



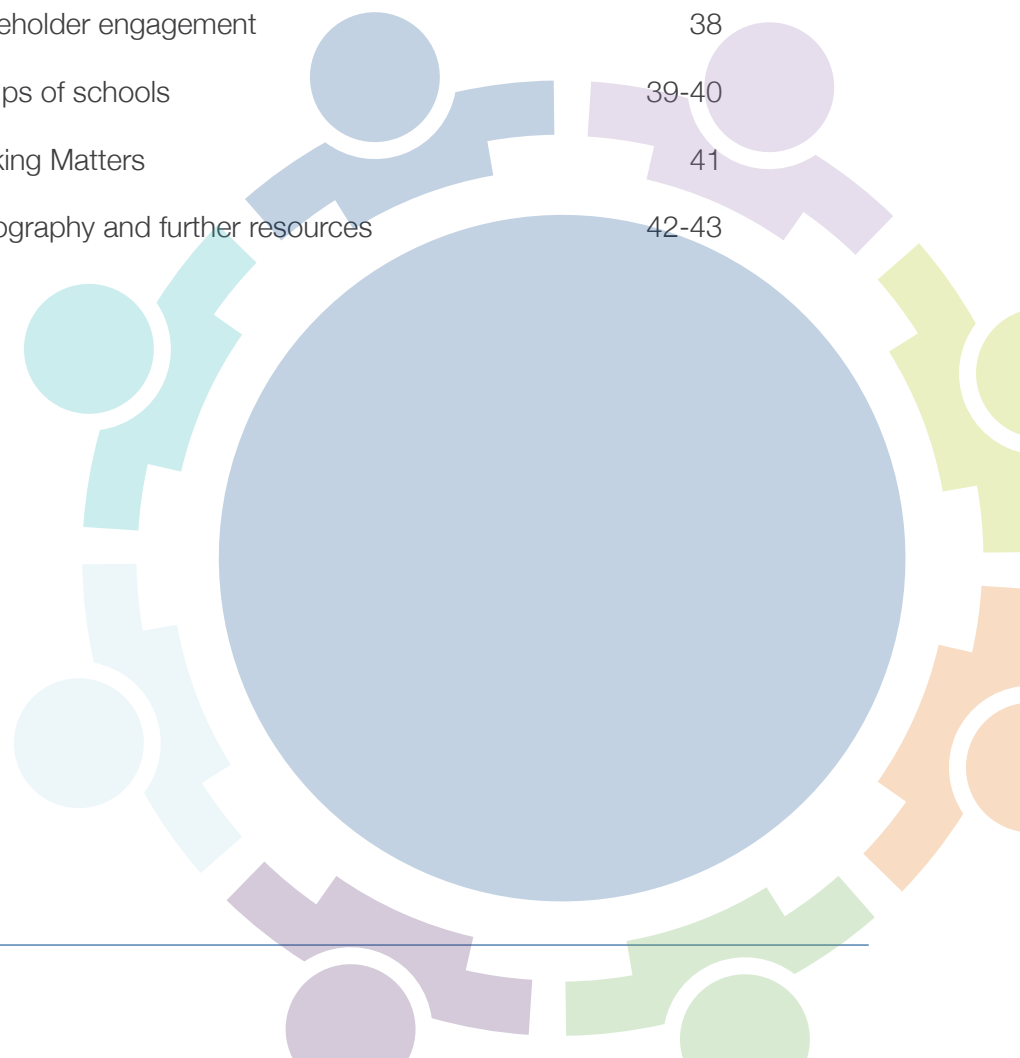
September 2019
#SchoolGovernance2019

In association with



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Welcome from the Chief Executive

“While we cannot claim the school governance community speaks with one voice, the concerns being raised across the country are becoming more consistent.”

For eight consecutive years, National Governance Association (NGA) has been running a survey of school governors and trustees in partnership with Tes, regularly achieving more than 5,000 respondents from across England. A huge thank you to the 5,923 individuals who made the time this year to respond; without you there would be no report. This is particularly impressive on top of governing duties, especially given the workload reported by some volunteers. We appreciate we are asking busy people to do one more thing; this may skew those who can respond. But even so, we do have the right proportions of all the different types of state-funded schools.

Obviously schools are different and their context is important; and the views and experiences of governors and trustees vary considerably. While we cannot claim the school governance community speaks with one voice, the concerns being raised across the country are becoming more consistent. We ask respondents to choose their five biggest challenges, and this year in every region these include:

- a. Funding
- b. Provision for pupils with SEND
(special education needs and disabilities)
- c. Staff workload and welfare

This three-some also holds true for each phase of education and every type of school. Balancing the budget is the top concern facing governing boards whether of maintained schools or multi academy trusts. Once again over three quarters of respondents said that they are not confident that funding pressures can be managed without any adverse impact on the quality of education provided. This report details the wide range of decisions taken by governing boards to-date to balance budgets. The reported financial stresses do now seem to have been accepted by the Government under a new Prime Minister; the new Secretary of State Gavin Williamson MP has announced increased school and college funding for the next four years. We are awaiting the detail. NGA of course welcomes additional funding, although it is highly unlikely that all shortfalls and cutbacks experienced by governing boards will be immediately and fully plugged. However the information provided by governors and trustees added to that from school leaders, teaching unions, and families to make the case.

According to leaked reports in the press, we are also expecting a Department for Education (DfE) announcement on pushing academisation again. There is no evidence that simply changing the legal status of a single school results in better outcomes for pupils. However there can be

advantages to pupils being part of a formal group of schools under one governing board: a maintained federation or a multi academy trust. Governing boards are well placed to judge what is best for their school. For almost ten years we have been providing information to help governing boards considering a structural change, and those considering joining or forming a group of schools should take a look at Taking the Next Steps. Some governing boards are in the process of doing this, some reporting for financial reasons, others because of diminished local authority support or diocesan policy. We are urging the Government not to repeat the mistake of three years ago and propose all schools must academise. This will be met with the same reaction as then and create division, when what is needed is us all to concentrate on the issues which make most difference to pupils and the education they receive.

Over the last few years the governing boards' concerns about inadequate provision for pupils with SEND has grown as the needs have grown but resources diminished. Over three quarters of respondents said their school was not funded adequately to meet SEND needs and many identified SEND as a priority area for any additional funding from the Government. There is also evidence reported that cuts in a range of other services for vulnerable children has

put additional strain on schools, often requiring them to step to attempt to fill gaps. This is neither good for families who need specialist support nor for schools which exist to educate pupils.

Three in five respondents said they lacked funds to support the needs of disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged children generally continue to do less well at school, despite attention - both at policy and school level - for a very long time. The survey confirms pupil premium spending is being concentrated on the classroom in the belief that is where schools will have the most impact. However some respondents identify the very fundamental barriers to learning that some pupils face, sometimes as basic as not being well fed at home. NGA will continue to explore these challenges through our Spotlight on Disadvantage project.

Worries about the workload, welfare and morale of staff is now the second highest concern of governing boards. However the good news is that more governing boards this year took decisions with these concerns in mind, and attempting to put in place policies which help reduce workload and stress. Many are considering incentives to retain staff, particularly financial incentives but also access to professional development and promotion opportunities. Staff recruitment is still being reported as much more challenging in London and surrounding areas and also slightly more difficult in schools with lower Ofsted grades. The request for professionals to be valued more and listened to by policy makers once again came through loud and clear.

Similarly the governance community needs to be listened to more by the powers that be. Here is an enormous group of people - quarter of a million volunteers across England - who know a lot about state schools and are responsible for setting their ethos and strategic direction. They are motivated to govern in order to give something back or to improve schooling for children and their community.

This survey provides details about those who are accountable for state schools. Here I just pick out one issue: for more than a year NGA has been running our Everyone on Board campaign to promote the importance of diversity on governing to boards, with a particular focus on increasing the number of younger and ethnic minority volunteers. The average age of those governing is 55 years, although this is actually lower than other charity trustees! There are good numbers of potential volunteers registered on www.inspringgovernance.org who are under the age of forty and/or from an ethnic minority, and this approach of targeted recruitment has been very well received by governing boards. Although the overall percentages of younger and BAME people responding to this survey have not improved significantly, of those who have been recruited in the last two years, the number are from ethnic minorities have doubled. However this is from such a low base: we are committed to this campaign for the long term.

There is a related bit of good news: last year 38% boards reported two or more vacancies and this year it's 34%, a slight decrease. Recruiting volunteers is reported as being difficult by 55.2% respondents, and of course is

a continuous task as people come to the end of their terms of office or move on for other reasons. It is healthy to have some change on a board, but the survey results also highlight that the sector needs to be very aware of the expectations of the roles. For a number of years we have documented the increasing workload of governing. Not only have 77% of those responding given the equivalent of over 20 days to governance, but 27% are governing for over 30 days a year. This is the biggest challenge for those who volunteer to chair the board. These results should be useful in our on-going discussions with DfE to persuade them to take this more seriously.

Given that 78% respondents to this survey had a negative view of the Government's education policy, there is clearly as much work as ever to do to persuade the DfE to listen more, to value the input from those who govern and to act. Government ministers stress the importance of governance from many stages, but little has been said or done more widely over the past year to ensure the people who take on this responsibility are recognised. We aim for this to change in 2020.



Emma Knights OBE

Chief Executive
National Governance Association

Introduction

Effective, ethical and accountable school governance is a cornerstone of the education system in England. Understanding how schools are governed, and the views and opinions of those governing in schools, is vital information for policymakers, practitioners and stakeholders in the education system.



Introduction and methodology

For the eighth consecutive year, NGA has run the annual school governance survey in partnership with Tes. It is the largest survey of its kind and provides an unrivalled and extensive overview of the state of school governance in England.

While not all respondents answered every question, this is the highest ever response rate since the survey's inception. The survey was open to all school governors, trustees and academy committee members of state-funded schools in England and was administered via the online surveying website SmartSurvey between 2 May and 24 June 2019.

Who responded to the survey?

The participants in the survey were self-selected and therefore not necessarily representative of the school governance population. Nevertheless, responses were collected from those governing across a broad range of school types and phases. As shown in [figure one](#), the distribution of responses broadly match the national picture; 58.9% of respondents govern in the local authority (LA) maintained sector either as maintained single schools or federations (compared to 59.5% nationally) and 41.1% govern in single or multi-academy trusts (compared to 40.5% nationally). There was also a largely proportional distribution of those governing across different phases, with 60.8% of respondents governing in primary (compared to 76.4% nationally) and 23.6% governing in secondary

5,923

respondents engaged with the survey

(compared to 15.7% nationally). In terms of regional spread, [figure two](#) demonstrates that, aside from the South East, which is slightly overrepresented, the distribution of responses compared to the distribution of schools across the country was within two percentage points.

As the survey was distributed heavily through the NGA membership network, 82% of respondents are members of NGA. However, the views and experiences of those who are and those who are not NGA members remain very similar on most issues.

Respondents role on their governing board

- 34.3% of respondents were chairs.
- A further 14.4% were vice chairs.
- 11.4% were committee chairs.
- Lead executives (headteachers/CEO) made up 1.2% of respondents.
- Other governors/trustees made up 38.7%.

Governing boards have three core functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Holding the executive leader to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure money is well spent

Percentage of schools structures in England compared with the percentage of survey respondents within each structure

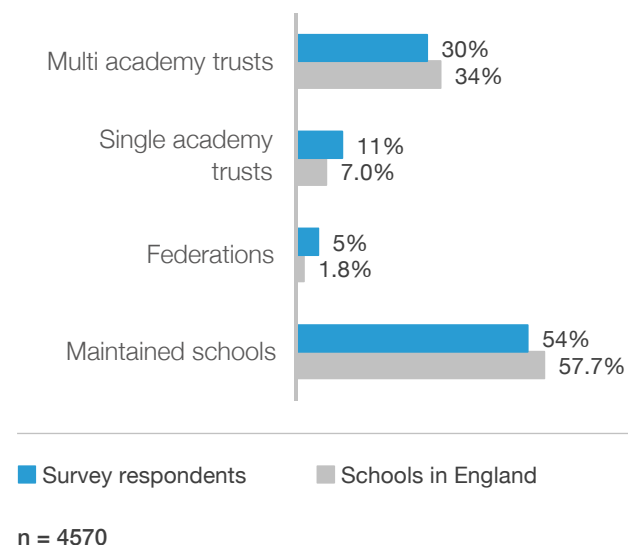


Figure 1: proportion of school structures within England compared with proportion of survey respondents within each structure

Percentage of schools in England compared by region compared with the percentage of survey respondents within each region

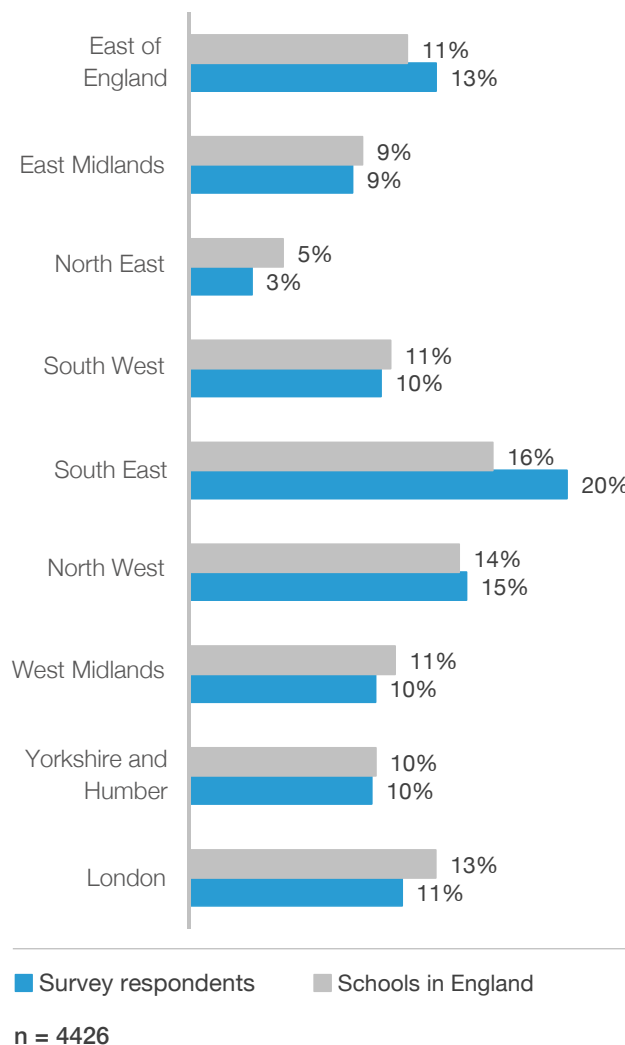


Figure 2: percentage of respondents from each region in England compared with the proportion of schools within each region

