

Shaping Governance - September 2025

A Note from Su, our CEO

The Start of a new school year: Holding onto what matters

Welcome Back! As schools reopen and boards come together, September isn't just about schedules and policies. It's a chance to pause, reset, and ask:

- What kind of tone will we set this year?
- Who will feel seen, heard, and supported by our work?
- What does it really mean to keep children at the centre; not just in principle, but in practice?

Plus today (9th September), Ofsted have launched their new framework - read our summary of the changes and why it's important for governors below.

Get in touch if you need anything.

Take care, Su

Read my full blog on our website

A spotlight on our Signature Approach and tools

Every board deserves the opportunity to reflect, refocus, and move forward; whatever your capacity or context. That's why we offer our **Signature Approach** with three flexible, strengths-led options to review and improve governance. Whether you're identifying priorities, preparing for Ofsted (see below), or seeking external assurance, there's an approach that fits.

Three ways to evaluate and improve governance effectiveness







- **Map it:** Our **Skills and Confidence Map** helps boards see beyond roles and responsibilities, identifying strengths, gaps, and development priorities through a people-centred lens.
- **Shape it:** Our Reflect & Improve D**evelopment Sessions** spark reflective, strategic thinking. We help boards ask better questions, have deeper conversations, and build a culture of shared purpose - all in two hours. *Shape it also includes Map it, so boards gain the benefits of both.*
- **ERG it:** Our **External Review of Governance**, delivered independently through our appreciative, people-centred approach, goes beyond compliance to offer meaningful insight into how governance is really working; and where it can grow. Designed to support both accountability and development, it turns review into a powerful opportunity for reflection, ambition, and improvement.

Each of these tools is designed to help you **ask better questions, see what's really going on, and understand governance in practice;** without falling into spreadsheet overload or overcomplicated discussions.

And whichever option you choose, you can build on it: *for example, Shape it includes Map it, and many boards use this as a stepping stone to a full ERG.*

Use the links above to find out more or contact Su.

New from Shaping Governance this term

FREE WEBINARS: Join us as we unpack:

- Local Governance in MATs - insight from our Locally Led, Strategically Strong Campaign
- What the latest **Ofsted changes** mean for boards
- How to embed **Appreciative Governance** by changing the conversation from problems to possibilities

NEW: Chairs' Network Launch: A new space for chairs to share ideas, challenges, and leadership approaches.

PAID-FOR-TRAINING: Building on Our Unique Approach
Alongside our free offers, we're running a series of paid-for development events shaped by our people-first, appreciative approach. These sessions are designed to inspire, connect, and equip boards who want to lead with clarity and care.

See our Events and Training pages for more details.

What's in the News - and why it matters to Governors

Ofsted Confirms New Framework & Report Cards

We've pulled together a full article on today's Ofsted announcement, setting out what the changes mean for governors and how boards can prepare. From the new grading scale to the spotlight on inclusion, our article breaks down the key reforms in plain language. **[Click here to read the full briefing]** and explore what this means for your governance practice.



Why This Matters for Governors

The new framework isn't just about inspection; it's about the role governance plays in shaping children's experiences and outcomes. Ofsted will place more emphasis on **how boards understand impact, support inclusion, and provide clarity of leadership**. For governors, this means your voice and challenge are more important than ever in ensuring the school is not only inspection-ready but also **child-centred every day**.

Spotlight: Labour's Autumn School Reform Blitz

A wave of policy changes are expected this autumn as the Labour government accelerates reforms across **inspection**, **accountability**, **curriculum**, and **SEND;** all set to be published this term, **as reported in Schools Week**. *5th September 2025*

Reform highlights to watch out for:

- **Ofsted 'report cards'**: See above.
- **Accountability shifts**: A new consultation proposes extra support for schools that are struggling, introduction of "school profiles"; a digital, one-stop portal for parents and tools to compare schools with similar characteristics.
- **Schools White Paper**: Still under development, expected "in the autumn," this paper will address improvements in attainment for white working-class pupils, attendance, behaviour, literacy, pupil engagement, and extracurricular access. SEND reforms are expected to be a key part of the agenda.
- **SEND reform proposals**: Changes to education, health and care plans (EHCPs) and funding are anticipated, with the government emphasising the preservation of "effective provision."
- **Curriculum review**: An interim report has prompted consideration of reducing content at primary level, revising EBacc measures, easing English and maths post-16 re-sits, and reducing overall KS4 exam volume. Any major reforms are likely to be preceded by a year's notice.



Why this matters for governors:

These fast-moving reforms are more than policy news; they're prompts for strategic reflection.

Boards may want to ask:

- Are we prepared for the changing inspection landscape and the implications for how our school is presented and supported?

- How can we use new tools like school profiles to support transparency and comparison thoughtfully?
- What could early draft proposals on SEND and curriculum mean for inclusion and breadth of opportunity in our context?

Persistent Gaps in Staffing and Equity

The Guardian reports that as the school year begins, systemic challenges remain. Over **25% of state schools** in England report **no qualified physics teacher**, deepening subject access inequalities. Meanwhile, low-income students increasingly face barriers to studying subjects like music, geography, and languages due to costs like equipment and trips; widening the post-Covid attainment gap. *2nd September 2025*



Why it matters for governance: Governing boards need to consider how strategic oversight can address both staffing gaps and unequal access to rich learning opportunities. These issues underline the importance of equity, resource allocation, and curriculum breadth in governance discussions.

Contact Su

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