advisory boards

Each regional director (RD) has a board of elected headteachers of academies in their area to advise on and scrutinise academy-related decisions.

A level

General Certificate of Education Advanced level – usually completed by some 16 to 18 year-olds after GCSE.

Articles of Association

The legal governing document for an academy that sets out its rules for operating, including the composition of the governing board

ASP - Analyse School Performance

A service providing schools and other existing user groups with detailed performance analysis to support local school improvement.

Associate members

Individuals appointed by the governing body of a maintained school to sit on committees. They are not part of the governing body but are allowed to attend meetings and can be given voting powers for the committee(s) they sit on.

Academy Trust Handbook (ATH)

A handbook issued by the DfE that sets out the management and governance requirements that apply to all academy trusts. (Formerly Academies Financial Handbook).

Attainment 8

A headline measure of school performance at GCSE. Measures the average achievement of pupils across eight subjects, including English and maths.

Attainment targets

These establish what children of different abilities should be expected to know and be able to do by the end of each key stage of the national curriculum.

AWPU

Age-weighted pupil unit – the sum of money allocated to the school for each pupil according to age. This is the basic unit of funding for the school.

B

Baseline assessment

The [reception baseline assessment](#) is carried out in the first six weeks of a pupil starting their reception year. It provides a starting point assessment from which a cohort-level progress measure to the end of key stage 2 can be created. It is a statutory assessment.

Board of trustees

The governing board of a single academy trust or MAT (also known as board of directors).

Bursar

A school's business professional. The exact role of a bursar varies but their duties almost always include financial and administrative management, and many are involved in strategic planning and risk management.

C

Capital funding

Spending on projects, improvements, and extensions to the school's land and buildings.

Chair's action

In maintained schools, the chair is allowed to take decisions without asking the governing body if a delay is likely to be detrimental to the school, a member of staff, a pupil, or a parent. In academies, this power is not automatic and must be delegated to the chair.

Chief executive officer (CEO)

The senior executive leader in a multi academy trust (MAT). They are held to account by the trust board for all aspects of the MAT as a whole.

Chief financial officer (CFO)

The CFO role is to have strategic oversight of the financial performance of each academy within the trust. All academy trusts are required to appoint a CFO, although trusts may give this person another title (such as finance director or chief operating officer).

Clerk

The clerk provides advice on governance, constitutional and procedural matters. They also offer administrative support to the governing board and relay information on legal requirements. See also 'governance professional'.

Collaboration

An agreement between two or more maintained schools to work together. The schools keep their individual governing boards but may set up joint committees to which they can delegate powers.

Community schools

Maintained schools at which the local authority (LA) is the employer, owns the land and buildings and sets the admission criteria.

Community special schools

Maintained special schools which have the same responsibilities as community schools.

Competency Framework for Governance

A document developed by the DfE, setting out the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed for effective governance.

Co-opted governor/trustee

Appointed by the governing board, generally on the basis of their skills.

CPD

Continuing professional development (for school staff or the governing board, for example).

D

Dedicated school grant (DSG)

Funding from central government to the LA for maintained schools, the majority of which is delegated directly to individual schools through the LA's funding formula.

Delegated budget

Money provided to schools which governors can manage at their discretion.

Delegated powers

Authority given to a committee, an individual governor or the headteacher to take action on behalf of the governing board. In multi academy trusts this also refers to powers delegated to academy committees.

Designated teacher

Liaises with the local authority on behalf of pupils in care and has a responsibility for promoting their educational achievement.

DfE

Department for Education – the government department responsible for schools and children's services.

Directed time

Time when a teacher must be available to carry out duties, including attending staff and parent meetings, under the direction of the headteacher – a maximum of 1265 hours in a school year.

Director-general of the regions group

A civil servant responsible for overseeing the work of the nine regional directors (see RDs).

Disapplication

A term used where national curriculum requirements may not apply to a pupil.

E

EAL

English as an additional language

EBacc

English Baccalaureate – a school performance measure based on achievement of GCSEs in ‘core academic subjects’ of English, maths, history or geography, the sciences, and a language.

ECT

Early career teacher. The term early career teacher (ECT) replaced newly qualified teacher (NQT) in 2021.

EHC plans

Education, health and care plans – the document which replaces statements of SEN and learning difficulties assessments for children and young people with special educational needs.

ESFA

Education and Skills Funding Agency – a single agency accountable for funding education and training for children, young people and adults (formerly the EFA and SFA).

NOTE: **The ESFA closed as an executive agency on Monday 31 March 2025** and all its functions were transferred to the Department for Education.