Percentage of schools in England by phase compared with the percentage of survey respondents within each phase

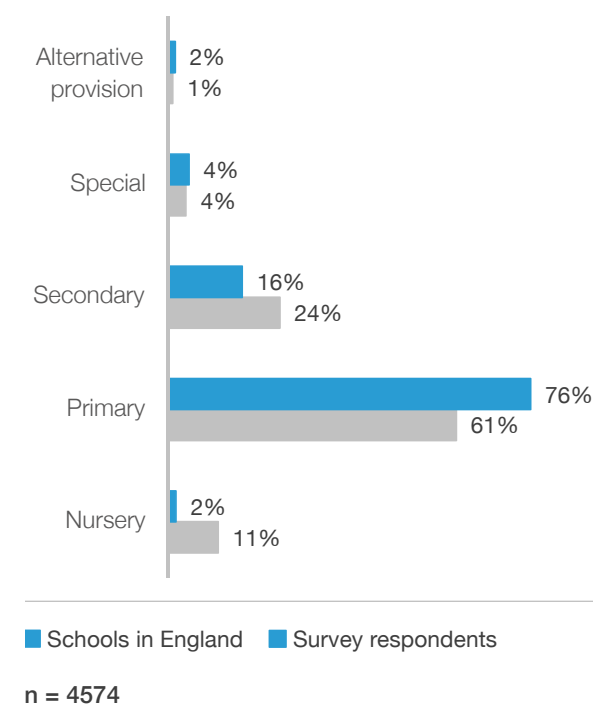


Figure 3: percentage of respondents governing each phase of school compared with the proportion of each phase in England

Key findings and recommendations

2

78% gave a negative assessment of the government's performance on education

01 Respondents' opinion of central education policy continues to decline. 78% of respondents had a negative view of the government's performance in education over the past year (2018: 75%). Furthermore, at the time of asking nearly three quarters of respondents felt that the Department for Education would not make a strong case for further funding in the upcoming spending review while over half of respondents felt that the government's vision for education did not align with that of their governing board.

02 There is growing agreement as to the key issues facing schools. When respondents were asked to list the top five (out of a possible 31) challenges facing their organisation, ten key issues¹ made up 63% of all responses, as opposed to 53% in 2018. In their asks for government, hundreds of respondents implored the government to invest more in school funding and to listen to those governing and school staff to overcome the challenges facing the sector.

03 For all regions, school types and phases, school funding remains the biggest issue for governing boards. Over three quarters of respondents said that they are not confident that funding pressures can be managed without any adverse impact on the quality of education provided in their school. Of the 32% of respondents reporting that their school is drawing upon reserves, 61% said that their board expects these to run out by 2021. Additionally, a large proportion of respondents reported reducing the number of staff and spending on buildings and maintenance within the last twelve months due to financial constraints.

78% said that their school(s) does not receive enough funding to meet the needs of SEND pupils

04 Concern over the adequacy of high needs funding is growing. 78% of respondents, as opposed to 74% in 2018, said that their school(s) does not receive enough funding to meet the needs of pupils with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). While in 2018 high needs funding pressures were significantly worse for secondary schools, this year the trend exists regardless of phase, type or school.

05 Staff wellbeing and workload moved up the list of concerns from third place last year to second place this year. 62% listed this within their top five issues as opposed to 37% in 2018. Half of respondents noted that the workload and/or pressure places on their lead executives had risen in the last twelve months. This may be linked to concerns about recruitment and retention which was the fourth most common concern for respondents.

29% spend more than 30 days a year on their governance role

06 Respondents reported spending a significant amount of time on governance, with 29% spending over 30 days per year completing their duties. Nearly a quarter of governing board chairs reported that the time they dedicate to governance was somewhat or completely unmanageable and only 22% of employed respondents said the time commitment was completely manageable.

07 Governing boards continue to lack diversity – particularly in terms of ethnicity and age. 93% of respondents identified as white compared to 74% of pupils in England and only 10% of respondents reported being under the age of 40.

1. These were: balancing the budget; staff wellbeing including workload; support for pupils with special educational needs, inc. high needs funding; attracting and retaining high quality teaching staff; pupil wellbeing; improving attainment; parental engagement; ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum; staff retention; and safeguarding.

18,000 additional school governance volunteers are needed to sustain current board sizes

- 08 Respondents reported an average of 1.26 vacancies per governing board or academy committee. Based on a conservative estimate of the number of governing boards and academy committees in England, an estimated 18,000 additional school governance volunteers are needed to sustain school governance under current board sizes.
- 09 The lines of accountability in MAT governance continue to be blurred, with the same individuals acting as trustees, academy committees and members in large proportion of MATs. This can and does negatively impact transparent decision making as well as creating governance workload issues.
- 10 Only 57% of academy committee members felt that their voice was being listened to by MAT trustees and leaders, and less than half said that they would be happy to share their schools' resources with the wider organisation. Furthermore, there are clear inconsistencies in what MAT trustees and academy committee members claim to have delegated responsibility for, suggesting more work is needed around schemes of delegation.

- 11 16% of respondents say their school has reduced pastoral support due to funding constraints, and 61% of respondents said that they do not have enough funding to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. This year there has been a 3.5% decrease in the number of schools providing financial support with purchasing school uniform, but an increase in those providing foodbanks, meals outside term time and washing uniforms.

- 12 Nine out of ten school governors and trustees supported the proposed new Ofsted inspection framework. 42% of respondents had already done work in preparation for the framework while a further 47% were planning to do work in preparation. Only one in ten said they were not planning to do, or had not done, any preparation.

61% do not have enough funding to support disadvantaged pupils

- 13 Respondents were slightly less likely to have engaged in stakeholder engagement (of any form) than in previous years - including staff, pupil and parent/carers surveys as well as engaging the school and wider community face-to-face, despite the importance of stakeholder engagement to good governance.

76% had the same clerk for the full governing board and committees

- 14 Only 76% had the same clerk for the full governing board and its committees, despite virtually all respondents employing a clerk. This means that those who did not either used another individual (such as a member of staff) or did not have anyone clerking committee meetings.

Summary of recommendations

For governing boards

- 01 Exhaust all possible mechanisms to address key challenges facing schools. This includes making use of financial efficiency benchmarking tools if this has not already been done and considering the implementation of strategies to tackle teacher and senior leader workload.
- 02 Consider diversity on the governing board when recruiting new volunteers or succession planning for key posts. Reflect on whether the time commitment is manageable for governance posts, and responsibilities evenly distributed, to ensure governance is accessible and manageable for as many people as possible.
- 03 **MAT trustees need to:**
 - i. ensure that there is no overlap between the layers of governance and management.
 - ii. have a succinct and clear scheme of delegation which is understood and followed by all.
 - iii. invest significant time in listening to the voices of academy committee members.
 - iv. consider an array of factors when deciding pay for executive leaders.
- 04 Provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils and continue to champion the needs of disadvantaged pupils and their families.

- 05 Continue to engage stakeholders using a range of tools and methods. This should not only include surveys, but also face-to-face engagement with parents, pupils, staff and the wider school community.
- 06 Draw upon a wider range of sources of information to hold the executive leader to account
- 07 Governing boards should continue to lobby the government on the issues which they care about by writing to their MP and inviting them to visit their school to see challenges faced first-hand.
- 08 Employ an independent and impartial clerk, where possible, for all meetings of the governing board rather than just the full governing board meetings.

For the government

- 01 With a growing consensus on the issues and concerns facing schools, the government need to engage with, and listen to, the voices of those governing our schools and school staff when deciding upon education priorities and policy.
- 02 Urgently address the insufficiency of school funding, including providing adequate provision to pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and consider mechanisms to alleviate workload pressures on school staff, including executive leaders.

- 03 Continue to recognise the immeasurable contribution that governing boards make to the education sector and remain mindful that while those governing have enormous capacity and a wealth of skills to offer, they remain unpaid volunteers.
- 04 Continue to support initiatives aimed at increasing diversity on governing boards and fund governor and trustee recruitment services to fill thousands of vacancies across the country.
- 05 Introduce mandatory induction training for new governors and trustees so that they understand their roles and responsibilities and feel effective and confident.
- 06 Consider the recommendations for government in NGA's recent [Moving MATs Forward: the power of governance](#) report.
- 07 Give greater recognition to the critical role schools are playing in providing services to families and pupils in need and continue to provide pupil premium funding to schools.
- 08 Recognise the centrality of stakeholder engagement to the governing board's role as part of the core functions of governance in the [Governance Handbook](#).
- 09 Clerking should be an essential part of government policy in terms of its approach to making school governance consistently more effective.

Challenges facing school governing boards in 2019

3

3.1: What are the top challenges facing our schools?

Those governing our schools have a unique perspective on the important issues facing England's education sector.

Survey respondents selected up to five of the most pressing issues facing the school(s) they govern – the findings reveal that governors and trustees are united in the three key issues they face regardless of school structure, phase, region and/or Ofsted grade.

Figure four outlines which challenges governing boards were more likely to list in their five top issues out of a possible 31 choices in the survey, alongside the option to give an 'other' response. 72.5% of those surveyed said 'balancing the budget' was one of the most important issues affecting their school(s). 'Staff wellbeing including workload' (61.9%) along with 'support for pupils with special education needs, including high needs funding' (31.2%) also ranked highly. Comparing this with last year's results, respondents this year were far more unified in what they felt were key concerns, with the top ten ranked issues making up 63% of respondents' collective vote (compared to 53.7% in 2018).

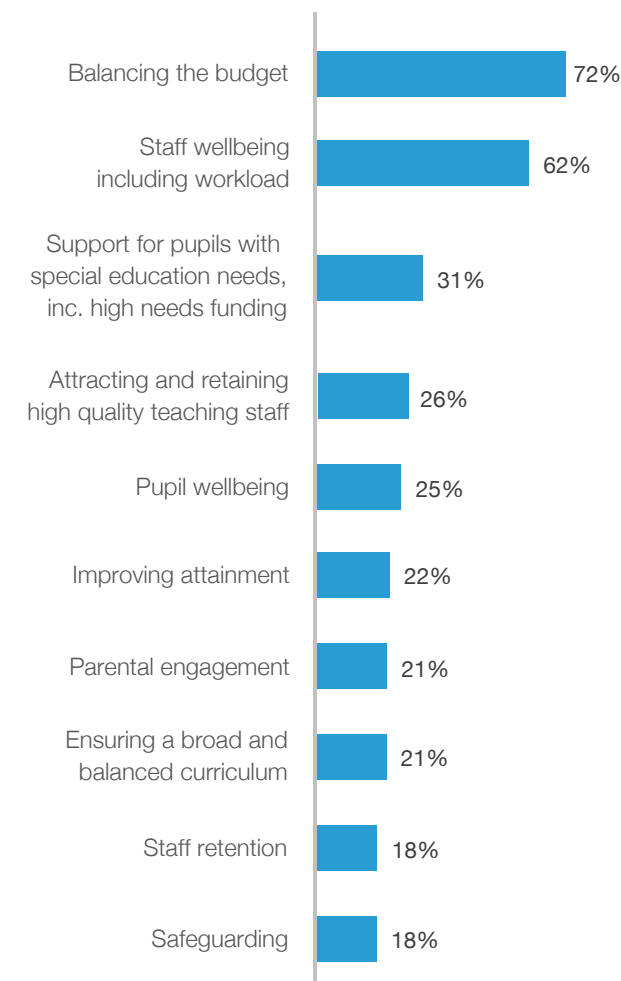
1. Funding remains the top issue for respondents

Over 76.1% of respondents said that they are not confident that funding pressures can be managed without any adverse impact on the quality of education provided, an increase from 74% of respondents in the 2018 survey. 65.4% of respondents felt that cuts to local authority services, such as school improvement, had an adverse effect on their school(s). Governors of maintained schools were slightly more likely to say that cuts to local authority services had adversely affected their school(s) with 68% of respondents from these boards saying they agreed.²

As shown in **figure five**, only half of respondents said that their board was expecting to be able to balance the budget next year and, of those drawing on reserves (32% of those surveyed, a 2% increase from 2018), 61.4% said that their board expected these to run out by 2021, with maintained school governors more likely to give this response.

As with previous years, the survey asked respondents how financial constraints had affected their school(s) and the pressures on finances does not seem to have decreased, as shown in **figure six**.

Top ten issues facing respondents' schools



n = 3423

Figure 4: What do you see as the most important issues facing the school(s) you govern? Please select five options.

