

# Welcome to Governance

**A guide for new governors and trustees  
of single schools**



**14TH  
EDITION**

October 2023

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# Using this guide

**Welcome to Governance** is designed to be an induction guide for those new to school governance, and those who wish to refresh their knowledge of key roles, responsibilities and good practice.

## **Welcome to Governance** is for:

- governors at a local authority (LA) maintained school
- trustees at an academy trust consisting of a single school (SAT)
- local governors – those volunteering within the local tier of governance in a multi academy trust (MAT)

Local governors in a MAT should use **Welcome to Governance** alongside the Scheme of Delegation (SoD) for the MAT their school is part of. This is important as the SoD defines the board's level of responsibility and accountability, which in some areas may differ to the governing board at an LA-maintained school or SAT.

Chapter 3 provides additional guidance for those governing at an academy within a MAT.

## **How to use Welcome to Governance**

Each chapter covers a specific topic and contains the important information needed at the entry level. We suggest reading chapters 1-4 prior to and during your induction to the governing board.

Chapters 5-11 are equally important but will become more useful when you are acquainted with the strategy for your school and the current priorities of the governing board. **Welcome to Governance** can also be used as a reference guide. You can return to chapters and topics as and when you need to. Use the helpful glossary to navigate common acronyms and jargon.

At the end of each chapter, we provide a list of three basic actions you can take to embed your learning and start you on the path to becoming effective in the role. These are not the only actions (or necessarily the most important) you should take – they have been selected because they are straightforward, yet will have an impact on how you govern going forward.

As a member of NGA, you have instant access to the Knowledge Centre, the area of our website that contains a wealth of guidance and practical resources to support effective governance. Use the Knowledge Centre to explore topics further and build confidence in carrying out your role.

Links to relevant Knowledge Centre resources feature throughout this guide.

[nga.org.uk/knowledge-centre](https://nga.org.uk/knowledge-centre)

NGA Learning Link offers flexible e-learning to help governors, trustees, chairs and clerks develop their governance skills and knowledge.

To find out more visit [nga.org.uk/learning-link](https://nga.org.uk/learning-link)

- The stages of education
- The types of school
- School structures and groups
- How schools are funded
- What pupils are taught and how they are assessed
- Teachers – their professional responsibilities and standards
- Oversight in the system

# The school system

## The stages of education

Education is compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 16.

Within these stages, there are all-through schools that take pupils from age 4 or 5 to 16 or 18. There are also three-tier systems used in some areas in England, with first school (reception to year 3/4), middle school (year 4/5 to year 7/8) and high school (year 8/9 to year 13).

## The early years foundation stage

Early years education caters for children aged 3 to 5 years.

Providers of early years education include state (local authority) nursery schools, nursery classes, reception classes within primary schools and settings outside the state sector.

## Primary

Primary caters for children aged 5 to 11, divided into school years reception to year 6 and including primary and separate infant and junior schools.

## Secondary

Secondary caters for pupils aged 11 to 16, divided into school years 7 to 11 and up to year 13 if the school has a sixth form. There are also sixth form colleges just for year 12 and 13 pupils.

## Post-16

Post-16 covers further and higher education. Post-16 education is not compulsory; however, young people must stay in some type of education or training until the age of 18. Work and study can be combined.

## Types of state school

Schools maintained and funded by the local authority (LA)	
Community schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LA is the direct employer of school staff</li> <li>• Governing board has some employer responsibilities (such as appointing the headteacher)</li> <li>• Land and buildings owned by the LA</li> <li>• LA is responsible for pupil admissions and appeals</li> </ul>
Voluntary controlled schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually have a religious character</li> <li>• LA is the direct employer of school staff</li> <li>• Governing board has some employer responsibilities (such as appointing the headteacher)</li> <li>• Land and buildings usually owned by a trust (often a religious body) – the trust can appoint members of the governing board</li> <li>• LA is responsible for pupil admissions and appeals</li> </ul>
Voluntary aided schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually have a religious character (established by religious organisation)</li> <li>• Governing board is the direct employer of school staff</li> <li>• Land and buildings usually owned by a charitable foundation</li> <li>• Governing board is responsible for pupil admissions and appeals</li> </ul>
Foundation and trust schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typically schools that were previously grant-maintained</li> <li>• Not to be confused with schools that have religious foundation, which in the main are voluntary controlled and voluntary aided</li> <li>• Governing board is the direct employer of school staff</li> <li>• Governing board is responsible for pupil admissions and appeals</li> <li>• Land and buildings usually owned by the foundation or governing board</li> </ul>

Schools funded directly by the government	
Academies and free schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run by not-for-profit academy trusts</li> <li>• Independent from the LA</li> <li>• Have greater freedoms to change how they are run (eg can follow a different curriculum)</li> </ul> <p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Converter academies</li> <li>• Sponsor academies set up to replace underperforming schools</li> <li>• University technical colleges, which cater for pupils aged 14 to 19, and have university and employer sponsors</li> </ul>
Other types of schools	
Special schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be any type of maintained or academy school</li> <li>• Provide specialist education provision to pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) or statement of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)</li> </ul>
Grammar schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run by the LA, a foundation body or an academy trust</li> <li>• Select pupils based on academic ability and there is a test to get in</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cater for children who aren't able to attend a mainstream or special school</li> <li>• Only LAs can establish a PRU; although they can only do so after exploring the possibility of an alternative provision (AP) academy</li> <li>• Others can establish alternative provision academies/free schools</li> </ul>

## Groups of schools

Schools that operate as individual institutions are commonly referred to as standalone schools. They can be either LA-maintained or an academy trust consisting of a single school (SAT). Some LA-maintained schools choose to become academies. If an LA-maintained school is judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted, then it must become an academy.

