LOCALLY LED, STRATEGICALLY STRONG

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE FOR TRUST-WIDE IMPACT



Locally Led, Strategically Strong is a campaign developed by Shaping Governance. It is grounded in our practice-led insight, national experience, and the voices of governors we've supported across the country. It draws on our research, lived experience, and commitment to keeping governance strategically connected, locally informed, and centred on children.

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About Shaping Governance

Founded in 2017 by Su Turner, a former National Leader of Governance, Shaping Governance has become a trusted partner for schools and trusts seeking to strengthen their governance.

We work with all types of settings: from individual schools to large Multi-academy trusts, delivering tailored, people-centred support that leads to real improvement.

Our approach is practical and appreciative, helping boards focus on what works and build the confidence to lead with clarity and purpose.

Su's cross-sector experience underpins our unique offer: strengthening governance, growing leadership, and supporting a culture of continuous improvement.

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FOREWORD

Reframing Local Governance: From add-on to strategic asset

Too often, local governance is seen as a 'nice to have'; a supportive voice rather than a strategic force. Through Locally Led, Strategically Strong, I want to challenge that perception.

This series brings together a set of reflections, provocations, and practical insights that all centre one simple truth: you cannot build a strong, resilient, and responsive education system without deep local roots.

Local governance is not an add-on. It's where strategy meets reality. It's where the lived experiences of children, families, and communities shape decision-making. It's the part of the system that listens, adapts, and leads with context; not in spite of it.

In this series, you'll find arguments grounded in experience, supported by evidence, and driven by a belief that smarter, stronger local governance is both possible and necessary. Whether we're looking at how trusts can use local voices to sharpen their strategic edge, or how schools thrive when decisions are closer to the communities they serve, the message is the same: local governance is not a cost, it's a catalyst.

At a time when education needs ambition, courage, and connection more than ever, I hope this publication helps boards, leaders, and policymakers see local governance not as a compliance exercise, but as the heartbeat of strategy and schools.

Because if we want trusts to be strategically strong, we must be locally led.

"Local governance keeps strategy grounded; in classrooms, in communities, in childhoods."



SU TURNER
CEO

About Su Turner

Su is a strategic governance expert with over 25 years' experience supporting Boards to strengthen clarity, capacity, and impact. A former National Leader of Governance for the DfE, she is now a Governance Associate for the Local Governance Association and a trusted reviewer of governance effectiveness.

Su brings a strengths-based approach, grounded in real-world experience. Described as an "agent of change," she has authored over 14 publications and is known for helping boards turn governance into a confident tool for improvement.

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INTRODUCTION

Locally Led, Strategically Strong: Making Local Governance central to MAT Success

In a busy educational landscape, the quiet power of local governance is too often overlooked. Yet it's in school communities, in the conversations with parents at the gate, and in decisions about safeguarding, attendance, and inclusion, where trust-wide strategy is tested, refined, and made real.

At Shaping Governance, we believe that the success of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) doesn't just depend on strong executive and non-executive leadership. It depends on how well that leadership is rooted in local insight, lived experience, and community voice. That's why we launched our campaign: Locally Led, Strategically Strong; which we have brought together in this single thought-provoking publication.

Our campaign is grounded in the work of Su Turner, founder of Shaping Governance, who has worked alongside MATs, schools, and governors across the country. Through her support, challenge, and research-led approach, Su has developed deep insight into the barriers and breakthroughs facing local governance today, and what it takes to unlock its full potential.

Through our campaign and this publication, we explore:

- Why local governance is essential for inclusive, outcomes-focused education;
- How people, passion, and performance drive improvement at the local level;
- What works in practice; from the perspective of chairs, trustees, and governors;
- And how effective local governance can transform MAT performance and pupil experience.

Our work with MATs and schools nationally shows that when Local Governance is clear on their purpose, connected to trust strategy, and confident in their role, they support schools and accelerate them.

But we also hear the frustration; with our insight showing that:

- Two-thirds of local governors report feeling unclear about their trust's strategy or feeling connected to it;
- Nearly 8 in 10 don't seek pupil or parent voice when monitoring the school.