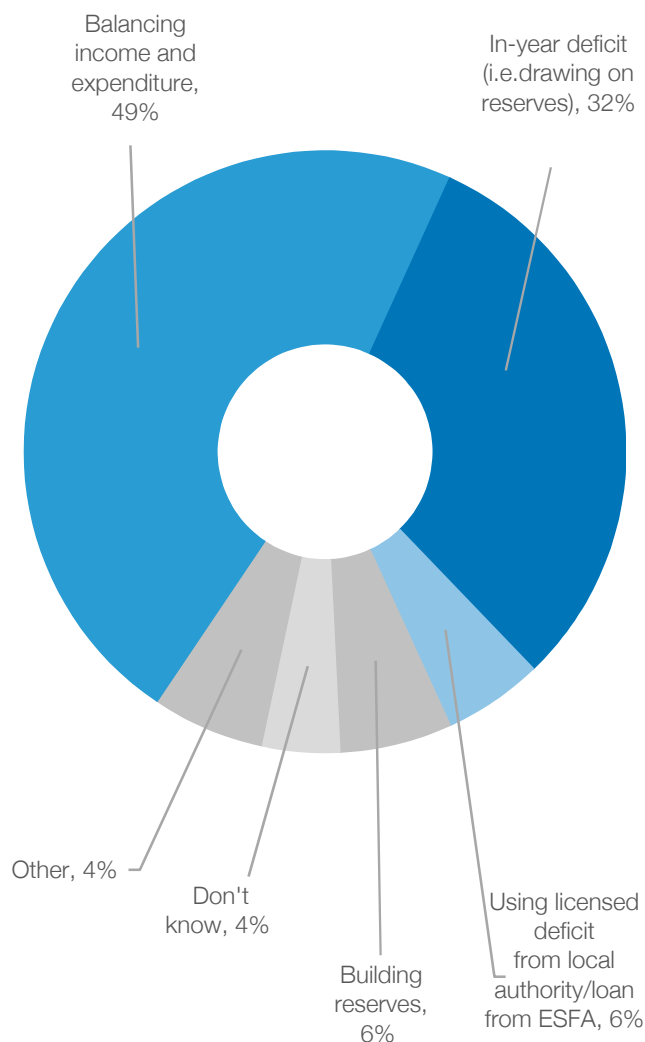
2. Local academy committee members were the least likely to say that this had affected their school(s), with 58% of respondents agreeing.

As the people responsible for overseeing the financial performance of schools, many governors and trustees have needed to make tough decisions regarding funding in their organisations:

- **6.6% of respondents said they had already or anticipate reducing school opening hours in the next two years.** Broken down by phase, secondary schools were the most likely to reduce opening hours, with 9.2% of respondents having either done this (4.2%) or anticipating doing this in the next two years (5%). In terms of groups, this approach was most common for trustees of single academy trusts, with 3.9% having already done this and 4.1% anticipating doing this in the next two years. Some trustees of MATs were also most likely to anticipate doing this within the next two years (5.6%).
- **Half said that their school had already reduced the number of support staff (51.7%) and just under a third had reduced the number of teaching staff (32.1%).** 44.4% of respondents had made at least one non-teaching staff member redundant within the last 12 months while 27.7% had made one teaching staff member redundant.³ A consequence of this may be increasing the amount of teaching time for senior leaders; 32.2% of respondents saying they had done this already and a further 17.4% saying they anticipated doing this in the next two years. Reducing the number of support staff was the most common action taken in response to financial constraints.

3. This includes natural wastage (not replacing employees that leave).

What is the financial position of your school or trust?



n = 3603

Figure 5: respondents' schools financial positions by percentage

Actions taken by respondents' school(s) in response to financial constraints

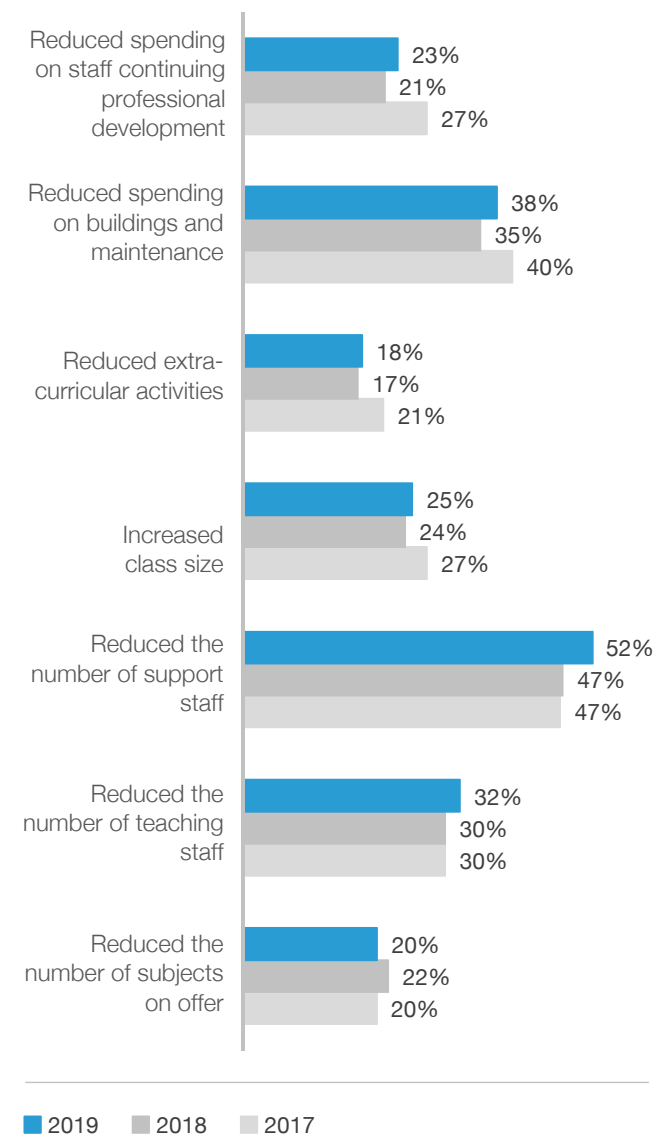


Figure 6: the percentage of respondents who had taken actions in response to funding constraints over time (2017 – 2019).

- Nearly half of all respondents said that their school had increased fundraising.

A quarter said that their school(s) had asked for parental contributions in the last twelve months and 46.5% of respondents stated that they had increase fundraising.

- The majority of those governing schools with early years and sixth forms said they did not have adequate funding to cater for their pupils

59.7% of respondents from schools with sixth forms said that they did not have adequate funding to cater for 16 – 19 year olds and 42.8% of those governing nursery schools suggested they did not sufficient funds for their pupils.

Despite having to make difficult budgetary decisions, the Department for Education's financial efficiency benchmarking tool, which allows schools to compare their use of resources and finance management with similar schools, was underutilised by many respondents. Only 53% of respondents had made use of this resource, with MAT trustees the most likely (59.2%) and academy committee members the least likely (37.3%) to have used this resource. Nurseries (59.4%) and alternative provision (60%) schools were the two most likely phases to use the tool.⁴

Looking to the future, respondents were pessimistic about the government's ability to address funding issues, with 73.4% of respondents not confident that the Department for Education will make a strong case for education funding to the government in the upcoming spending review.

2. Most respondents are concerned that their school does not have the resources to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

Despite 89% of respondents saying that they felt their board had the skills, knowledge and experience to champion the needs of SEND pupils in their school(s) to a moderate or great extent, 77.8% of respondents said they did not receive enough funding to meet the needs of pupils with SEND, with 31.2% stating that a lack of high needs funding was one of the top five issues facing the school(s) they govern.

Respondents from both special schools and alternative provisions were more likely to place 'services for children e.g. health services' within the top five issues facing their schools.

In their open text responses to several questions, those surveyed stressed that not only did they feel they did not have adequate provision to cater for SEND pupils, but that this was also having a detrimental effect on all pupils as their schools are having to find the funding from other places within the school budget.

61.9% placed staff workload in their top five issues

"Improve school funding and help us with the funding specifically for children with SEND. The children arriving to our school have more and more complex (diagnosed) needs but we're not always set up to support their needs nor do we have the funding to put the provision they need in place."

"Invest in SEND support and training. There is a funding crisis in SEND and ultimately this will end up costing more as these kids grow in to adults needing more expensive support. Investing now is not only badly needed but it will improve the outcomes for so many."

"Be realistic with the funding that is in schools and the cuts they are having to make - this makes a direct impact on teachers and being able to provide support - especially when looking at mental health, SEND and wellbeing in schools."

"We have a high percentage of SEND pupils and are using a significant amount of our budget in supporting them in school."

"We spend more than we receive to support SEND children. This has a wider impact on the other children in school"

4. This may be due to their respective schemes of delegation and the fact that not all academy committees will have delegated financial responsibilities.

3. Respondents noting staff workload and wellbeing as a key concern have increased and schools are working hard to attract and retain high quality teachers

The largest growing area of concern for respondents was staff workload and wellbeing, with 61.9% of respondents placing staff workload in their top five issues compared with only 37.3% in 2018. Encouragingly, boards appear to be increasingly proactive in identifying solutions to teacher workload where this is within their power; 48% of respondents said that their board had taken steps to reduce teacher workload (up 5% from 2018).

Over half of respondents also reported that the workload and/or the pressure upon the lead executive of the school they govern had increased over the past 12 months.⁵

Just under **70%** said that teacher workload was a problem

Another highly rated issue was the attraction and retention of high-quality teaching staff (26.2% of respondents rated this as one of the five most important issues facing their school(s)). Despite this, only 14.8% of respondents had increased incentives for teachers and only 34.8% had a flexible working policy for all staff (with 32% not having a

5. 53.3% of respondents said that their lead executive's workload had increase in the past 12 months while 55.1% said the pressure upon them had increased.

flexible working policy for any staff members). The most common incentives introduced by respondents included monetary incentives, continuing professional development and training opportunities as well as career progression and promotion opportunities. Other suggestions included 'day-to-day wellbeing initiatives' and sabbaticals.

Recommendations for governing boards

- 01 Renew focus on the core function of overseeing financial performance and make the best use of the financial efficiency tools available on the government website.
- 02 Prioritise strategies to tackle teacher and senior leader workload as a strategy to recruit and retain staff.

Recommendations for the government

- 01 Urgently address the insufficiency of school funding and its widespread effects on the standard of education provided to young people. As part of NGA's Funding the Future campaign, NGA call for the core revenue budget to be increased by at least £2 billion per year.
- 02 Ensure that schools are equipped with the resources and support to provide high quality education and provision to pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Additionally, the Funding the Future campaign also calls for the high needs budget for pupils with SEND to be increased by at least £1.5 billion per year.
- 03 With regard to staffing, consider mechanisms to alleviate pressures on school staff and their workload, including executive leaders, whilst considering the

Only 5.2% said that their board had never dealt with a HR issue in their organisation and 87% of respondents said that they were confident in dealing with most HR issues. A third of respondents said that they relied on the advice of a HR professional employed by their school/trust while 24.3% said they relied on advice from external professionals.

On what information governing boards receive about their school(s)' staff, respondents told us that

- 72.2% receive the objectives of the headteacher/lead executive
- 62.2% receive summary reports of performance reviews and how they link to pay awards
- 67% receive information on staff absences
- 79.2% receive data on staff turnover
- 24.6% receive summary reports of exit interviews.

impact that funding cuts have had on the number of teaching staff per pupil and the additional strain this has placed upon the education system.

3.2: Respondents views on education policy

Despite their vital role, the views of those governing schools are often overlooked in conversations about national education policy.

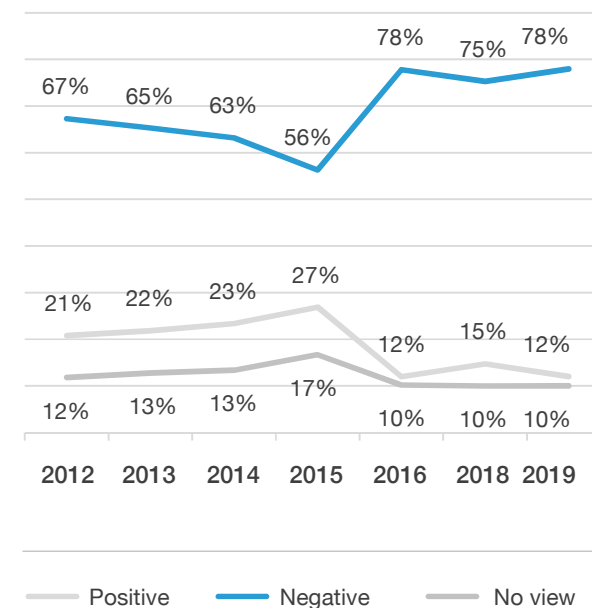
78% gave a negative assessment of the government's performance on education

Since 2012, NGA has asked respondents to give their verdict on the government's performance. As seen in [figure seven](#), the government has consistently received an overall negative assessment of their performance from survey respondents; particularly since 2016.⁷

Additionally, just over half of all respondents felt that the government's vision for the education system did not align with their governing board's vision for education within their school, and this divide remained regardless of school structure.

"The government must stop pretending that schools are being adequately financed and stop imagining that a little bit of money to spend on 'extras' ... addresses the systematic underfunding of the last 10 years. Schools have used up every last bit of resource and that is affecting recruitment, retention and pupil outcomes".

Survey respondents' verdict on the government's performance in education over the past year⁷



n = 3422

Figure 7: 'Give your verdict on how the government has performed in education over the past year', % of respondents' answers over time (2012 – 2016, 2018 – 2019).


⁷ This question was not asked in 2017 so we do not have any data for the period.

When asked what single message they wanted to send to the government, the overwhelming majority of responses noted ‘funding’. Other commonly mentioned responses include reference to more support from government for a myriad of different services and groups. While some of these were tied to funding, it included increased support for LAs, children with SEND, and pastoral and family services. Others commonly asked the government to stop “interfering” or “introducing changes” to the education system and there was a clear message from over 100 respondents for the government to listen to the education community, including governors, trustees and headteachers.


“Provide more SEND support – more places in special schools and better funding for those in mainstream. This will mean school funding can then be used for other pupils as well”.

“Promote greater stability and reduce emphasis on change”.

Recommendations for governing boards

-  Governing boards should continue to make their voices heard to national and local policymakers on the issues that matter to them the most. Those governing can use the resources available on NGA's [Funding the Future](#) campaign webpage to contact their MP or the Chancellor about school funding.

