



Excellence in Governance Award (EGA)

An in-depth audit that will give you the confidence that the work of your governing body is accurately evaluated and that there is an action plan to take it forwards

The Department for Education places high strategic priority on governance declaring that:

The importance and significance of outstanding governance and leadership across our education system, in every school in England, has never been greater. The role of governing boards in defining and implementing strategy whilst holding the leaders of schools and trusts to account, has to be the foundation upon which a world class education system is built. Governors or trustees who work as a team, who are able to bring their skills and experience to the role and who blend challenge and support to hold their workforce to account, will improve standards.

The Excellence in Governance Award encourages and supports educational institutions to promote governance as a core leadership role that is a fundamental to achieving excellence. Hence governors:

- provide well informed and competent oversight of the institution's work, including its finances
- work strategically to guide the institution's future development and improvement
- demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding to monitor performance and to hold leaders to account as necessary
- build sustainable working relationships with one another, school leaders, other staff and stakeholders
- place high importance on Nolan's Seven Principles of Public Life and ensure that their code of conduct reflects these and that governors model high standards of professional behaviour in public service.

The framework is designed in alignment both with the 16 competencies set out in the Department for Education (DfE) *Competency Framework for Governance* published in 2017 and with the *Governance Handbook*. Throughout this document the 'board' is used as a term to represent the accountable body for the school, college or multi-academy trust. The term 'governor' is used to designate a person carrying out governance duties, and includes trustees.

Who is it for?

- any board of governors of a school that is responsible for children, young people or students
- boards of trustees, directors and/or members of multi- academy trusts
- boards of governors of further education colleges

How long is it current?

- 2 years with an option for a yearly light touch visit to upgrade from Gold to Platinum or to confirm continued excellence

Benefits

- a visit to your place of work where the Chair of the board and/or a representation of members or trustees will meet with the auditor
- informative and informed discussions during the on-site visit with an expert auditor who will provide advice, make suggestions, share best practice garnered from their professional experiences
- a personalised report generated from the visit which highlights the best practice and identifies action points for improvement
- the body or institution is able to use the 'Excellence in Governance' Logo
- access to regular newsletters and updates
- access to our governance experts' advice
- access to best practice in relation to supporting governance amongst other award holders
- access at discounted rates to Incyte's comprehensive online training for governors.

What makes this award stand out from other awards?

- there is a high focus on the impact that governance has on shaping, developing and improving the organisation, its educational purpose and effectiveness
- we recognise that governors and/or trustees need to be strategic and we look at how they achieve their roles without blurring the lines between strategic oversight and becoming operational
- we recognise innovative and creative practice that really makes a difference to how well a governing body works and the difference this in turn makes to the quality of educational services provided to parents and pupils
- we pay particular attention to the role of the Chair of the governing body as a key driver of the functions of the board and as an enabler to good governance through the development and deployment of its members
- we put children and young people at the heart of our award by ensuring that the work of governance is first and foremost in the interests of pupils and parents
- we focus on how well governors work with institution leaders to support their work but also to challenge them when necessary

- we focus on the culture that governors create to establish an inclusive board that values the skills and experiences of its members
- we do not expect institutions to collect a wide range of evidence to present to the panel prior to the audit. We work with what you already do, day in day out.



The Awards

The Platinum Award

To gain The Platinum Award, the organisation will need to gain Grade 1 of the 3 grades in each of the categories and demonstrate innovative practice that goes above and beyond that which is found normally. They will need to demonstrate that this work makes a positive difference to the people in their care.

The Gold Award

To gain The Gold Award, the body or institution must meet all the most important governance criteria with only a few minor aspects that need to be addressed.

Essential criteria

In order to gain *either* award the school, body or institution will need to demonstrate:

- that governors understand their roles and how to undertake these competently and effectively; that they know what good governance looks like
- that governors have set an ambitious, strategic direction for the institution
- that the governing body has established appropriate structures, i.e. committees, and processes to manage its work
- that any schemes of delegation are clearly communicated, fully understood and implemented appropriately
- that governors have a robust process for policy development and review, and they ensure that all statutory policies and plans are in place, and well crafted
- that the governing body has rigorous procedures in place to manage and oversee the institution's finances and that this includes systems to manage financial risk and business continuity
- that governors monitor the school's/institution's performance effectively and understand its strengths and weaknesses well
- that governors of schools provide effective oversight of the quality of education, including the curriculum, and are involved in setting out the rationale and purpose for the education of pupils within the institution
- that they work with school leaders to address any weaknesses and areas for improvement and are effective in holding leaders to account for the school's performance
- that the governing body ensures legal requirements are met in relation to the curriculum, behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and health and safety
- that governors know their and the school's responsibilities in relation to the Equality Act 2020 and have appropriate mechanisms in place to monitor how well leaders are ensuring equality for all
- that the governing body ensures the school meets the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice

- that the governing body ensures effective management of HR including disciplinary matters and teachers' pay and conditions
- that there is a clear audit trail of decisions made by the board which shows the rationale for the decisions taken
- that the governing body is itself accountable for the effectiveness of its role to external stakeholders such as parents, the DfE etc.
- that governors have a comprehensive approach to engaging and consulting with parents, and responding to their concerns
- that the work of governors is informed by children and young people's views and perceptions of how well the institution supports their academic progress and pastoral wellbeing
- that the board has open and transparent processes for recruiting, selecting and deploying governors, including succession plans for replacing retiring members including the Chair
- that governors are well trained, including for specific roles and responsibilities, such as chairing, and new members inducted and supported to become effective board members
- that there is a process for self-review and continuous improvement
- that there are clear systems for appraisal and performance management of all staff; that arrangements for the performance management of the headteacher or principal include external advice
- that the Chair fosters a positive working relationship with the school and its community, welcoming robust debate and promotes the right balance between support and challenge
- that the standards of behaviour amongst members are high and relationships are open and respectful
- that the governing body has appropriate arrangements for clerking and accessing external advice on technical and legal matters that fall within its remit.

The visit and scrutiny of policies will test out:

- the extent to which governors **set the strategic direction** for the institution's future development **and are ambitious** in what they want the institution to achieve
- that the governing body has the **right structures, processes and procedures** to enable it to fulfil its role and ensure **all statutory requirements are met**
- that the governing body has the **right people** whose skills and expertise are **deployed in the most effective way**
- that the governors **understand** the institution's **context and its performance**
- that governors **monitor** the work of the institution and **challenge leaders to do even better**
- that the governing body, understanding its own performance and members, are able to **evidence their impact** and **the value they add** to the work of the institution
- the extent to which governors demonstrate the DfE principles of effective governance and are:
 - ◇ committed
 - ◇ confident
 - ◇ curious

- ◇ challenging
- ◇ collaborative
- ◇ critical
- ◇ creative

This framework is regularly updated to include changes in guidance and legislation

Scoring

3	Needs urgent action. Not meeting requirements
2	Mostly meets requirements but still some significant recommendations
1	High standard with possibly only one or two recommendations. Evidence of innovative and creative practice that has a positive impact on the strategic and operational leadership of the institution

‘There should be only one political ideology and that is good governance’ – Amit Abraham