This is not just a matter of communication. It's a call for leadership. It's time to reimagine local governance as a core pillar of strategic success, not a box-ticking exercise, but a force for transformation.

"Local governance is not a 'nice to have'; it's a strategic necessity."



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CHAPTER 1:

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN EDUCATION

THE BENEFITS AND ADDRESSING CHALLENGES



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CHAPTER 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN EDUCATION

Local Governance: The cornerstone bridging trust strategy and school reality

Local governance is a cornerstone of the education system. At its heart are the dedicated, skilled, and passionate volunteers, people who care deeply about their schools, their communities, and the futures of children and young people. Local governance connects trust strategy with school reality, bridging the gap between high-level decision-making and the day-to-day needs of individual schools. When empowered, it brings accountability, insight, and inclusion to the forefront, ensuring that local context and community needs inform decisions. This chapter explores why purposeful, well-aligned local governance is essential to driving trust-wide improvement; and what's at stake when it's missing.

At the heart of local governance is accountability. Governing bodies scrutinise decisions, monitor progress, and ensure that strategies are rooted in the needs of their communities. Without this oversight, schools risk defaulting to standardised trust approaches that ignore the unique challenges and strengths of their pupils and localities. Through our work at Shaping Governance, we have consistently found that where local governance is effective, schools and their multi-academy trusts (MATs) are more focused, responsive, and outcomes-driven.

Local governance is also the window on its school, a trusted, informed view into how the school is functioning, how the community perceives it, and how it is meeting the needs of its pupils. It enables trusts and leaders to see what's happening on the ground, not from a distance, but through a lens of genuine understanding and engagement. When functioning well, this window offers immediate, relevant insights rooted in lived experience.

Equally vital is the inclusive structure that local governance enables. Governing bodies are one of the few spaces in the education system where parents, staff, and community members come together as equals. This diversity of voice ensures that decisions are shaped by lived experience, cultural insight, and a genuine understanding of what matters most to children and families. This inclusive, collaborative approach promotes shared responsibility and helps embed education more deeply within the fabric of the community.

Perhaps most critically, local governance keeps education child-centred. Every community has its own story, demographic, and challenges; a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work. Local governance enables a tailored response that reflects needs and aspirations. Through governance, schools can remain agile, adapting to context in ways that lead to better engagement, stronger relationships, and improved outcomes.

"Local governance offers a trusted, informed view; a window into the life of the school."



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The Benefits of strong local governance: a closer look

Local governance doesn't just fill a compliance role; it directly impacts the effectiveness and success of schools within a MAT. Here are some of the key benefits that local governance can bring, shaping a stronger, more connected educational system:

Enhanced strategic focus

When local governance is empowered, it becomes a dynamic source of insight that helps align trust-wide strategies with the unique needs of individual schools. A well-informed governing body provides timely, on-the-ground feedback, allowing leadership to fine-tune strategy and adapt approaches based on local realities. This ensures that trust-level decisions reflect the lived experience of pupils, staff, and communities.

Strengthened community connections

Local governance fosters a deeper connection between schools and their communities. It creates an inclusive space where the voices of parents, staff, governors and local leaders come together to ensure that decisions are rooted in the community's specific needs and values. Strong local governance ensures that schools are not isolated from their environment but instead become an integral part of a collaborative network that supports student success.

Increased accountability and transparency

Effective local governance enhances accountability by providing a crucial layer of oversight. This means that governance is not just reactive; it proactively challenges, scrutinises, and ensures that strategic goals are being met. When local governance is well-aligned with the trust's overall vision, it holds all levels of leadership accountable to the communities they serve, creating a transparent decision-making process that fosters trust across the system.

Agility in decision-making

In an educational landscape that is constantly evolving, local governance offers the flexibility to respond quickly to emerging issues. Whether it's a shift in student demographics, changes in local policy, or evolving educational needs, local governance ensures that MATs remain adaptable and can make informed decisions that reflect real-time challenges. This responsiveness allows trusts to stay relevant and continue driving positive outcomes for their schools.

