

Holding to account: How to conduct a courageous conversation

A reminder about accountability

1. Who holds whom to account and how?

Put simply, governing boards hold senior executive leaders to account for the performance of their organisation.

In turn, through line management arrangements, senior executive leaders hold their executives to account for the part they play in the organisation's success or otherwise.

Boards should also hold themselves to account, reviewing their own effectiveness and dealing with issues before they escalate or become entrenched and embedded as the 'culture' of the board.

2. Who holds the board to account?

Maintained schools

Maintained school governing bodies can also be held to account by their local authority who can, in exceptional circumstances, remove the governing body's delegated powers.

Academy trusts

In academy trusts, the members of the trust and the Secretary of State can dismiss trustees if they are not deemed to be effective in carrying out their governance functions.

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3. Who else plays a role in holding schools and trusts to account?

Academy trusts have to submit returns to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and issues with these can trigger interventions.

The DfE publish information on school performance which enables parents and other stakeholders to engage with the accountability process. Governors have a duty to ensure that these voices are heard.

Ofsted inspects schools and schools found to be inadequate will trigger intervention from the DfE.