

Governing Board Skills Audit

For governors, trustees and academy committee members of single schools

Why this is important

This audit is a useful way of assessing the needs of your governing board. In the 2016 NGA/TES survey, 83% of respondents said their governing board uses a skills audit. 64% used it to identify training needs; 54% used it for recruitment; 64% used it to assign committee members; and 47% used it for succession planning. This model can be used to help identify any knowledge, experience, skills and behaviours your governing board still needs to deliver their functions effectively.

How the NGA model has changed and why

In January 2017, the DfE released a new Competency Framework for Governance, structured around the DfE's newly identified "six features of effective governance". The governance handbook 2017 states that "Boards should carry out regular audits of the skills they possess in the light of the skills and competences they need, taking account of the department's Competency framework for governance". The DfE suggest one way governing boards can use the competency framework is to inform how they carry out a skills audit.

The Competency framework has been written to cover all possible bases in school governance, from boards governing small standalone primary schools to the trust boards of large MATs overseeing the performance of multiple schools. It should be used to provide clarification of government expectations, rather than as a set prescribed checklist – but NGA is already aware of it being used as a checklist or governor job specification by some. Governing boards are best placed themselves to individually assess which areas outlined in the framework are most important for them, and so while the new skills audit is structured around the DfE's six features of effective governance, it doesn't attempt to replicate all 200 plus competencies, knowledge skills and behaviours included. Instead it combines the core aspects of the framework with the priceless experience and feedback of our members to inform the skills, experiences and knowledge included.

How to use it

To take account of differing roles of MAT trustees and those governing in other contexts, NGA has developed **two separate models**. This model is to be used by governors, trustees and academy committee members of **single schools**. Trustees of multi-academy trust should use our other model [here](#).

No individual is going to have all the skills listed in the audit. The governing board is a team, and the purpose of the audit is to ensure that each skill below is covered by at least one of the governors/trustees around the table. A skills matrix in which responses can be collated can be found on the NGA website. If there are any gaps, these can be used to inform further recruitment to the board.

This exercise is designed to enable all members of the governing board to set out their skills and experience whatever their backgrounds, and make clear that the essential and desirable skills for governance can be acquired through a range of life experiences. The skills and knowledge sought are those which enable governors to ask the right questions, analyse data and have focussed discussions which create robust accountability for school leaders.

Each Knowledge, experience, skill or behaviours should be rated on a scale of 1-5, with 1 indicating no experience or knowledge in this area, and 5 indicating strong expertise.

Governors, trustees and academy committee members of single schools Knowledge, experience, skills and behaviours	Level of knowledge or skills/behaviour, rate on scale of:				
	No	→	→	→	Yes
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Strategic leadership					
I am committed to improving education and welfare for all pupils.					
I understand current national education policy and the local education context.					
I have previous experience of being a board member in another sector or a governor/trustee in another school.					
I have experience of chairing a board/governing board or committee.					
I have experience of strategic planning and applying this to set and preserve the culture of the organisation.					
I am committed to the school's vision and ethos of the trust.					
I am able to question and challenge, working as part of a team to identify viable options through collective decision making.					
I am able to work in a professional manner, avoiding conflicts, acting with transparency and integrity.					
I am confident I can identify when to seek independent/professional advice.					
I have experience of stakeholder management and engagement including communicating with and taking account of the views of parents and pupils.					
I have experience of promoting community cohesion.					
I am proficient in prioritising, assessing and mitigating risk.					
I have experience of school sector risk management, including managing conflicts of interest/loyalty.					
2. Accountability					
I understand the importance of collecting high quality data and have expertise using data to interpret/evaluate performance and identify trends to target improvement.					
I have expertise in curriculum development, school assessment and progress/attainment.					
I have experience of working with leaders to establish expectations for improvement and outcomes.					
I have experience of agreeing the range and format of information and data needed in order to hold leaders to account.					
I have experience of providing challenge to leaders on strategies for monitoring and improving behaviour and safety.					
I have an understanding of the board's duties in relation to safeguarding including Prevent.					
I have an understanding of special education needs and disabilities (SEND).					
I have financial management expertise, with experience of funding allocation/budget monitoring and contributing to financial self-evaluation and efficiency drives.					
I have experience of basing funding decisions on organisational priorities and the ability to interpret financial data and question financial performance against strategic priorities.					
I have experience of procurement/purchasing.					
I have experience of property and estate-management.					

I have experience of HR policy and processes, including employment legislation, recruitment, performance management and pay.					
I have experience of school sector HR policy and processes.					
I have experience of change management (overseeing a merger or an organisational restructure).					
I have experience of preparing for and responding to external oversight.					
I have experience of inspection and oversight in the school sector.					
3. People					
I am willing to devote time, enthusiasm and effort to the duties of and responsibilities of a governor/trustee.					
I am a strong communicator and committed to building strong collaborative relationships.					
I am able to discuss sensitive issues with experience of conflict resolution and influencing consensus.					
I am able to demonstrate a commitment to ethical behaviour and values, honesty, independence of thought and sound judgement.					
I am committed to equal opportunities and the promotion of diversity.					
I am willing to reflect, listen and learn from a diversity of views, to receive and provide feedback and accept impartial advice.					
4. Structures					
I am familiar with the strategic nature of the board's functions and how this differs from and works with others including senior leaders.					
I have experience of reviewing governance structures.					
5. Compliance					
I have experience of complying with legal, regulatory and financial frameworks and statutory guidance.					
I understand and accept the legal duties, responsibilities of a governor/trustee.					
Governing boards are responsible for ensuring schools comply with a whole range of legal responsibilities. I have experience ensuring legal compliance in this way and a commitment to understanding the full range of legal responsibilities.					
I understand the importance of adhering to organisation policies e.g. on parental complaints or staff-discipline issues.					
I have the confidence and ability to speak up when concerned about non-compliance.					
6. Evaluation					
I am aware of my own strengths and weaknesses and committed to personal development.					
I have experience of evaluating board decisions and am willing to contribute to board self-review.					