Better engagement and outcomes for students

At its core, local governance is about ensuring that schools are child-centred. When governance structures are rooted in the needs of their communities, the decisions they make have a direct impact on student engagement and outcomes. With a deep understanding of the local context, local governance can advocate for and implement strategies that create more engaging, inclusive, and supportive learning environments. This leads to improved student outcomes, fostering a stronger, more positive school culture.

"When rooted in community, local governance drives engagement, inclusion, and better outcomes for children."

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Addressing challenges in local governance

Our Shaping Governance research shows that the potential of local governance in MATs is too often unrealised. In our recent findings, 66% of local governance structures across MATs reported a lack of clarity about the trust's strategic vision and direction. This lack of clarity isn't just a communications issue; it's a leadership challenge that risks undermining the effectiveness of governance altogether. Governance can quickly become disconnected and disempowered without a shared sense of purpose and direction.

Even more concerning, 76% of local governance structures told us they do not feel confident about what pupils and parents think, signalling a critical breakdown in feedback loops and undermining a key strength of local governance: its ability to bring the community insight into the decision-making table. When local boards feel unsure or excluded, trusts lose access to the rich, contextual insight they need to make effective decisions for children.

This gap is not inevitable; it's an opportunity. As Emma Hawker, Impact and Projects Manager at Governors for Schools, emphasised in her appearance on The National College podcast, local governance becomes transformative when it is "clear, empowered, and connected." In this form, governance shifts from a compliance role to a driver of cultural alignment and trust-wide improvement. Strong local governance, she notes, ensures that trust leaders are "informed and influenced by those who know their schools best."

When Shaping Governance was founded in 2017, Su, its founder, saw firsthand that local governance had untapped potential to drive meaningful change. She recognised its structural importance and local governors' depth of insight, care, and commitment. Shaping Governance was built to strengthen that potential and give local governance the clarity, and confidence it needs to move beyond observation and into impact. By focusing on what makes governance effective in practice, the work has helped ensure that local voices are heard and actively shape the direction of their schools and trusts.

The need for this clarity and connection is only growing. According to the Confederation of School Trusts' 2024 National School Trust Survey, 66% of MATs plan to grow. With expansion comes complexity, and without strong local governance, the risk is that local identity, responsiveness, and community voice will be diluted. In contrast, when governance is strong and clearly linked to strategic decision-making, it provides the framework for equitable, child-focused, and community-driven growth.

Shaping Governance has seen firsthand how embedding strong, connected local governance structures leads to better educational outcomes, stronger engagement, and deeper community trust. It's not enough to have governance in place; it must be equipped, aligned, and empowered to drive change.

"66% of local governance structures report a lack of clarity about their trust's strategic vision; this isn't a communication gap, it's a leadership challenge."

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CHAPTER 2:

THE POWER OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE: PEOPLE, PASSION, AND PERFORMANCE



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Governance that matters: aligned people, clear purpose, better outcomes

Strong governance is not about paperwork, meetings, processes, or box-ticking. It's about people, passion, and performance.

At its best, governance brings people together, leaders, parents, pupils, and communities, to shape a shared vision for education. It is driven by passion and a commitment to ensuring every child has access to the best possible opportunities. It is measured by performance, not just in data, but in the real-life impact governance has on schools, students, and communities.

Yet, too often, governance in multi-academy trusts (MATs), particularly local governance, can be disconnected, unclear, and underutilised. Our work at Shaping Governance has revealed the scale of the problem:

- 66% of trust-wide local governance structures lack clarity on strategic vision and direction.
- 76% of trust-wide local governance structures do not know how pupils and parents feel.

This is not just a structural weakness; it's a lost opportunity. When local governance is clear, empowered, and connected, it transforms from a compliance function to a powerful driver of trust-wide impact.

What happens when Local Governance works?

People align: Stronger connections, better decisions

Governance is about people. But when local governance lacks clarity, trust boards and schools operate in silos, creating misalignment and missed opportunities. Without local governance that actively feeds into strategy, trust boards risk making detached, data-driven decisions that don't reflect the reality in schools.