ESO

Education supervision order – an order which local authorities may apply for to deal with cases of poor attendance at school.

Ethos

The morals, values and beliefs that underpin the school culture.

EWO

Education welfare officer – a professional worker who visits pupils’ homes and deals with attendance problems and other welfare matters in co-operation with the school.

Ex officio

Governing board membership by virtue of holding a particular office (such as headteacher).

Exclusion

The permanent removal of a pupil from school for serious breaches of the school’s behaviour and discipline policy.

Executive headteacher

Unlike a traditional headteacher who leads one school only, an executive headteacher is the lead professional of more than one school; or a lead professional who manages a school with multiple phases; or who has management responsibility significantly beyond that of a single school site.

Executive leaders

Those held to account by the board for the performance of the organisation. This may be the CEO, executive headteacher, headteacher or principal, as well as other senior employees/staff, depending on the structure of the organisation.

Extended schools/services

Schools that provide a range of services and activities often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of the pupils, their families and the wider community.

F

Federation

Two or more maintained schools governed by one governing body.

FFT

Fischer Family Trust – a non-profit company that provides data and analyses to LAs and schools in England and Wales.

Form of entry

The number of classes that a school admits in each year group.

Foundation governor/trustee

Appointed by the foundation body.

Foundation schools

Maintained schools in which the governing body is the employer, owns the land and buildings and sets the admission criteria.

Foundation special schools

Maintained special schools which have the same freedoms as foundation schools (see above).

Foundation stage

Curriculum followed by children below statutory school age in schools and nursery/pre-school provision.

Free school

A type of academy, either a new school set up in response to parental demand, or a fee-paying school joining the state education system.

FSM

Free school meals – pupils are eligible for FSM if their parents receive certain benefits.

Funding agreement

The document which sets out the relationship between an academy/MAT and the Education and Skills Funding Agency ESFA/Department for Education (DfE).

G

GAG

General Annual Grant – the main source of revenue funding for academy trusts.

GCSE

General Certificate of Secondary Education.

GDPR

General Data Protection Regulation.

GOLDline

NGA's independent and confidential advice service offering strategic, procedural and legal information about governance.

Governance professional

A collective description for all those involved in supporting and advising governing boards in schools and trusts (including clerks, governance managers and directors of governance).

Governing board

Overarching term for boards in both maintained school (governing body) and academy trust (trust board) settings.

Governing body

Refers to the governing board of a maintained school only.

Governor services

Governor services provide support to governing boards which may be in the form of training, advice or clerking services. May be 'in-house' in larger MATs or externally commissioned.

Graded inspection

An Ofsted inspection that results in grades (outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate) in four key judgement areas, however, single headline grades are no longer given. Formerly known as a Section 5 inspection.

H

HLTA

Higher level teaching assistant.

HMCI

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills

HMI

His Majesty's inspector.

HSE

Health and Safety Executive.

I

ICFP

Integrated curriculum and financial planning – a collaborative process that brings together the governance, education leadership and business support functions in a school or trust. Effective ICFP helps schools and trusts design a curriculum that is affordable and sustainable.

IEB

Interim Executive Board – appointed by the local authority or Regional Director (RD) in accordance with the Education Act 2006 to replace the governing body of a maintained school that is eligible for intervention.

IEP

Individual education plan for pupils with special educational needs.

INSET

In-service education and training – dedicated training time for teachers and other school staff, often delivered during five 'INSET days' each academic year when pupils do not attend school.

Instrument of Government

A legal document setting out the composition of maintained school governing bodies.

K

Key stage

Key stages 1 to 4 are the four stages of the national curriculum: KS1 for pupils aged five to seven; KS2 for seven to 11; KS3 for 11 to 14; KS4 for 14 to 16.

L

LA

Local authority. The LA has certain responsibilities regarding education, for example the educational achievement of looked-after children, and for school places planning. It also provides other services to schools, which may be provided via a service-level agreement to maintained schools and, in many cases, academies.

LA Governor

Nominated by the local authority but appointed by the governing body.

LAC

Looked after children who are in the care of their local authority. May also refer to children who have been in care at any time in the last six years.

Learning Link

NGA Learning Link is an e-learning training platform for governors, trustees and clerks on the full range of their responsibilities.

LGA

Local Government Association – national organisation supporting and representing local government.

LGB

Local governing body – a term often used to describe a committee of a trust board for an individual academy within a MAT. See also ‘academy committee’.