In recent years more schools have joined groups, either as a federation of LA-maintained schools or as part of a multi academy trust (MAT); the number of MATs continues to grow. Others choose to work together and share good practice without formal arrangements.

The benefits of schools being part of a group include economies of scale, shared facilities and resources. Forming or joining a group can be a way of helping another local school to improve, or of retaining the best staff by creating career progression opportunities across the organisation.

## MATs

The Department for Education (DfE) white paper published in March 2022 sets out a vision for all schools to be part of a MAT by 2030. However, this is an aspirational timescale, and for good and outstanding schools, the decision over whether or not to be part of a MAT remains with the governing board.

### Visit

[nga.org.uk/joining-MAT](https://www.nga.org.uk/joining-MAT)

The board of trustees is the governing authority for all academies in the MAT and delegates functions to committees of the trust board, the CEO of the MAT and academy committees, which are sometimes referred to as local governing bodies. This is explained in detail in chapter 3.

## Federations

A federation is a formal structure between two or more LA-maintained schools with one governing body that is accountable for a number of schools. Whilst the schools retain their own identity and admission arrangements, they may choose to have an executive headteacher with oversight across all the schools in the federation as well as the headteachers in each school.

## How state schools are funded

There are two major types of school funding:

- Revenue funding pays for the day-to-day running costs of the school: staff salaries, stationery, heating and lighting bills.
- Capital funding is money provided for spending on school buildings and major items such as IT equipment. This funding may not be spent on the day-to-day running costs of the school or on routine maintenance. Voluntary aided schools must fund 10% of capital work costs from their own budgets.

## The allocation of funding to schools

### The National Funding Formula for schools

The DfE uses a National Funding Formula (NFF) to calculate the core funding that state schools receive. The core funding is allocated to schools and academies by their local LA using a local funding formula that determines the final amount the school or academy receives. At some point in the future, when the NFF is fully implemented, core funding will be allocated directly to schools rather than using a local funding formula.

### LA-maintained schools

LA-maintained schools currently receive their revenue funding from their LA through a central government grant known as the dedicated schools grant (DSG). The majority of the DSG is delegated directly to individual schools based on the number of pupils in schools and other factors, such as pupils with a high level of special educational needs. LAs can retain a proportion of the DSG for centrally provided services such as school improvement.

All LA-maintained schools receive a small amount of capital funding through the devolved capital fund. This is calculated as a lump sum plus an amount per pupil.

### Academies

Academies receive their revenue funding from the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA), an arm's-length body of the DfE. Funding for academies is known as the general annual grant (GAG) and is allocated on the same basis as maintained schools.

All academies receive devolved formula capital funding to address their own priorities for new buildings or major refurbishments. This is calculated as a lump sum plus an amount per pupil. For larger capital projects, SATs and MATs with fewer than five schools or 3,000 pupils are required to bid to the ESFA.

## Special schools

All state-funded special schools are funded via a place-plus method. This provides base funding dependent on the number of agreed places in the school, followed by additional (top-up) funding to meet the needs of individual pupils, where required. LA-maintained special schools receive their place funding via their LA, and special school academies via the ESFA. The top-up funding is provided by the LA where the pupil lives.

### Pupil premium funding

Pupil premium aims to close the gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others. It is up to schools and academies to assess their pupils' needs and use the funding to improve attainment.

Pupil premium funding is for:

- pupils registered for free school meals (FSM) in the past six years
- pupils currently or previously under the care of the LA

Service pupil premium is additional funding for schools with pupils who have parents serving in the armed forces. It has been combined into pupil premium payments to make it easier for schools to manage their spending.

### Other funding streams available to schools

Other streams of funding that support schools to deliver education include:

- Universal infant free school meals (UIFSM) is flat-rate funding available for all children in reception, year 1 and year 2. Schools with eligible pupils are required to offer each pupil a free school lunch every day.
- Primary school PE and sport premium funding, which is based on the number of pupils in years 1 to 6. This funding is ring-fenced and must be allocated to school sports provision, but it is up to schools to decide how it will be spent.
- Recovery premium is a time-limited government grant available to state-funded schools in 2023/24, to support pupils whose education has been impacted by COVID-19. It is focused on pupils who are eligible for pupil premium and pupils in specialist settings.
- The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) funding is available in 2023/24 for primary and secondary schools to spend on targeted academic support, delivered by tutors and mentors. It is intended to cover a proportion of the unit cost of tuition, with the school making up the remainder of the cost using their pupil premium funding or other core school budgets.