Recommendations for government

-  With a growing consensus on the issues and concerns facing schools, the government need to engage with, and listen to, the voices of governing boards and school staff when deciding upon education priorities and policy.

School governance: the national picture



4.1: Who governs our schools?

Governing boards need a balance and diversity of people with knowledge, skills, perspectives and experience to enable it to be effective. This section explores the demographical data collected through the survey, including the age, ethnicity, gender and occupation of those governing schools in England.

Diversity is an ongoing issue for governing boards

Just under half of those surveyed said that their board had considered whether it was reflective of the community it serves (47.1%) and, of these, nearly one third said it was not.

Like previous years, the data indicates that the school governance population is not reflective of the pupil population. 92.8% of respondents in this year's survey identified as white. This is compared to 74% of England's pupils and 86% of its teachers who were identified as white according figures from the Department for Education. The proportion of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) governance volunteers, at just 5.4% of survey respondents, remains largely unchanged since the survey's inception. Those who identified as white were also more likely to be chair compared to those from other ethnic groups.

9.7% of volunteers joining boards in the past two years are from ethnic minorities

Ethnicity	% of pupils in England (2018)	% of governance volunteers surveyed (2019)	% of governance volunteers who reported being chair (2019)
White	74%	93%	95%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	6%	1%	1%
Asian/Asian British	12%	2%	2%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	6%	1%	0.2%
Other ethnic group	2%	1%	0.1%
Rather not say	0%	2%	2%

Figure 8: demographics of survey respondents in 2019 compared to official figures on pupil demographics (DfE, 2018).

n of chairs: 1,600 n of governance volunteers: 5,904

Nevertheless, it is encouraging that 9.7% of those who have been recruited to governance posts in the last two years were from ethnic minorities – compared to only 1.5% who had been in governance for over 40 years. There is also some regional variation; 81.4% of governors and trustees surveyed in London identified as white.

62% of school governance volunteers are female

In terms of gender, 62% of respondents identified as female, whereas females only comprised of 60% of chairs. This shows that there are slightly fewer female chairs than there are females in governance across schools. Females are more likely to govern in all phases of schools apart from alternative provisions, and particularly more likely to govern in nursery, primary and special schools.

6% of respondents said that they had a disability compared to 21% nationally. Overwhelmingly, individuals who responded to the survey said that disabled people were underrepresented on their board.⁸

8. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-201718> self-reported

Only 2.6% of respondents identified as LGBTQ+, yet 37.4% of respondents felt that individuals who identified as LGBTQ+ were underrepresented on their board. It is worth stating that 3.6% of those surveyed answered 'rather not say' to whether they were LGBTQ+ and when questioned whether individuals from this group were represented on their board, 53.6% said they did not know. This brings into question how school governance recruiters, and recruiters in general, treat non-visible diversity and how we can recruit diversely with this in mind.

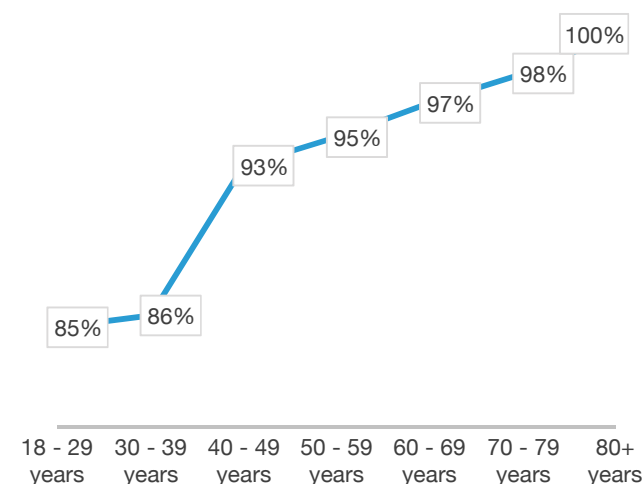
Everyone on Board

NGA's **Everyone on Board** campaign aims to increase the participation of people from ethnic minorities and young people in school governance by encouraging them to share their skills, experience and insights as school governors/trustees. Creating a diverse governing board has multiple benefits:

- It helps to avoid groupthink by offering a range of perspectives
- It sets a culture for equality and diversity to thrive throughout the school or group of schools
- Seeing governors/trustees from ethnic minorities provides role models for young people and can give them confidence in what they can achieve
- Having a diverse board provides a connectedness between the school and its community and ensures all stakeholders feel valued

To find out more, visit www.nga.org.uk/everyone-on-board.

Percentage of white governors and trustees within age brackets



n = 5309

Figure 9: Percentage of white governors and trustees within each age bracket.

Younger respondents are less likely to be white, but continue to be underrepresented compared to the national population

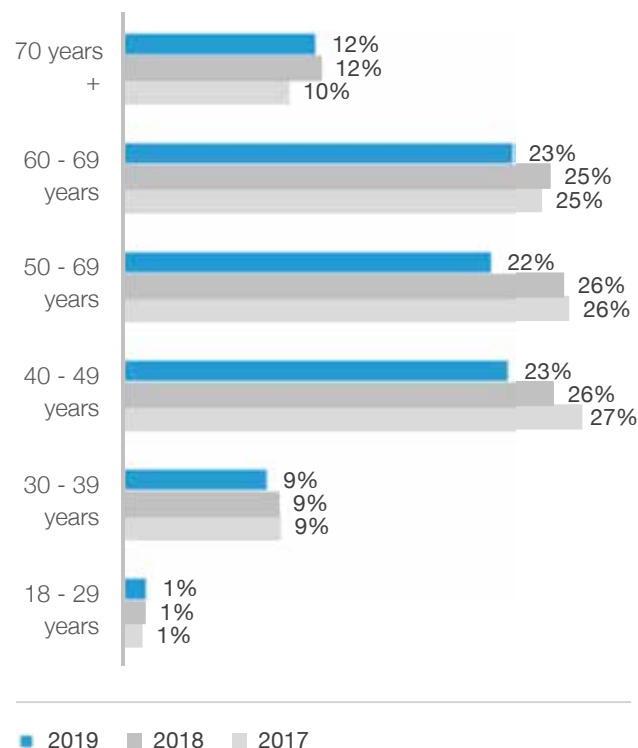
The average percentage of governors and trustees who identified as white falls when compared with age – as shown in **figure nine**. This suggests that as older governors and trustees retire and younger volunteers take their place, the ethnic diversity of governing boards will improve.

Like ethnicity, however, **figure ten** shows that the age of those governing has remained stagnant over time. The largest bulk of respondents were those aged over 40, making up 79.6% of the school governance population while only 10% were aged under 40 – the lowest recorded figure of under 40s in the last five years. The percentages of respondents aged between '18-29' and '30-39' remains the same.¹⁰

Young Governors' Network

The Young Governors' Network (YGN) aims to support and encourage those aged under 40 to govern in schools. It facilitates the sharing of experience, addressing the challenges faced by young people governing schools and creating sustainable connections among current and prospective governors. YGN is member-led: created and run by young governors with support from the NGA and Inspiring Governance. To find out more visit www.nga.org.uk/YGN

Percentage of respondents within age brackets over time (2017 -2019)



n = 5306 (2019)

Figure 10: percentage of respondents by age over time (2017 – 2019)

As with 2018, respondents predominately have professional or managerial backgrounds. 87% of those surveyed said that they were either a manager, director, senior official or held another professional role. While these individuals often hold skills governing boards are looking for such as in finance, HR and risk management, respondents told us that their boards are chiefly lacking volunteers with (53.9%) and volunteers that reflect the community (44.1%). While this might not necessarily tell us whether the lack of these characteristics are having a negative effect on board performance or composition, it does suggest that potential volunteers should not be put off from volunteering because they do not come from a professional or managerial background.

For comparison, less than a third of the employed population of the UK were in managerial or professional occupations when the latest figures were published in 2017 (Office for National Statistics, 2017b). This suggests that those governing are able to bring a wealth of skills and experience to their role. Diversity of professional and educational backgrounds is also important to ensure good governance, however, and it is worth considering whether a range of perspectives are represented on the governing board; it should not be assumed that a potential volunteer has nothing to offer because they do not have a professional or managerial background.

9. Since 2017, the survey gives respondents the opportunity to choose 'rather not say' which is why these figures do not add up to 100.

10. This is likely due to the change in format of the question. Previously we asked participants to give their age within a bracketed category whereas in 2019, we gave participants the opportunity to give their precise age. As the percentage of respondents under 40 remain stable, we can assume that those over 40 were the least likely to give their age.

Who governs our schools: a snapshot

Age

- The average age of a school governor/trustee is 55 years old.
- MAT trustees are, on average, the oldest at 59 years old.
- There are 70 years between the oldest and youngest respondent – the oldest at 90 and the youngest at 19.

Occupation

- 32.5% of those surveyed were retired, 0.7% were studying and 0.7% were also unemployed with a further 5.2% looking after home or family
- The most common occupation of those surveyed was of a managerial, directorial or senior official while only 0.7% were from a skilled trade profession
- Over 38% worked or had worked in education, mirroring the large proportion of respondents (30%) who classified their current occupation as an education professional.

Gender

- Females are the most likely to govern in schools making up 58.9% of those surveyed.
- Average age of a female governing was 52.6 years while the average age for a male was 57.6 years.

Ethnicity

- White governors/trustees were, on average, the oldest at 55 years old
- The youngest governors/trustees were more likely to be from an ethnic minority with an average age of 47 years old
- Female governors/trustees were more likely to come from an ethnic minority.

Joining the governing board

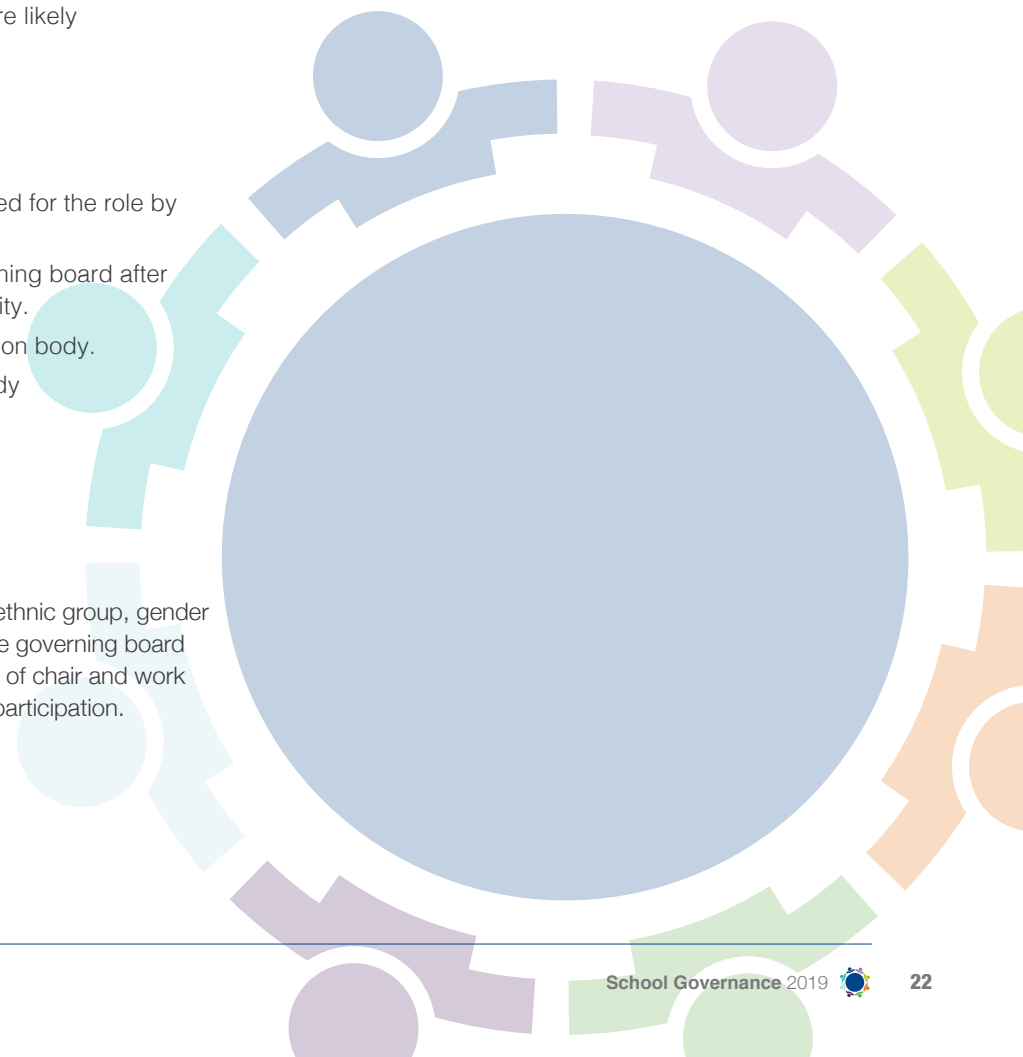
- 57.1% of respondents were appointed for the role by the governing board/trust members.
- 11.2% were appointed by the governing board after being nominated by the local authority.
- 13.5% were appointed by a foundation body.
- 14.8% were election by a parent body
- 3.5% were elected by staff

Recommendations for governing boards

- Actively consider diversity of age, ethnic group, gender and disability when recruiting to the governing board or succession planning for the role of chair and work to identify and remove barriers to participation.

Recommendations for government

- Continue to support initiatives aimed at increasing diversity on governing boards and ensure messaging supports this aim.



4.2: Motivations, recruitment and time spent on governance

Governing is a substantial commitment of time, energy and skills, yet school governance volunteers often talk of how rewarding the role is. This section sheds light on the amount of time it takes and the current outlook on governor, trustee and academy committee recruitment.