When local governance is structured and valued, trust boards benefit from:

- Real-time insight from those closest to the schools: pupils, parents, and staff;
- Better decision-making, informed by diverse perspectives;
- A governance model that is connected, not top-down, ensuring strategy is rooted in reality.



When people across governance layers align, decisions become more strategic, schools feel more supported, and the entire trust benefits from a shared sense of purpose.

"Governance works best when people align; strategy becomes smarter, schools feel supported, and purpose is shared."

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Passion ignites: Schools feel connected and supported

Passion drives governance; volunteers, school leaders, and trust boards commit to it because they care about children's futures. But when local governance lacks purpose, that passion is potentially wasted. Schools feel disconnected from the trust board, and governance becomes a burden rather than an enabler.

Our work has shown that when local governance is clear, strategic, and engaged, schools experience:

- A stronger sense of belonging within the trust, acting as a family of schools;
- Less governance duplication, reducing workload for headteachers;
- A culture of support, not just scrutiny, where governance helps schools solve challenges rather than just holding them to account.

When governance harnesses passion, it energises schools, strengthens collaboration, and ensures governance is a force for good rather than just a layer of oversight.

Performance improves: Governance becomes child-centred and solution-focused

Governance should always be measured by impact. Yet our research found that in 76% of trusts, local governance is not confident about what pupils and parents think. If we are not listening to the communities we serve, how can we be sure governance is making a difference?

When local governance is focused on performance, not just process, it:

- Amplifies pupil and parent voice, ensuring governance is truly responsive;
- Shifts from problem-spotting to problem-solving, driving real improvements in education;
- Ensures governance is about outcomes, not just oversight, keeping children at the heart of every decision.

Passionate people drive performance, but only if governance structures allow them.

The local governance opportunity

People, passion, and performance: When local governance embodies these three principles, its impact is transformational. It strengthens trust-wide alignment, supports schools in practical ways, and ensures governance is focused on what truly matters: improving children's outcomes.



For trust boards, the challenge is clear: Are you using local governance as a compliance function or a powerful driver of trust-wide impact?

Now is the time to get local governance right.

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CHAPTER 3:

LOCAL GOVERNANCE: A CHAIR'S PERSPECTIVE

THE THOUGHTS OF AN LGB CHAIR



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Bridging school and trust: how strong local governance drives insight, alignment, and improvement

Local governance offers a crucial window into the life of a school, providing oversight, support, and challenge while serving as a key link between the school and the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). While the MAT holds overall strategic responsibility and accountability, Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) build a detailed understanding of their school's context, ensuring that relevant, timely information is communicated to support informed decision-making at the trust level.

My LGB oversees a school which is part of a six-school trust, all based within a 10 mile radius. Despite their proximity, the schools serve very different communities and maintain distinct identities. As a result, the challenges they face, and their School Development Plans (SDPs) are unique. This also influences the structure of each LGB. While all LGBs include key link roles such as Safeguarding, SEND, Health & Safety, and Quality of Education, additional roles are shaped by each school's specific priorities.

Our role as an LGB is to monitor progress against the SDP and share relevant insights with the Trustees. This may include tools such as RAG-rated risk registers for quick reference, or more detailed reports highlighting achievements and areas needing further focus. All of this is done with a clear understanding of the school's context and history.

In larger MATs, especially, it's unrealistic to expect every Trustee to have an in-depth understanding of each school's background. Their role is to lead on the Trust's overarching vision, ensuring each school, regardless of its degree of individuality, delivers the best outcomes for its pupils. Trustees rely on LGBs to surface key insights: celebrating successes, flagging concerns, and identifying emerging risks.

Strong local governance is built on trust; trust between governors, school leaders, and staff. That trust grows through regular visits, open communication, and collaborative relationships. The LGB acts as a supportive yet critical partner, bridging the school and MAT leadership.

"Trustees rely on LGBs to surface key insights: celebrating successes, flagging concerns, and identifying emerging risks."



