

Effective MAT governance

Unit 4: Governance accountabilities and structures

Evaluation

It is good practice for all boards to review and reflect on their own effectiveness and all guidance and governance codes outline:

	Guidance/code	Recommendation
1	DfE's Maintained Schools Governance Guide	<p>6.1 and 6.2</p> <p>An effective governing body will review its own performance regularly. The governing body can evaluate the effectiveness of their governance through a combination of self-assessment tools, independent perspectives, and skills audits.</p> <p>We recommend that External Reviews of Governance are conducted routinely as part of a wider programme of self-assessment and improvement.</p>
2	DfE's Academy Trust Handbook	<p>1.27. New trusts in their first year must, and established trusts should, include in their governance statement, an assessment of their governance structure, including a review of the board's composition in terms of skills, effectiveness, leadership and impact.</p>
3	Charity Commission's Charity Governance Code	<p>5.8.2</p> <p>The board reviews its own performance and that of individual trustees, including the chair. This happens every year, with an external evaluation every three years. Such evaluation typically considers the board's balance of skills, experience and knowledge, its diversity in the widest sense, how the board works together and other factors relevant to its effectiveness.</p>
4	FRC's UK Corporate Governance Code	<p>3.21</p> <p>There should be a formal and rigorous annual evaluation of the performance of the board, its committees, the chair and individual directors. The chair should consider having a regular externally facilitated board evaluation. In FTSE 350 companies this should happen at least every three years. The external evaluator should be identified in the annual report and a statement made about any other connection it has with the company or individual directors.</p>

Options to consider for evaluating your board

Trustees should consider:

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Type of review	Resource	Notes
Reviewing trustees' skills to ensure that these meet the board's needs	Model Skills Audit	Undertaken bi-annually or when board composition changes
Evaluation of board effectiveness	Online board appraisal	Undertaken annually, is based on the APPG 21 questions for MAT boards
External review of governance	NGA External Reviews of Governance	Undertaken every three years and carried out by experienced consultants
Chairs' 360° appraisal	Online Chairs' Appraisal	Undertaken by new chairs or chairs who have not had an appraisal before

Comments from boards who have evaluated their governance using the tools recommended here

- **On the online board appraisal**

“The mentoring was helpful and the honesty, suggestions and encouragement have led to clarity on the current strengths of governance and more importantly, on the areas to be developed.”

- **On the online chairs' 360° appraisal**

“You have highlighted many areas for future development which is great and I'm feeling quite inspired and excited and now all I need to do is to put some of these ideas into practice, but I shall bear in mind your words of advice to be realistic.”

- **On an external review of governance**

“Under your guidance, this process has really impacted the trust and it will be a lever to push us further forward to where we want to be.”

“The consultant was knowledgeable and understood the context of both the school and the MAT. She was both candid and supportive which is what we were looking for.”

“We knew we needed an external review but hadn't appreciated how significantly out of step we had become with good practice. The NGA reviewer took us on that journey and had the skills to enable us to realise for ourselves what needed to happen and to give us the confidence and support to nudge us in the right direction. An excellent, supportive yet very honest approach which will transform our governance arrangements.”