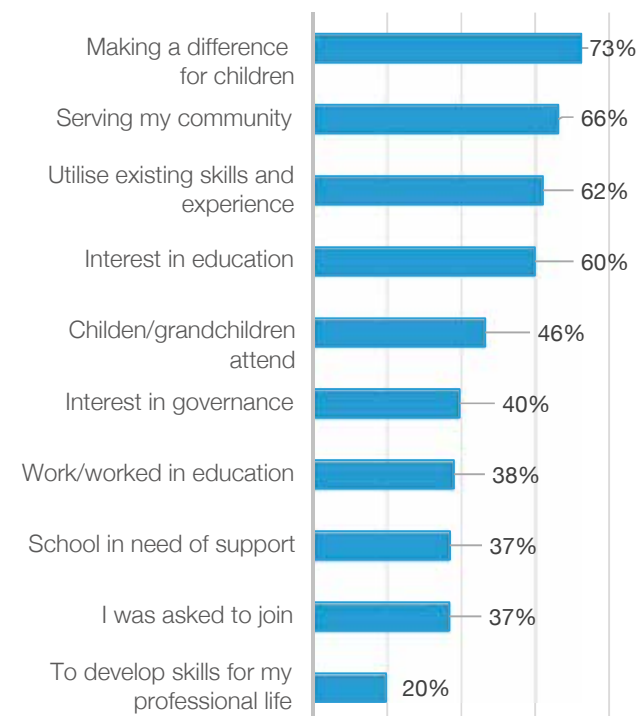
The majority get involved in school governance to 'make a difference' to children's lives. As illustrated by **figure ten**, over half of all those surveyed also listed 'serving my community' (66%), 'utilising existing skills and experience' (62%) and 'an interest in education' (60%).

73% state making a difference for children as their main motivation

How do governors and trustees feel they are making a positive impact?

- 75% of respondents said they feel that they make a positive contribution to their local community
- 80% of respondents said that they feel that they are making a positive contribution to the whole school system
- 88% of respondents said that they feel that they are making a positive contribution to the quality of education at their school(s)

Top motivations for governing according to respondents



n = 5016

Figure 10: 'What motivated you to become involved in school governance?'

Respondents were also given the opportunity to explain their motivation for governing in their own words:

"[I] had a rubbish time at school and didn't want anyone else to"

"[I volunteered] to build my confidence having been out of the workplace"

"[My] children previously attended the school and [I had] a desire to give something back"

The most common answer relating to why respondents were involved in school governance related to previous or ongoing involvement with the school, with 33% of respondents governing in a school where they were related to a child.

Governors and trustees were also asked about the skills they had gained from the role. Amongst the comments, respondents noted that governance had given them a greater understanding of how education and schools work. It has also helped them work with others and improve their leadership skills (including managing others and chairing).

While the vast majority of respondents felt they were making a positive contribution to the whole school system, this varies by time governing with only 69.6% of those governing for under two years agreeing with this statement. Meanwhile, 85.1% of respondents who had been involved in school governance for over 20 years agreed with this statement. This may be that they are more likely to be able to see and identify the long-term positive effects of school

governance or they have had more of an opportunity and time to make a difference while those new to governance are still getting to grips with the role.

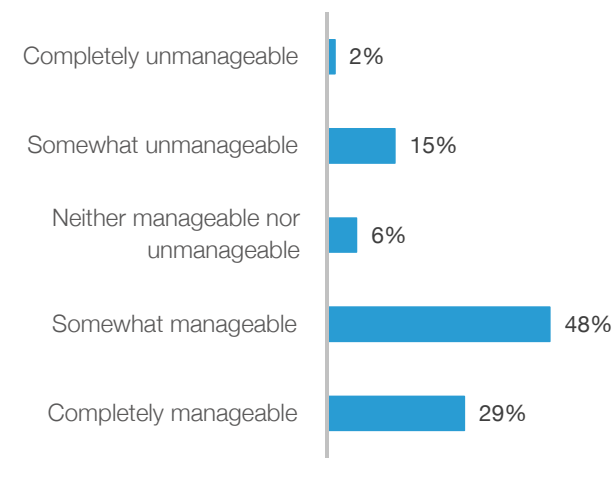
Respondents reported spending a significant amount of time governing their school(s).

"A big factor is that governing bodies are being asked to do so much more these days - to be more accountable, and to take on a growing chunk of responsibility for schools' inspection outcomes. It adds to the stress and takes away from the pleasures of governing and is in my view too much to ask of a group of time-stretched volunteers. I feel our generous nature is being exploited by the system."

NGA has previously set the expectation that time spent on school governance should be manageable within 10 to 20 days per year, a benchmark borrowed from the wider charity sector. Last year 52% of those surveyed said that they agreed that the responsibilities given to governors/trustees are manageable within this timeframe. This decreased from 69.7% in 2012.¹²

This year, over half of volunteers identified that they are devoting between 20 and 30 days per year to their governance duties and a further 27.4% are dedicating over 30 days. In addition, 24.4% of chairs of governing boards admitted that their workload was either somewhat or completely unmanageable, with around 15% of those in other chairing positions (such as committee chairs and

To what extent do you feel that the time commitment required for your governance role is manageable?



n = 3821

Figure 12: percentage of respondents on whether their governance duties were manageable.

11. The mean average of a commute to governance meetings according to respondents was 27.4 minutes (one-way).
12. 16.1% of vice chairs and 13.2% of committee chairs.

77.4%
volunteers are giving
over 20 days per
year to governance

30 minutes is
the average commute
for governors and
trustees

11. 54.6% of respondents governing 'inadequate' schools spent over 30 days per year on their governance duties compared with only 28.9% of respondents governing 'good' schools.

Years respondents had been involved in school governance	
Less than 12 months	7.8
1-4 years	30.8
5-8 years	19.2
8 years +	42.2

Figure 13: table showing the average number of years respondents had been involved in school governance

vice chairs) saying the same.¹² NGA's interim research report, *Exploring the time it takes to chair a multi academy trust (MAT)* found that chairs governing MATs spend a significantly longer time on governance within their organisation than those chairing in other types of schools.

"I feel very disillusioned with being a governor, it's a thankless task. The government expects far too much for a voluntary role and I don't feel the enthusiasm for it anymore."

The perception of whether time spent governing is manageable is also slightly affected by the most recent Ofsted grade given to the school. The data demonstrates that those whose schools have been rated 'inadequate' are the most likely to say that the time commitment for their role was somewhat or completely unmanageable.

Additionally those governing schools deemed 'inadequate' by Ofsted were also twice as likely to perform over 30 days of governance duties per year than those governing schools which had acquired 'good' status.¹¹ This may be due to the added time taken to govern in schools where an interim executive board is in place instead of a governing board.

Despite the extensive time commitment, most respondents said that the role was somewhat or completely manageable (77%). Whilst 41.9% of retired respondents said that their workload was completely manageable, only 22.2% of employed individuals said the same.

32.4% of respondents were given paid time off by their employer for school governance duties and a further 11.6% received unpaid time off. 2.9% respondents were refused time off while 29.5% said that it was not applicable to their work arrangement.

Despite this overwhelming trend of increasing workload, governors and trustees remain ambivalent towards the notion of pay. As with previous years, over half of governance volunteers surveyed said that they disagreed with the option to pay all governors and trustees (in addition to receiving expenses).

Over a quarter of respondents said they would or were unsure if they would resign from their role



13.2% of respondents said they are planning to resign from their role in the next twelve months and an additional 14.7% said they were not sure. MAT trustees were the most likely to say they were planning on resigning from the board (16.1%) while local academy committees were the least likely (11.8%).

Those involved in school governance for under 12 months were the least likely to say they intended to resign within twelve months (9.9%) compared with volunteers who had served for one year or over (31.4%).


Whether respondents were planning to resign was interesting when compared with their school(s) most recent Ofsted grade. Governors/trustees of 'inadequate' schools were expressively more likely to say they were planning to resign (23.8%) and only 56.4% said they definitely not planning to resign. Meanwhile, 72% of respondents governing 'outstanding' or 'good' schools said they were not contemplating resignation.

On average
respondents had spent
6.6 years on
their current governing
board

Recommendations for governing boards

-  Look to introduce strategies to manage time more effectively and ensure that the board is working as a collective to alleviate the burden upon individuals who are vulnerable to spending a significant amount of time on governance, particularly the chair.
-  Consider how the time it takes to govern in your school impacts upon governor/trustee wellbeing, recruitment and succession planning. Actively talk about governor and trustee workload as a governing board; putting measures in place to make the time commitment more manageable for those who are struggling.

Recommendations for government

-  Continue to recognise the immeasurable contribution that governing boards make to the education sector at no cost to the taxpayer. When considering education policy and workload in schools, **remain mindful that while those governing have enormous capacity and a wealth of skills to offer, they remain unpaid volunteers.**

4.3: Governing boards: recruitment, composition and training

There are over a quarter of a million school governance volunteers in England, but despite the move toward smaller boards, thousands of volunteers are still needed to fill governing board vacancies.

The number of small governing boards continues to increase

There is no set size for a governing board. Instead, all boards are encouraged to regularly review their constitution and composition to ensure that the board can function to an optimal level, having enough individuals to contribute a diverse range of skills and opinions but not so big that a consensus cannot be reached. While in 2013, 16.6% of respondents to the survey reported having ten or less individuals on their board, in 2019, this is now 39.8% of respondents showing a drastic shift to smaller boards.

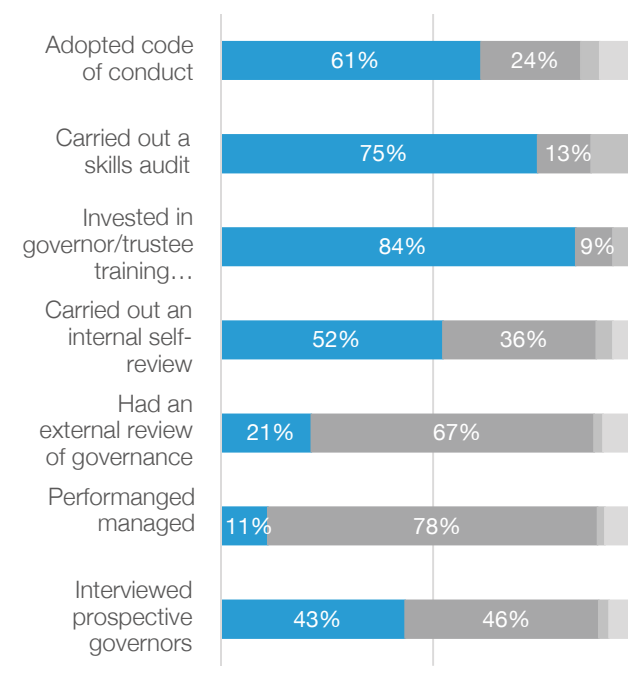
Number of governors/trustees on respondents' boards when full	% of respondents (2019)
8 or fewer	16.7%
9-10	23.1%
11-12	31.9%
13-15	19.2%
16-19	6.2%
20 or more	2.8%

n = 3,859

Figure 14: table showing a breakdown of board sizes amongst survey respondents.

In addition to the full governing board, many schools and trusts have committees made up of a smaller group of people chosen to receive specific information and make decisions on behalf of the full board. Respondents told us that the average number of committees was 2.51 committees per board. This varies a little by type of board; MATs on average have the least trust board committees

Actions formed by respondents' boards and whether it was useful



■ We did this and it was useful
 ■ We did not do this
 ■ We did this and it was not useful
 ■ Don't know

Figure 12: percentage of respondents who carried out each action and how beneficial it was.

There are
11 to 12 volunteers
 on an average board

55.3% say it is difficult to recruit volunteers to their board

(1.8 per board) and single academy trusts have the most (3.1 per board). A significant portion of those surveyed also said that they had either changed the terms of reference for their committees (32.9%) or had changed the number of committees their board has (24.5%) in the past year.

Roughly 18,000 additional volunteers are needed to sustain school governance

Over 60% of respondents said that they had at least one vacancy or more on their governing board and a further 34.4% said that they had two or more vacancies. Over half of respondents said that they find it difficult to recruit governors/trustees to the governing board (55.3%) and 38.5% of respondents said that they find it difficult to attract a good chair and vice chair. 59.6% of chairs and vice chairs said that they found it difficult to recruit to the governing board, 10% more than those in non-chairing positions (excluding lead executives and committee chairs).

What methods of recruitment are governing boards using?

- 67.7% of respondents said that they had successfully recruited governors and trustees through word of mouth.
- 16.6% had recruited successfully through their local authority
- 12.6% had used Inspiring Governance
- 8.9% had used Governors for Schools (formerly SGOSS)

Based upon the approximate number of school governing boards in England and the number of vacancies per board, an estimated 18,000 additional school governance volunteers are needed to sustain current board sizes.

A supply of experienced and prepared chairs is essential to effective governance, so it is important for boards to plan their future leadership. Over half (55%) of respondents reported that they either did not have a succession plan or strategy in place or did not know if they had one in place. Only a quarter (24.2%) of school governance volunteers surveyed said that they both had a succession plan in place and there was someone lined up to take on the chairing role.

What skills are governing boards looking for?

- volunteers with motivation (41%)
- volunteers with time (53.9%)
- volunteers with finance skills (34.7%)
- volunteers with HR skills (40.8%)
- volunteers with risk management skills (36.6%)
- volunteers with education skills (31.5%)
- volunteers that reflect the community (44.1%)

24.2% had a succession plan for the chairing role in place

The majority of those governing have undertaken some form of effective training and over 9 in 10 support mandatory training for governing boards

96% of those surveyed who had invested in governor/trustee training reported that they had found the training useful and beneficial. 93.8% of respondents said that they were in support of high-quality induction training being mandatory for all new governors and trustees – a proportion which has remained consistent over the past few years.