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The role of Headteacher can be an isolating one. As Chair, I see my relationship with the Head as vital. I maintain regular formal and informal contact using various communication channels. While I hold the Headteacher to account and help ensure strategic delivery, I also offer support, providing a listening ear, sharing perspectives, and helping to navigate difficult decisions. This relationship gives me deep insight into the school's daily operations, informing the narrative behind data and progress reports that the Trust uses to shape its strategic decisions.

Our MAT hosts termly meetings between LGB Chairs and MAT senior leaders. These sessions are a powerful two-way channel for communication, enabling best practice to be shared and feedback to be gathered from across the trust. They also allow for meaningful discussions around MAT policies, plans, and their local impact, while surfacing any school-specific concerns that need raising at Board level.

I firmly believe the strength of governance in our MAT lies in the quality of communication. Our structured reporting approach ensures that each LGB meeting contributes directly to Trust Board and committee discussions. A standardised reporting format is used across both local and MAT levels to avoid duplication. At the start of each academic year, we provide an "intelligence gathering" calendar, setting clear expectations for what is reported, how, and when, across all layers of governance.

As our MAT looks to expand, we're confident that our strong governance foundation will support a smooth transition for new schools. Several of our schools have recently undergone Ofsted inspections where governance at all levels was recognised as a strength. Following independent reviews, we're assured that our structures can support meaningful, sustainable growth.

Every LGB provides invaluable insight and expertise, supporting the Trustees and helping to drive the Trust's continued success.

LGB Chair of Governors

"Our reporting approach ensures every LGB meeting contributes directly to Trust Board discussions; with no duplication, just clarity."



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CHAPTER 4:

LOCAL GOVERNANCE: A TRUSTEE'S PERSPECTIVE

THE THOUGHTS OF A CHAIR OF A TRUST BOARD



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Why local insight is essential to trust-wide success

When done well, local governance bodies (LGBs) provide a vital window into what's really happening in schools. They offer local oversight, inform strategic direction, and act as a filter; bringing key insights and emerging risks to the Board's attention in a timely and constructive way.

As Trustees, we don't just rely on LGBs for performance monitoring, we rely on them for the rich, real-time insight that only comes from being embedded in the school community. That insight is essential. It helps the Trust Board see beyond the data and understand the lived experience behind the numbers. We need LGBs to help us make sense of complexity, spot issues early, and shape strategy that works on the ground.

While our core responsibilities are shared (strategic direction, accountability for outcomes, and financial oversight), our vantage points are different. The Trust Board operates across the system; the LGB works deeply within a specific school context.

Despite the centralised governance structures of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), local governance remains essential. Here's why I think this:

Local expertise and insight

LGBs bring a deep understanding of the school's unique context; often because members live or work in the community. This local knowledge is indispensable. It ensures that decisions made at Trust level are grounded in what's happening in real time, not just abstract policy or standardised reporting.

Meaningful accountability

Being close to the school enables more informed and timely challenge. LGBs are well placed to see how things are working day-to-day and to hold leaders to account in a way that's both informed and constructive. They help ensure policies are lived, standards are upheld, and outcomes are improving.

"We don't just rely on LGBs for performance monitoring; we rely on them for the rich, real-time insight that only comes from being embedded in the school community."



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Stronger community connection

LGBs serve as a bridge between the school and its local community. They bring the voices of parents, carers, and stakeholders into the conversation, helping schools stay connected to the people they serve. That local connection builds trust, pride, and a strong sense of shared purpose.

Contextual decision-making

While the MAT provides strategic direction and shared resources, every school has its own challenges and opportunities. LGBs help shape local decisions; from curriculum emphasis to pupil wellbeing, based on what's right for that school's context.

Strategic and cultural alignment

LGBs help ensure that the Trust's vision and values are understood locally and reflected in daily practice. They help maintain a shared culture across the trust while protecting what makes each school distinctive.

In conclusion, strong local governance isn't a legacy of a time before MATs; it's a powerful enabler of trust-wide success. As a Trustee, I see how effective LGBs enrich our governance. Their insight, rooted in community and context, is something we can't do without.

Without that local lens, our ability to lead well across multiple schools would be significantly diminished.

Chair of a Trust Board

"Without that local lens, our ability to lead well across multiple schools would be significantly diminished."