Local association

A group of governors and trustees from different schools in the local area. Local associations vary in size and capacity. The smallest local associations may offer an informal support network for local governors/trustees whereas larger local associations may organise useful local events and provide formal support and training opportunities.

M

Maintained schools

Publicly funded schools overseen by the local authority. These schools must follow the national curriculum and national pay and conditions guidelines (see STPCD).

MAT

Multi academy trust – where two or more academies are governed by one board of trustees.

MAT board

Common term for the board of trustees overseeing a multi academy trust.

Mixed ability

A teaching group in which children of all abilities are taught together.

N

National curriculum

This was established by the 1988 Education Reform Act to ensure that all pupils receive a broad and balanced education, which is relevant to their needs. Academies do not need to follow the national curriculum, but many still choose to.

NFF

National Funding Formula – the standardised formula for school funding allocations across every mainstream state funded school in England.

Non-teaching (support) staff

Members of the school staff employed to provide services other than teaching in a school, such as teaching assistants, cleaners and office staff.

NOR

Number (of pupils) on roll

NPQH

National Professional Qualification for Headship – training for new or aspiring headteachers.

O

Ofqual

Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Register – the regulator of examinations and qualifications.

Ofsted

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills – the body which inspects education and training for learners of all ages and inspects and regulates care for children and young people.

P

PAN

Published admissions number – the maximum number of children the admissions authority determines must be admitted to each 'relevant age group' (the age group at which pupils are normally be admitted to the school, for example, reception and year 7).

Parent governor/trustee

Member of the governing board elected by the parents of the school's pupils.

Partnership governor

In schools with a religious character, these governors must be appointed with the purpose of preserving and promoting the religious ethos

PE and sport premium

Funding for primary schools to make additional and sustainable improvements to the quality of the PE, sport and physical activity provided.

Peripatetic teacher

Teaches in a number of schools, usually to give specialist instruction such as in music.

PFI

Private finance initiative – enables local authorities to enter into contracts with the private sector for the provision of new and/or improved capital assets (infrastructure for example).

PGCE

Post-Graduate Certificate of Education.

PGR

Parent governor representative – elected to serve on a local authority committee discharging the education functions of the LA.

PI

Performance indicators (sometimes called key performance indicators). Used to evaluate the success of a school or of a particular activity in which it engages.

PPA

Planning, preparation and assessment – 10% guaranteed non-contact time for teachers.

Progress 8

A headline measure of school performance at GCSE introduced from 2016. It aims to capture the progress a pupil makes from the end of KS2 to the end of KS4.

PRP

Performance related pay – schools and academies have the option to link teachers' pay to their performance. Prior to September 2024, all schools following the STPCD were required to use PRP.

PRU

Pupil referral unit – alternative education provision for pupils unable to attend a mainstream school or special school.

PSHE

Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is a subject through which pupils develop knowledge, skills and attributes needed to manage their lives, now and in the future.

PSP

Pastoral support programme for pupils at serious risk of permanent exclusion.

PTA

Parent teacher association – or PSA (parent staff association).

PTR

Pupil/teacher ratio – this is calculated by dividing the number of pupils in a school by the number of full-time equivalent teachers.

Public Sector Equality Duty

A duty on public authorities (including schools) to consider how their decisions might affect people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010.

Pupil premium

Funding allocated to schools to support pupils eligible for free school meals, in care, or who have parents in the armed forces.

Q

QTS

Qualified teacher status.

Quorate

A meeting is quorate if a sufficient number of members are present. Decisions can only be ratified if a meeting is quorate.

Quorum

The minimum number of members present at a meeting before decisions can be made.

R

Regional directors (RDs)

Civil servants that act on behalf of the secretary of state. Their responsibilities include intervening in underperforming academies and free schools, making decisions on conversion to academy status, and encouraging and deciding on applications for academy sponsors.

Resolution

A decision which has been agreed to at a meeting. Trust boards (and their committees) may also agree to decisions by written resolution.

Revenue funding

Revenue funding is spent on the day-to-day costs of running a school. Examples include salaries, heating, lighting, services, and small items of equipment.

RSE

Relationships and Sex Education.

S

SACRE

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education –statutory board in each local authority which advises on religious education and collective worship.

SATs

Standard assessment tests – used for national curriculum assessment in years two and six.

Scheme of delegation

A document defining the lines of responsibility and accountability in a MAT and where different functions have been delegated.

School business professional (SBP)

A professional employed by a school/trust with responsibility for financial management and often other areas such as human resources and health and safety management. Usually part of the senior leadership team. Often known as the school business manager in maintained schools, and chief financial officer in academy trusts (see CFO).