A quarter of all those that sat on a panel to review a permanent exclusion said that they did not receive any training in preparation

The governing board must be informed of any permanent exclusion within their organisation and have a statutory duty to consider if the decision to exclude the pupil should be upheld. NGA recommends that all governors/trustees serving on exclusion panels should receive training in order to ensure they understand the legislation surrounding school exclusions and appropriate conduct at these panels. Yet 25.4% said they had not received any training in preparation. Respondents who had received training, 93.5% said that the training prepared them for their role on the panel.

17. Training did not appear to affect respondents' decision whether to reinstate the pupil.
18. 5.9% of respondents who had not sat on an exclusion panel said they felt the headteacher's power to exclude pupils were insufficient compared to 5.5% of those that had and had reinstated the pupil and 3.8% of those that had and had decided to reinstate the pupil;

We also asked participants whether they felt the headteacher's powers to exclude pupils were:

- too great (2.8%)
- just right (91.5%)
- insufficient (5.7%)

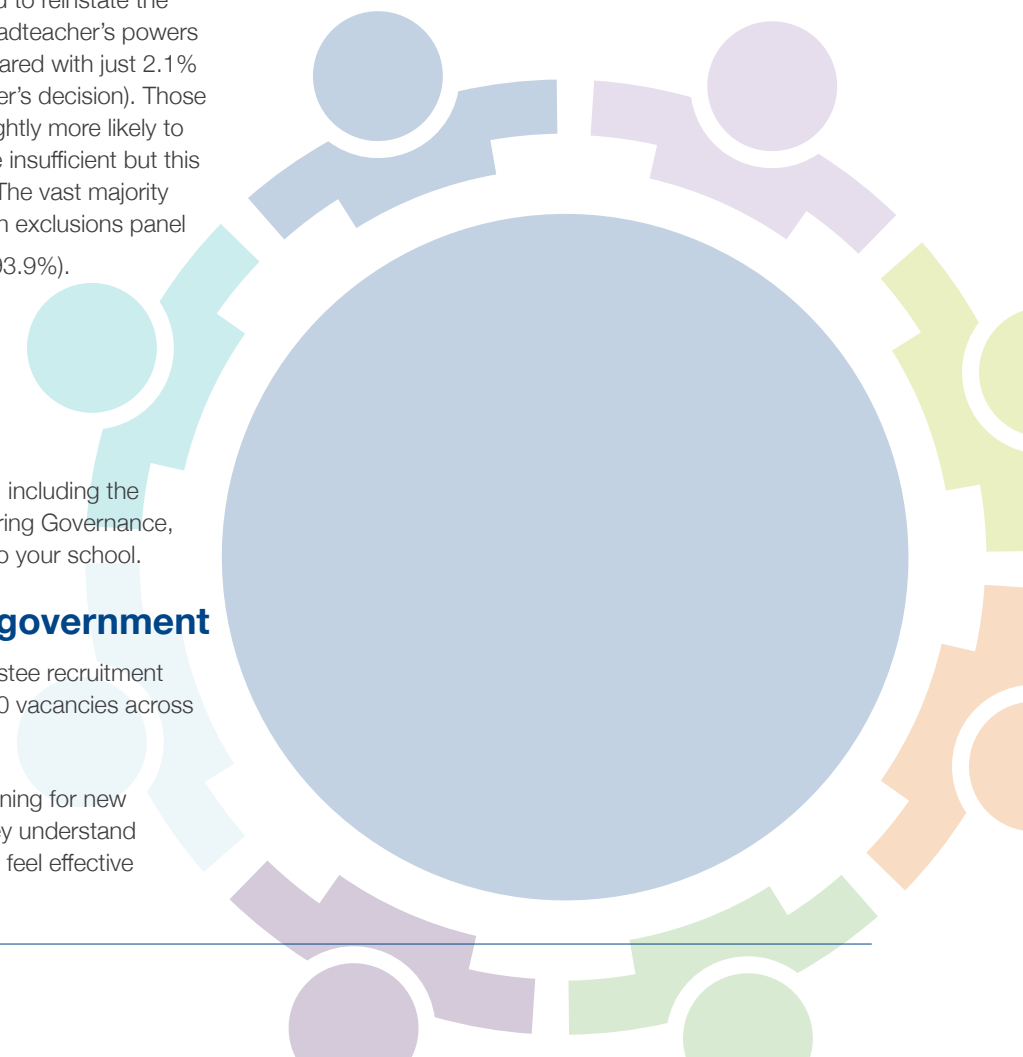
Those had sat on a panel which decided to reinstate the pupil were more likely to say that the headteacher's powers to exclude were too great (12.7% compared with just 2.1% of those that had upheld the headteacher's decision). Those who had not served on a panel were slightly more likely to say that the headteachers' powers were insufficient but this represented a minority of respondents. The vast majority of those surveyed who had served on an exclusions panel supported the headteacher's decision (93.9%).

Recommendations for governing boards

- Use the full array of tools available, including the government-funded platform Inspiring Governance, to recruit governors and trustees to your school.

Recommendations for government

- Continue to fund governor and trustee recruitment services to fill the estimated 18,000 vacancies across the country.
- Introduce mandatory induction training for new governors and trustees so that they understand their roles and responsibilities, and feel effective and confident.



4.4: Regional differences

North West

- Respondents were the second most likely to say they did not have any vacancies on their board (41.0%).
- The fifth most important issue was 'ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum' (21.5%).
- Respondents third most pressing issue was 'pupil wellbeing' (26.9%).

West Midlands

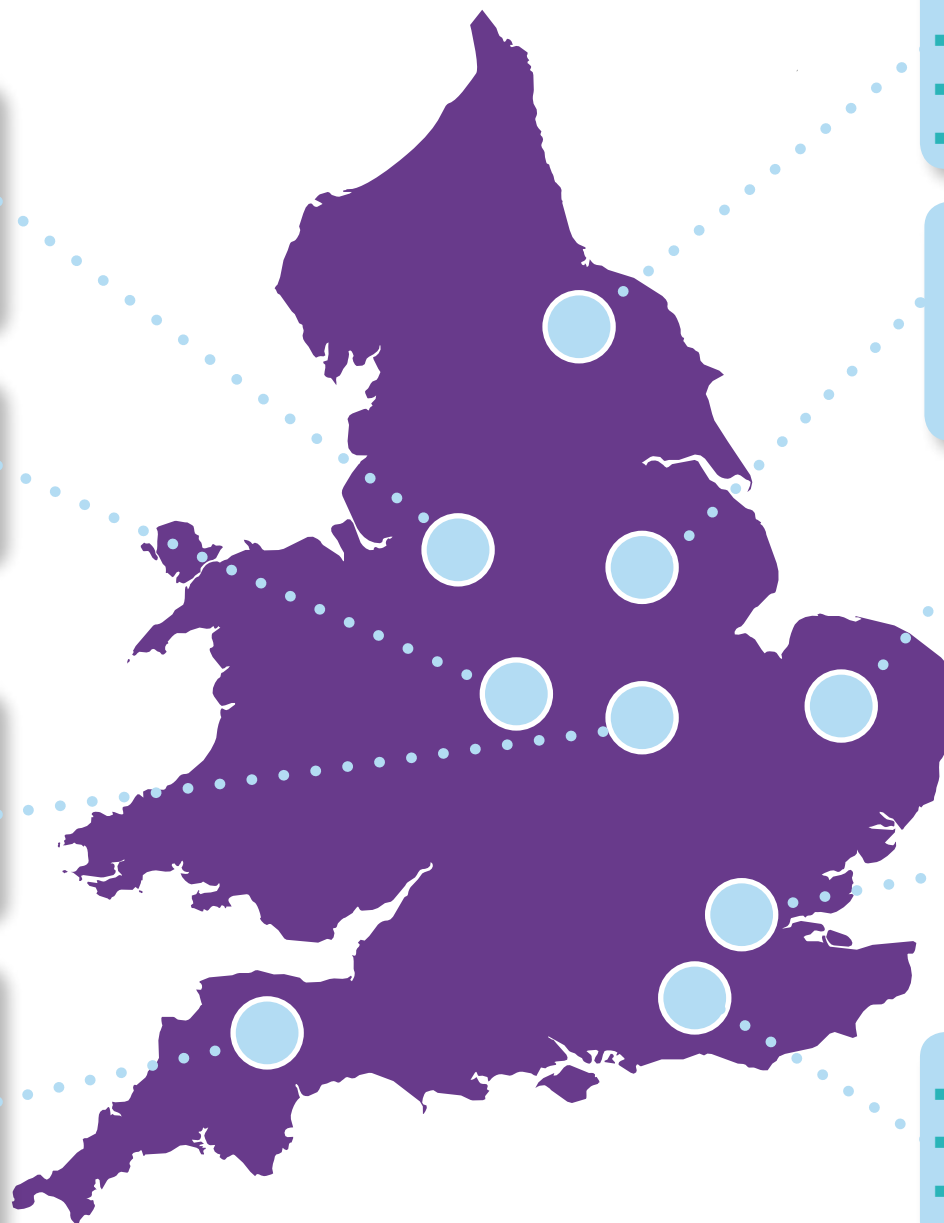
- Most likely to say that they had difficulty recruiting to the board (59.1%).
- Fifth most pressing issue was improving attainment (26.7%).

East Midlands

- Most likely to say that they had made teacher redundancies in response to funding constraints.
- Pupil wellbeing was the fifth biggest issue.
- MAT respondents from this region were most likely to say that they were planning to increase the number of academies within their trust.

South West

- Highest average age of school governance volunteers at 57 years.
- Least confident that the DfE would make a strong case for education in the upcoming spending review (77.3%).
- A higher proportion said they were considering resigning from their role (33.3%).
- The highest proportion said they did not have the sufficient funding for disadvantaged pupils (67.5%).



North East

- Largest proportion of respondents reporting a vacancy on their board (65.9%).
- Rated pupil wellbeing as their fourth most pressing issue (25%).
- Least likely to support governor pay (16.8%) compared with other regions (average = 27.8%).
- Least likely to say they supported Ofsted's framework 82.8%.

Yorkshire and Humber

- Fourth most pressing issue was ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum (26.5%).
- A higher proportion of females govern in this region (64.1%).
- More likely than average to say that they make a positive contribution to the whole school system (82.2%).

East of England

- Respondents were most likely to govern at a school their child attends (36.6%).
- Parental engagement was respondents fifth most important issue (25.5%).

London

- Third most pressing issue was 'attracting and retaining high quality teaching staff' (38.9%), the highest percent of any region on this issue.
- Has the youngest school governance volunteers with an average age of 53 years.
- Most likely to say they found it difficult to attract high quality teaching staff (over 50%).
- London respondents, of those currently drawing from reserves, were the most likely to say that their reserves would run out by 2021.

South East

- Amongst the most likely to report pupil wellbeing as one of their most pressing issues (23.3%).
- Like London, staff attraction and retention was of a greater concern than other regions (34.1%).
- Most likely to say that they supported Ofsted's new inspection framework (92.4%).

Further themes for 2019

5

5.1: Groups of schools

Governing a group of schools is a significantly different prospect from governing one school, and the risks increase as the number of pupils being educated increases.

Federations

A federation is a group of local authority (LA) maintained schools operating under a single instrument of government. This means that they share a governing body and, much like MATs, can establish cross-school leadership and share resources and staff. Unlike MATs, however, schools within federations remain under LA control.

3.2% of respondents govern in federations. Of these, 63.0% had two schools, 15.5% had 3 schools and 6.6% had 4 schools. 14.9% of schools reported having 5 or more schools within their federation.

When asked about the benefits of federation, the most common response was that it allowed for greater opportunities, including training, CPD and development for staff, as well as the opportunity for staff to share knowledge, expertise, skills and to progress in their career. Federations also noted greater support across the organisation and, where two schools covering different phases of education joined together, transition was noted as a key benefit. Other respondents mentioned that there was better management structures under federation, with shared leadership (including executive headteachers) across multiple schools and a single governing body.

Multi academy trusts

MATs are academy trusts consisting of two or more schools. They receive their funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) rather than the LA and are exempt charities.

NGA has asked for several years about whether being in a MAT has benefited schools within a trust and has received consistently positive responses. Instead, this year's survey explored some of the issues emerging out of NGA's recent [Moving MATs Forward: the power of governance](#) report.

There is still substantial overlap between trustees, members and those governing at a local level

The majority of MATs had academy committees for every school (82.9%). A number of other MATs had academy committees for some schools (1.9%) or clusters of schools (4.7%).

This year's survey revealed that the majority of trusts were still operating with overlap between the layers of governance and management, with 60.3% of trustees noting that members in their MAT were also trustees – a reduction

60.3% said
trustees of their MAT
were also members

from 73% in 2018 – and 84.2% outlining that trustees in their MAT were also academy committee members. As outlined in the [Moving MATs Forward](#) report, this blurs lines of accountability and increases workload for leaders and those governing, despite repeated attempts from the government to create more robust MAT governance structures through increased separation.

Academy committee members had different views to trustees on delegated responsibilities

Nearly three-quarters of academy committee respondents (71.4%) were happy with the level of delegation to them. However, as shown in figure 12, the data demonstrates that trustees and academy committee members had differing views on what responsibilities were delegated to those at a local level. While this could potentially be due to the fact that those governing in academy trusts may have been

operating in different MATs to the trustees who answered the survey, it does suggest that the two groups had different views on what has been delegated downwards – suggesting that more work needs to be done to ensure schemes of delegation are clear and robust.

71.4% academy committee members are happy with the responsibilities delegated to them

Academy committee members expressed mixed views on whether their voices were heard and whether they felt part of 'one organisation'

The survey asked academy committee members to share their views on a series of statements relating to being in a MAT. While many of the views expressed by academy committee members were positive, only 56.8% of respondents said that they felt their voices were heard by executive leaders and trustees. A MAT is a single organisation; being a part of a MAT brings a fundamental change to the identity of the schools within it, which no longer have their own separate legal existence. While 61.8% outlined that they felt part of a single organisation, only 40.6% of respondents noted that they would be happy for resources in their school to be shared across the trust.