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CHAPTER 5:

THE IMPACT OF EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN SCHOOLS



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CHAPTER 5: THE IMPACT OF EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN SCHOOLS

Why local insight matters more than ever in a growing MAT system

Local governance is crucial to the success of schools within Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). It serves as the vital link between the community and trust-wide strategic leadership. By focusing on accountability, strategic decision-making, and meeting the specific needs of pupils and communities, local governance plays a key role in driving improvement at both the school and MAT levels.

As over 60% of Trusts plan to grow in the near future (CST Survey, September 2024), the local governance tier must evolve to meet the increasing complexity of scale. This chapter explores how local governance can support growth while maintaining strategic alignment and accountability.

The crucial role of local governance

Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) are the window into school life, offering the closest connection to the day-to-day realities of children and young people. Their role extends far beyond compliance monitoring. When supported effectively, LGBs shape the educational experience, hold leaders accountable, and protect the school's vision and values.

Recent studies, including the CST Survey (September 2024), highlight the importance of local governance for larger trusts. These trusts often delegate responsibilities that require local insight, including:

- Parental and pupil engagement;
- Education outcomes;
- Behaviour and attendance;
- Safeguarding and inclusion.

This highlights a key point: the strength of LGBs lies not just in their oversight but also in their local insight.

Challenges and the need for change

At Shaping Governance, we've worked with hundreds of schools and trusts, reflecting on what works and what doesn't. We've seen firsthand the power of local insight, and we understand the challenges that arise when local governance isn't effectively supported.

Our research shows that nearly 80% of LGBs report lacking confidence in engaging with pupil and parent voice. This is concerning, as these voices are essential for driving school improvement and creating responsive, inclusive governance.



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We've supported many trusts in building the confidence, tools, and strategies to engage meaningfully with their communities. By shifting from passive consultation to genuine co-production, we help LGBs develop structures that embed meaningful engagement into their governance practices. This 'reflect and improve' approach helps them continuously evolve based on feedback and insights from all stakeholders.

Adapting for growth: The Scheme of Delegation

As MATs expand, governance structures must adapt. The CST report also reveals that nearly half of CEOs plan to review or revise their Scheme of Delegation within the next year, reflecting their preparations for growth. This is a timely opportunity for MATs to re-evaluate and clarify the role of LGBs, ensuring they align with strategic plans for sustainable growth.

Establishing clarity from the outset ensures that local governance doesn't just provide commentary but high-quality assurance and real-time intelligence to inform trust-wide decision-making. At Shaping Governance, we help MATs reflect and improve their governance structures so that local insight becomes a driving force behind key decisions.

Building confidence and capability

Local governance doesn't just happen; it's built. To make an impact, local boards need clarity about their role, the confidence to lead, and the capability to ask the right questions and drive improvement.

Our experience shows that when boards are supported to reflect and improve regularly, they become more strategic, inclusive, and effective. Strong local governance is never accidental; it is the result of intentional development, consistent support, and a shared commitment to children's outcomes.

Evidence of impact

The CST Next-Gen Governance report (November 2024) highlights important challenges, especially around role clarity and communication. Many local governors report a lack of understanding about their responsibilities, and poor communication between governance layers leads to duplication, blurry accountability, and added pressure on school leaders.

These challenges are not arguments against local governance; they are calls to action. Poor role clarity and disconnected communication are symptoms of underdeveloped governance structures. When local governance is designed intentionally, clearly defined, and consistently supported, it becomes a force for improvement. Helping MATs move from compliance to strategic action, ensuring that decisions are informed by local insights and community needs.

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LOCALLY LED, STRATEGICALLY STRONG: A REFLECTION AND CALL TO ACTION

BY SU TURNER
CEO, SHAPING GOVERNANCE



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Governance that's 'Fit for Purpose' and 'Full of Purpose'

When I founded Shaping Governance, I had one clear ambition: to make governance more connected to people, and more deeply valued as a force for improvement. After years of working in education, advising trusts, and supporting governors, I saw a growing pattern: the further governance drifted from schools, the more disconnected it became from the people it was meant to serve.

As Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) have expanded, local governance has often been the first casualty of scale, seen as optional, administrative, or easily replaced by centralised systems. But it doesn't have to be that way. That's why we launched the Locally Led, Strategically Strong campaign.

What we've learned

Over this series, we've shared insights and experiences from across the system: governors, trustees, and leaders all pointing to the same truth:

Local governance is not a legacy. It's a strategic asset.

We've explored how strong local governance:

- Brings insight rooted in the lived experience of pupils and communities;
- Aligns trust strategy with real-world school contexts;
- Builds trust, improves outcomes, and strengthens culture.

When local governance is done well, it doesn't slow the system down; it sharpens it.

A personal reflection

My vision is simple and remains unchanged:

I want local governance to be recognised, resourced, and respected.

It should be:

- Clear in purpose;
- Aligned with trust strategy;
- Embedded with care and challenge;
- And powered by people who understand the local context and care about every child.

At Shaping Governance, we work with MATs to build structures that aren't just compliant; they're 'fit for purpose' and 'full of purpose'. We don't simply deliver reviews or advice. We partner with you to reflect, improve, and create governance that drives real change.

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A call to connect and to invest in local governance

The response to Locally Led, Strategically Strong has been inspiring; not just the conversations it's sparked, but the appetite for action it's revealed. Across the country, I've heard from trust leaders, governors, clerks, and communities who all recognise the same truth:

Local governance has untapped potential and we need to unlock it.

We believe strong local governance sits at the heart of great schools. It supports leaders, connects communities, and helps shape inclusive, values-led cultures where children thrive. When done well, it isn't just about compliance – it's a strategic investment in the success of every child, school, and trust.

So, here's my invitation to you:

- If your trust is growing and you want to protect local connection as you scale;
- If you're revisiting your governance model and want it to reflect both clarity and care;
- If your local tier feels underused, unheard, or unclear, and you're ready to change that;

I'd love to talk to you.

At Shaping Governance, we work alongside MATs to create governance that is aligned, ambitious, and ready to deliver. We don't just deliver training or reviews; we embed habits, shape cultures, and equip local boards to lead with insight, care, and purpose.

Our support includes:

- Reflect & Improve: our award-winning development session designed to help boards reflect on what's working and improve where it matters most;
- External reviews using our USP: the Shaping Governance appreciative, people-centred process to assess strengths and identify development opportunities at the trust and local tier;- enabling boards to lead with clarity, confidence, and connection;
- Targeted training on pupil voice, parental engagement, inclusion, and safeguarding;
- Skills and Confidence Mapping to support succession planning and local board development;
- Appreciative, people-centred approaches that help boards shift from deficit-based challenge to insight-led, strategic dialogue.

If you're serious about governance that reflects your values, your communities, and the needs of your children, we're here to help. Get in touch to explore how we can work together to strengthen your governance, reconnect with your local tier, and lead with purpose.

**Because if we want trust governance to be strategically strong,
it must also be locally led.**

Su Turner
Founder and CEO, Shaping Governance

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STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNANCE OUR TOP TIPS

At Shaping Governance, we support trusts to move local governance from overlooked and underpowered, to purposeful and powerful



These tips draw from our hands-on experience of what works in practice.

Clarify the purpose

Ensure every local board understands its role in the trust's strategy and how it contributes to overall success.

Align structures with strategy

Your Scheme of Delegation should make roles clear, reduce duplication, and support shared accountability.

Build confidence in community voice

Support local boards to gather, reflect on, and act on what pupils, parents, and staff are saying; this is where real improvement begins.

Invest in skills and succession

Use skills audits or try our Skills and Confidence Map to develop your local tier and plan for leadership continuity.

Shift the conversation

Help governors move from deficit-based challenge to appreciative, solution-focused questioning.

Standardise without silencing

Templates and structures should support consistency; without erasing local voice and insight.

Encourage trust–local dialogue and celebrate wins

Foster regular, two-way conversations between LGBs and Trustees to strengthen connection, responsiveness and visibility.