School census

A statutory return which takes place during the autumn, spring, and summer terms. Maintained schools and academies must take part in the census.

School development plan

The operational document describing how the school will work towards the strategic priorities set by the governing board. Also known as a school improvement plan.

Schools Forum

A schools forum has been established in each LA area to advise on the allocation of the funding for schools – the majority of places on this board should be filled by governors and headteachers, preferably in equal numbers.

SENCO

Special educational needs co-ordinator – the teacher responsible for co-ordinating SEND provision in the school/trust.

SEND

Special educational needs and disabilities – learning difficulties and/or disabilities which call for special education provision to be made.

Senior Executive Leader (SEL)

Academy trusts must appoint a senior executive leader (who may be known as the principal in a single academy trust, and CEO or equivalent in a MAT). The SEL should also be the accounting officer (AO) for the trust.

Service level agreement (SLA)

A contract between a service provider (the local authority or another private sector provider) and a school that defines the level of service expected.

Service pupil premium

Funding allocated to schools to support pupils whose parents are serving in HM armed forces or have at any time in the last six years, or who are in recipient of a child's pension from the Ministry of Defence.

SFVS

Schools financial value standard – a means for the governing board to assess its financial processes, capabilities and skills. Must be completed by maintained schools annually.

SIMS

Schools Information Management System – a computer package to assist schools in managing information on pupils, staff and resources.

Special school

For pupils with a statement of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or an education, health and care plan, whose needs cannot be fully met from within mainstream provision.

Special unit (or resourced provision)

A unit attached to a mainstream school to cater for children with specific special needs.

Sponsor

An organisation or person who has received approval from the DfE to support an underperforming academy or group of academies. Examples of sponsors include academies, businesses and charities.

Staff governor/trustee

Elected by those who are paid to work at the school.

STPCD

School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document – an annually published document which forms a part of the contract of all teachers and headteachers in maintained schools in England. Many academies also follow the STPCD.

Strategic plan

The school's strategic document which sets out a small number of key priorities for the school over the next three to five years. The governing board should take the lead on developing the strategic plan.

STRB

School Teachers' Review Body – makes recommendations to the Secretary of State on teachers' pay.

Streaming

Placing pupils in classes according to their ability across a range of subjects.

Suspension

The temporary removal of a pupil from school for serious breaches of the school's behaviour and discipline policy.

T

TA

Teaching assistant.

Teaching school alliances

A group of schools and other partners that is supported by the leadership of a teaching school.

Teaching schools

Schools that work with others to provide CPD for school staff.

Terms of reference

Sets out the membership, roles and responsibilities of a committee.

TLR

Teaching and learning responsibility – payments made to teachers for undertaking additional leadership and management responsibility.

Trust Deed

The deed by which a voluntary aided or a voluntary controlled school has been established.

Trustee board

The governing board of a single academy trust or MAT.

U

Ungraded inspection

Ungraded Ofsted inspections focus on determining whether the school has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

V

Value added (VA)

The progress pupils make relative to their individual starting points. VA takes into account prior attainment to help evaluate pupils' current attainment.

Vertical grouping

Classes formed with children of different age groups.

Virement

The agreed transfer of money from the budget heading to which it has been allocated to another budget heading.

Virtual school headteacher

Looked after children are on a virtual school roll, and each local authority employs an experienced teacher to oversee the educational progress of all children under the care of that particular LA. The virtual school headteacher has the specialist knowledge to provide extra support to designated teachers. They also work with professionals in the Children's Services department of the council and with all schools in the area to promote the education of children in care.

Vision

The school's vision should, in a few sentences, describe what the school will look like in three to five years' time.

Vocational

A subject that would not be considered academic in the traditional sense. Students in key stage 4 and key stage 5 may undertake a vocational apprenticeship or qualification as a viable alternative to GCSEs or A-levels.

Voluntary aided (VA)

A maintained school set up and owned by a voluntary board, usually a church board, largely financed by the local authority. The governing board employs the staff and controls pupil admissions and religious education. The school's buildings and land (apart from playing fields) are normally be owned by a charitable foundation.

Voluntary controlled (VC)

Usually, a denominational maintained school with certain residual rights regarding religious worship. The school's land and buildings are usually owned by a trust.

Y

YGN

Young Governors' Network - created and run by young governors with support from the National Governance Association.

Young Carer

A young carer is anyone under 18 years of age who helps to look after a family member who is disabled, physically or mentally ill or has a substance misuse problem.