This difference between feeling like one organisation and acting upon it (by sharing resources and reserves for instance) may be because, for 56% of respondents, their

61.8% academy committee members felt part of one organisation

Delegation of responsibilities to local level governance

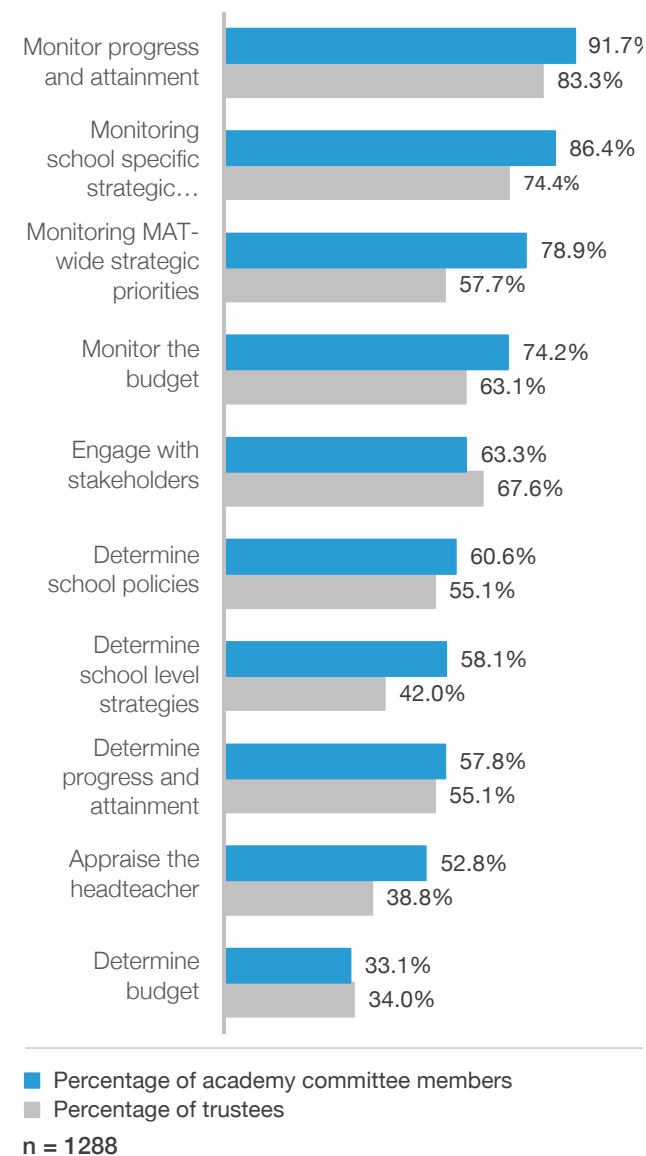


Figure13: Delegation to a local level in a MAT according to trustees and academy committee members.

“headteacher is allowed to manage the school with minimal involvement from MAT leaders”. This may mean that, for many of the trusts, feeling as part of “one organisation” does not involve pooling resources with others.

There was inconsistencies as to what factors were taken into account when deciding upon executive pay

Respondents were asked how they had determined the pay of their lead executive. The data highlights that, as would be expected, the most common considerations were affordability and the lead executive’s performance. In addition, it is encouraging to see more trusts than not taking into account benchmarking data and pension contributions. Nevertheless, only 23.8% of trusts took into account pay ratios within their own organisation and, nearly a third (31.8%) had not considered pension contributions when deciding lead executive pay.

Many MATs are using clerking networks as well as cross-school network meetings to communicate across the different layers of governance

MAT trustees were asked how they communicate with different layers of governance and management across the organisation.

MATs were using methods of communication which were not based upon overlap between the layers of governance or management, or an overreliance on the executive. The most common methods of communication across MATs included the use of the same clerk (or a clerking network) in 55.1% of cases and/or cross-school MAT network

meetings in 52.1% of cases. Nevertheless, there was still a sizeable percentage of respondents who used overlap between trustees and those at a local (50.5%) or member (33%) level for communication purposes or used the executive to communicate between the different layers of governance (30.7%).

Those governing are less interested in school structures

Survey respondents were 6.18% less slightly to likely to rate ‘school structures e.g. exploring academisation’ as one of the top five issues facing their school, with 4.12% respondents selecting the option this year compared to 10.3% in 2018.

Growing MATs

- 53.9% of those governing MATs said they were looking to expand the number of academies within the organisation
- 32.9% of MAT trustees said they would expand the number of academies in the MAT if suitable schools were interested
- Respondents with 6 – 10 academies in their MAT were most likely to say they were planning to increase their number of academies (66.2%)
- Respondents with over 31 academies in their MAT were least likely to say they were planning to increase the number of academies (45.4%)
- Respondents from MATs with 2 – 5 academies were most likely to say that they would only expand if suitable schools were interested (37.8%)

Tools, techniques and resources respondents from MATs use to decide upon pay awards for their lead executive

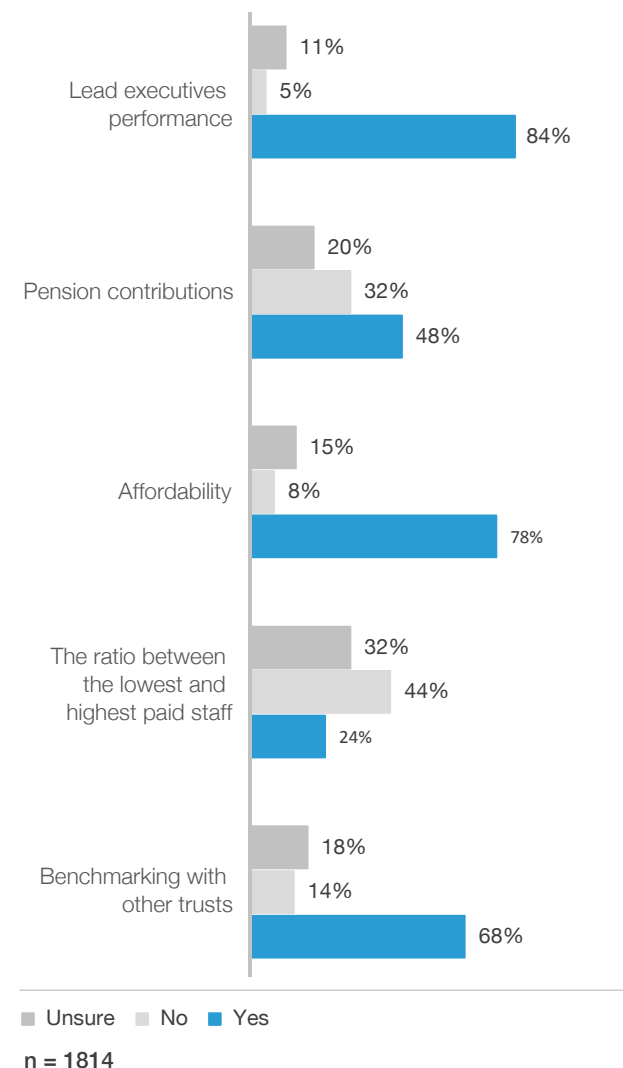






Figure14: Tools, techniques and resources MATs used to decide upon pay awards for their lead executive.


Why do single schools want to join a group of schools?

We asked those governing single schools whether they would consider joining a group and significantly 69.6% said they would not consider joining a group. Of those that answered yes, some explained their answer and the most common responses were from those considering joining up with local schools, those that felt local authority support was dwindling, individuals who felt that being a single school was becoming financial sustainable and those that viewed cross-school collaborations as holding multiple benefits. Some also noted that they felt pressure to join a group from a range of organisations such as the Department for Education (DfE), their local authority or their dioceses.

Recommendations for governing boards

-  MATs should avoid overlap between the layers of governance and management, ensuring that there are no trustees acting as members or sitting on academy committees.
-  MATs should have a succinct and clear scheme of delegation which is understood and followed by all. This is to ensure that there is no confusion and/or duplication over roles and responsibilities.
-  MAT leaders and trustees should invest significant time in listening to the voices of academy committee members. This includes putting into place effective mechanisms so that academy committee members feel part of “one organisation” and can report concerns to trustees and leaders.
-  MATs need to ensure that they are considering an array of factors when deciding on pay for executive leaders – including affordability, pension contributions, benchmarking with other trusts and the ratio between the highest and lowest paid in the organisation.

Recommendations for government

-  Consider the recommendations for government in NGA's recent [Moving MATs Forward: the power of governance](#) publication. These will help the sector overcome common issues identified in this year's survey including communication, blurred lines of accountability, and the relationship between academy committees, trustees and executive leaders.

5.2: Spotlight on Disadvantage

Governing boards play a major role in championing the needs of disadvantaged pupils but their efforts are constrained by funding pressures, with cuts to welfare services adding pressure to what schools are expected to provide.

Schools are continuing to provide additional services for families and pupils in need

Figure 15 highlights that schools are continuing to provide additional services to families and pupils in need, with the numbers providing food banks, meals outside of term time and washing school uniforms increasing, whereas the numbers offering financial support with purchasing school uniforms and emergency loans has decreased. Rather than a lack of need, this is likely due to funding constraints with the number of respondents reporting a reduction in pastoral support due to funding constraints rising from 11.8% in 2018 to 15.51% this year and 60.5% of respondents reporting that they had insufficient funds to cater for the needs of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

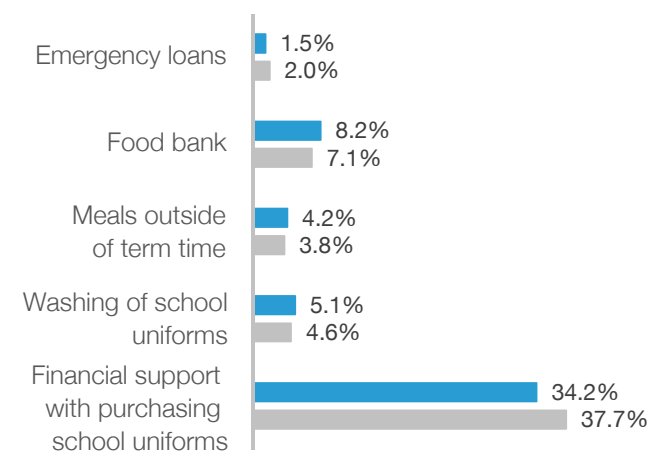
NGA also asked respondents to report on other services that they provide for families in need, with 19.1% providing family learning and 13.9% offering families advice on income and benefits.

70% said their school is providing additional services to families

Schools with a higher proportion of free school meal (FSM) pupils were more likely to report people-centred priorities in their top five issues

Respondents also shared the percentage of free school meal (FSM) pupils in their school, which can be used as a proxy to identify the most and least disadvantaged schools in the dataset. As would be expected, the data demonstrates that the average percentage of FSM pupils in schools was higher in those schools providing these additional services. Furthermore, the data shows

Proportion of respondents' schools providing social services for families

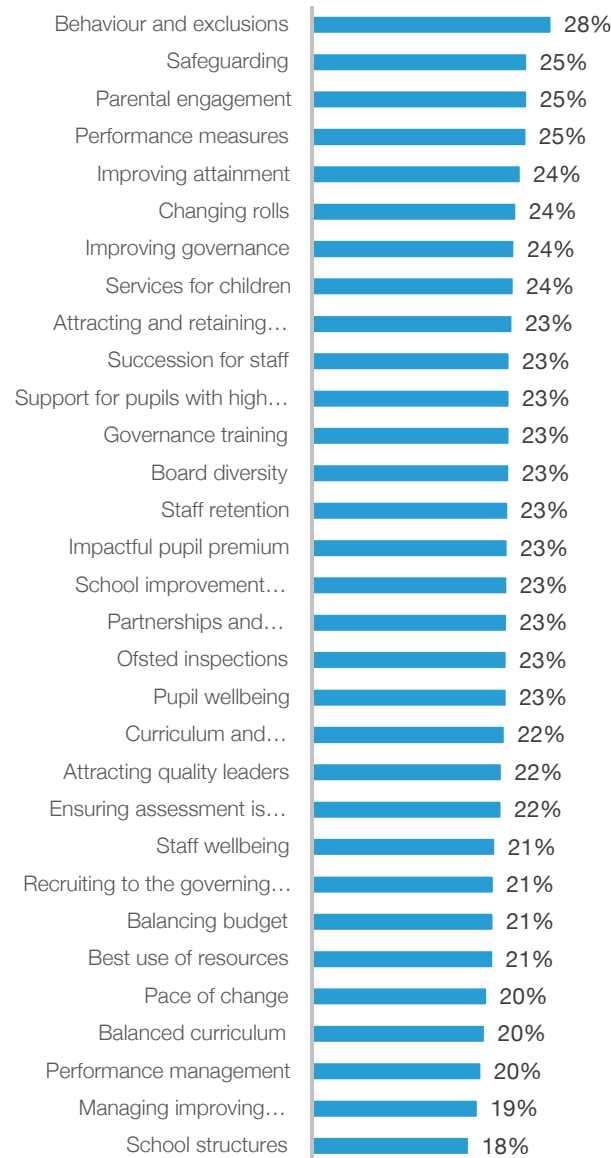


■ 2019 ■ 2018

n = 3458

Figure 15: Percentage of respondents' schools providing services for families in 2019 compared to 2018.

Average percentage of FSM pupils in respondents' schools that listed any of issues below in their top five issues



n = 3423

that schools with a higher percentage of FSM pupils were more likely to report people-centred factors such as improving attainment, staff wellbeing, parental engagement, behaviour and exclusions, and safeguarding in their top five issues. Schools with a lower (mean) percentage of FSM pupils were more likely to report school structures, premises, performance management and pace of change amongst the top five issues impacting their school.

When asked to choose, most respondents said that the pupil premium had the biggest impact on teaching and learning

When asked about impact, 58.3% of respondents noted engaging pupils in teaching and learning as the area that the pupil premium had the most impact in their school(s). Providing for pupils' pastoral needs (12.2%) and helping pupils access extracurricular activities (8%) emerged as the second and third most reported impact areas, with improving attendance (5.3%) being the fourth most important issue.