Invest in expertise; and make governance a strategic asset

Great governance doesn't happen by accident. It needs focused development, especially for roles like Chairs and new governors. By working with experts, you can build confident, capable boards that contribute meaningfully to your trust's success. Governance shouldn't sit on the sidelines; it should be embedded in your improvement journey as a strategic driver, not a compliance tick-box.

We can help you take the next step.

Whether you're looking to review, rebuild, or re-energise your local governance, we're ready to work with you. We can turn these tips into tailored action; and make your governance not just 'fit for purpose', but 'full of purpose'.

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Developing your Governance Improvement Plan

Improving governance starts with asking the right questions; not just about structures, but about people, purpose, and impact. Here are three searching questions to guide your next steps:

What's the current reality of our governance; do we know where it needs to grow or be strengthened?

Start with a clear, evidence-informed picture. Are roles understood? Is impact visible? An independent perspective can reveal gaps and opportunities you may not see from the inside.

Do our governors feel equipped and confident; or are they quietly unsure of their role, purpose, or value?

Confidence and clarity don't come from job descriptions alone. Are you investing in your people with the right support, tools, and development; or expecting them to figure it out alone?

Who are we learning with and from; and how are those relationships helping us build on what works and grow stronger in areas that matter most?

Every strong board has support behind it. Who's challenging your thinking, sharpening your practice, and helping you move from fit for purpose to full of purpose?

We'd love to help you answer these questions.

At Shaping Governance, we work alongside trusts and schools to create confident, capable, and connected governance. Whether you're ready to review, rebuild, or re-energise your local tier; let's build your improvement plan together.

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SHAPING GOVERNANCE SERVICES

Our award-winning services tackle governance improvement from many angles and have a 5 star Google Rating for impact.

OUR USP



TRUST-WIDE GOVERNANCE REVIEWS

Go further: combining board-level review with tailored support and development for every LGB; driving whole-trust governance improvement.



TRUST BOARD GOVERNANCE REVIEWS

Aligning with DfE expectations and provides a clear assessment of your Trust Board's effectiveness and LGB connections



BESPOKE TRAINING

We provide tailored training to meet the needs of our clients. We also have a number of off the shelf packages.



CLERKING SERVICES

High-quality professional clerking and advice services for school and academies.



COACHING AND NETWORKING

Our qualified coaches help governors to develop their capacity and effectiveness; and our online governor networking sessions build skills.



KEYNOTE SPEAKING

Our CEO provides regular keynote addresses on child-centred and appreciative governance to leadership and governance conferences.

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CONTACT DETAILS AND CLIENT FEEDBACK

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CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

Supporting a Multi-Academy Trust to support and develop its LGBs

January 2025

PCLC

Continuing to develop all leaders across our trust/schools is vital for success and governors/trustees, as community custodians of our schools, can often be the hardest to plan for.

Meeting Su from Shaping Governance has been an absolute gift. Our governors/trustees have been challenged to think even more deeply about their roles and what they can do to support and challenge us. We can already see the shift in their questioning and how meetings are run.

They are excited about the ongoing relationship with Shaping Governance and how they will continue to develop to ensure that our community is served by all of our schools. Shaping Governance is now a key part of our journey to improvement - thanks Su.

Vic Goddard - CEO / Executive Principal

Five ★ Google Rating

Scan the QR code for more impact and testimonials

CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

Trust-wide External Review of Governance - including Local Academies Committees

February 2025

SOUTH ESSEX ACADEMY TRUST
› collaboration › challenge
› perseverance › innovation

Our experience with Shaping Governance for our recent external review was outstanding. The process was clear, well-structured, and provided meaningful insights that will help strengthen our governance.

Working with Su Turner was a real highlight—her expertise, enthusiasm, and supportive approach made the experience both insightful and enjoyable. She took the time to understand our organisation and provided thoughtful guidance that has given us real clarity on our next steps. The support and resources available ensured we could reflect on our progress and identify key areas for development.

I would highly recommend Shaping Governance, and particularly Su, to any organisation looking to enhance its governance practices."

Julie Mulcahy - Chair of Trustees and Member

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