"[There is] ... insufficient data on how the pupil premium is being used and [it is] difficult to establish causality. Improving attendance is known to improve outcomes, but is not always the issue for those attracting pupil premium".

Figure 19: bar chart showing the average percentage of free school meals (FSM) pupils in respondents' schools amongst those that put each of the above in their top five issues.

Recommendations for governing boards

- Continue to champion the needs of disadvantaged pupils and their families; removing the barriers (whether educational or otherwise) to attainment and progress wherever possible.

Recommendations for government

- The government need to give greater recognition to the critical role schools are playing in providing services to families and pupils in need and the additional financial burden this is placing upon already struggling schools.
- The government should continue to provide pupil premium funding to schools as a minimum. Going forward, they should also review whether funding for disadvantaged pupils is meeting the needs of the most vulnerable.

5.3: Curriculum and the new Ofsted framework

Governing boards should always look to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which ensures that pupils are properly prepared for the opportunities and experiences of adult life. Changes made to the Ofsted school inspection framework aim to shift the focus from data and outcomes to curriculum and the substance of education.

NGA asked whether respondents had altered their schools' curriculum in response to several factors. Most commonly, respondents had altered the curriculum to better reflect their organisation's overarching vision and strategy (40% of those surveyed) or had adjusted the curriculum due to changes in government policy (32.8%). A significant proportion of individuals also said that funding constraints had altered their approach to curriculum (30.7%), which was more prevalent in those governing secondary schools than other phases. Additionally, for those governing schools with sixth forms, 51.7% said they had already reduced their curriculum in response to financial constraints (for those not governing sixth form, this was only 11%).

Nearly 30% of respondents (29.4%) had altered their curriculum in response to performance measures, a figure which is likely to increase in response to Ofsted's new inspection framework for schools because of its increased focus on the curriculum.

Nine out of ten school governors and trustees support the new Ofsted Education Inspection Framework.

The new framework was published on 14 May 2019, a day following the launch of the survey which means there may be some inconsistency in whether participants were referring to their opinion of the proposed framework or the


40% altered their curriculum to reflect their vision

published framework.¹⁴ 89.4% of those surveyed supported the new Ofsted inspection framework in its proposed form.

42% of respondents had already done work in preparation for the framework while a further 47.4% were planning to do work in preparation. Only one in ten (10.6%) said they were not planning to do or had not done any preparation.

When asked about their view on changes to the new Ofsted framework, many were complementary:

Recommendations for governing boards

 Governing boards should ensure that their school(s) is providing a broad and balanced curriculum which prepares pupils for life after school.

In terms of careers advice and guidance, 64.6% of those governing secondary schools had a designated careers leader in their school and 43.6% had published a policy statement setting out their organisation's arrangements for education and training providers for pupils' access.

5.4: Stakeholder engagement

NGA proposes that a fourth core function of governing boards should be to ensure effective engagement with stakeholders, as understanding the views and experiences of stakeholders is a crucial part of the governance role.

Despite the importance of stakeholder engagement to good governance, use of all engagement methods has dropped

The most frequently used method of stakeholder engagement was conducting a survey, with 73.2% of respondents saying that they had conducted a parent/carers survey and 59.2% conducting a survey for the pupils of their school(s). A similar proportion of respondents (56.5%) had conducted a staff survey. Overall, governing boards also appeared to be making use of both face-to-face and online communications.

However, when looking across the years, engagement with stakeholders has decreased as demonstrated by **figure 17**, which shows that conducting surveys has remained steadily popular over the past four years, but use of all other methods of engagement have fallen.

MATs are less likely to engage with parents through surveys than maintained schools

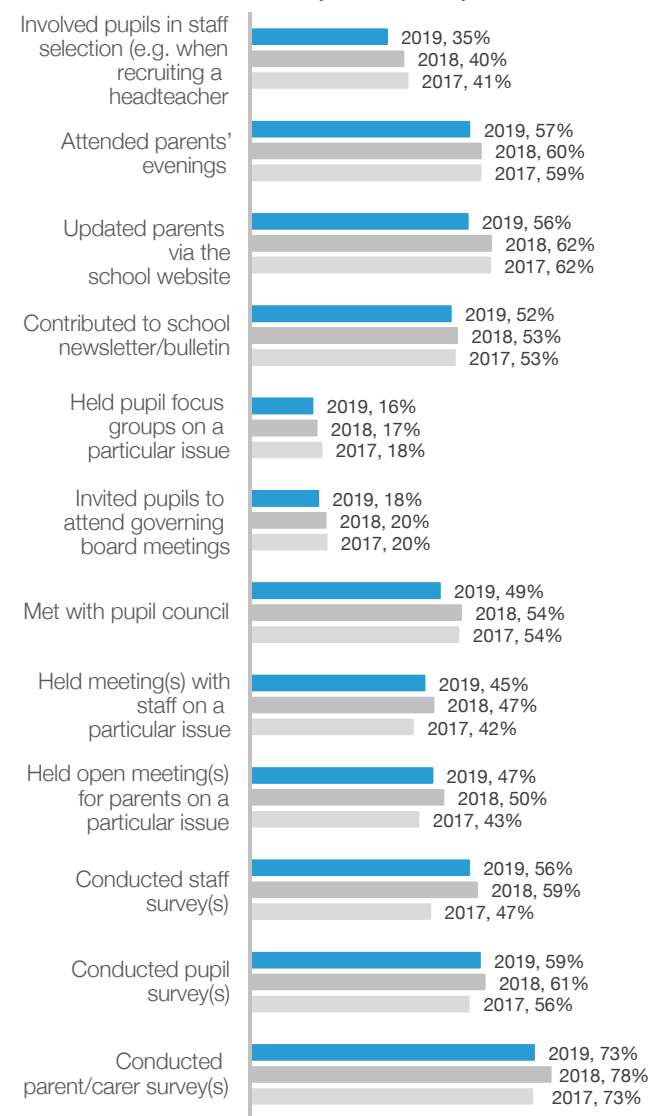
The data also shows that those within academy trust structures were the least likely to use parent surveys to hold their lead executive to account, with 60.4% of MAT

trustees reporting doing so, 66.5% of local academy committees and 71.7% of single academy trusts. On average, maintained schools boards are 8.4% more likely to engage with parents through a survey than their academy counterparts. This statistic does not tell us, however, whether academy trusts are engaging with parents in different and more innovative ways. Nevertheless, it does correlate with the findings of NGA's recent Moving MATs Forward report which cautioned that larger trusts may struggle to engage with stakeholders, including parents.

Boards still largely rely on reports from senior leaders for their information

Figure 18 reveals that reports from senior leaders were the most common way that respondents said they knew their school(s) and held their executive lead to account. However, methods such as surveys of staff, parents and pupils served as some of the least likely ways in which respondents used stakeholder engagement to hold executive leaders to account. NGA has long argued that these resources are vital to triangulate information received from the school leadership team and boards should draw on a range of evidence to carry out this function.

Respondents' methods of engagement with stakeholders over time (2017 -2019)

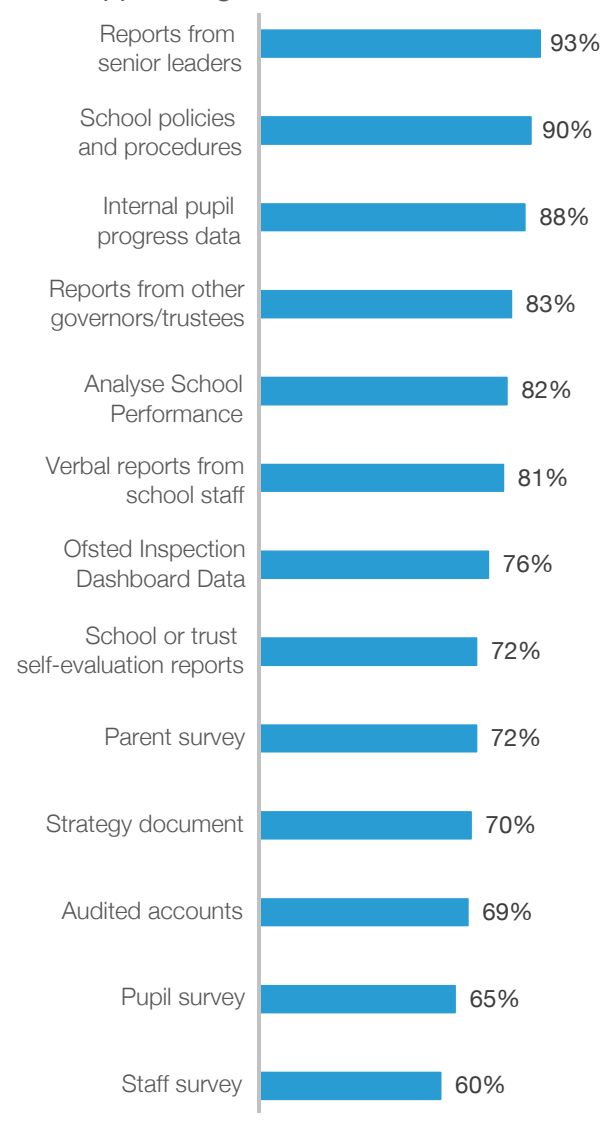


n = 3454

Figure 17: methods of stakeholder engagement over time (2017 – 2019).

14. The main differences between the proposed and published frameworks concern inspections with a 'no notice' period which was removed following the consultation and prior to publication.

How respondents reported knowing their school(s)/holding the executive lead to account



n = 3805

Figure18: 'Which of the following sources of information do you draw upon to know your school(s) well and hold executive leaders to account? Please select all that apply.'

Recommendations for governing boards

- Continue to champion the needs of disadvantaged pupils and their families; removing the barriers (whether educational or otherwise) to attainment and progress wherever possible.

Recommendations for government

- Recognise the centrality of stakeholder engagement to the governing boards' role as part of the core functions of governance in the [Governance Handbook](#).



5.5: Clerking Matters



The clerk, or governance professional, plays an integral role of the professional clerk to the effectiveness of the governing board. NGA advocates that the value of professional clerking should be properly recognised and remunerated by governing boards.

While the vast majority of respondents employed a clerk, only 76% had the same clerk for the full governing board and its committees. This means that those who did not either used another individual (such as a member of staff) or did not have anyone clerking committee meetings. In terms of employing clerks, maintained schools and federations were the most likely to obtain the services of a clerk employed through the local authority (with 40.9% of maintained standalone schools obtaining their clerk through this method and 38% of federations). Whereas, MAT trust boards and academy committees are more likely to have a clerk employed directly by the MAT (with 39.5% and 32.6% of respondents respectively) while respondents from single academy trusts were the most likely to say that their clerk had another role within the school (45.1%).


Figure 19, shows that while the overwhelming majority of respondents reported that their clerk prepared the agenda and drafted the minutes for the meetings, a much lesser percentage reported their clerk performed duties such as providing advice on legal, constitutional and procedural matters (67%). While it may be that clerks are not completing some of these duties or that the responsibility sits elsewhere, it could also indicate that respondents are not fully aware of their clerk's contribution to their organisation's governance management.

Respondents who appointed self-employed clerks or utilised clerking services were more likely to have a higher knowledge of their clerk's role while those whose clerk had another role within the school showed the least knowledge of what the role entailed.

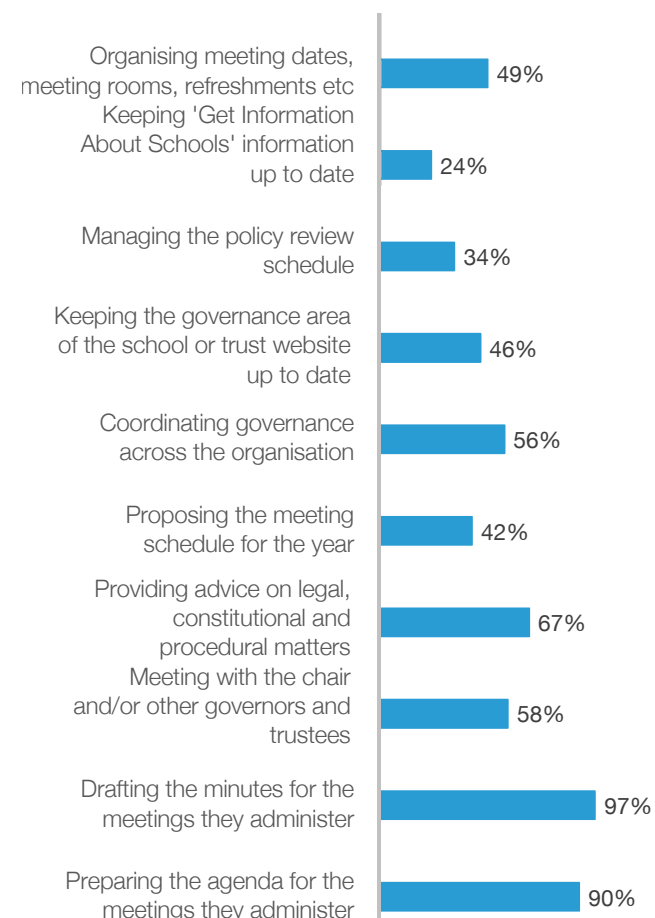
Recommendations for governing boards

-  Ensure that a professional and independent clerk is employed for the full governing board and its committees. Ideally this should be the same person.
-  Ensure that the clerk is working on behalf of the governing board and look to avoid conflicts of interest by employing an individual that is independent to the organisation and is not managed by a member of school staff.

Recommendations for government

-  Clerking should be an essential part of government policy in terms of its approach to making school governance consistently more effective.

Roles performed by respondents' clerks/governance manager



n = 3755

Figure19: roles and responsibilities performed by respondents' clerks/governance professionals.

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6

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