

Shaping Governance - Newsletter October 2025



A word from Su

This edition is all about one of the things I'm most passionate about – ***joining up governance.*** Whether you're a single school or a Multi-Academy Trust, governance works best when it is connected.

For schools, that means making sure governors have clear sight of what matters and that leaders feel supported and challenged in equal measure. For Trusts, it means creating strong links between the board, local voices, and the communities you serve.

When governance joins up, decisions are stronger, accountability is sharper, and children benefit from leadership that is ambitious and grounded in real experience. It creates clarity, builds confidence, and strengthens culture; whatever the size or structure of your organisation.

In this newsletter, you'll find insights and ideas to help you think about how joined-up governance looks in your own context. My hope is that it sparks conversations with your board and your leadership teams, and helps you see governance not just as oversight, but as a driver of improvement for children.

Because when governance joins up, it doesn't just add value – it changes outcomes.

Su
CEO, Shaping Governance



Breaking down key governance concepts into clear, digestible insights

J is for Joined-Up Governance
The power of aligning local insight with strategic direction

Governance that works in isolation doesn't work at all.

The real impact comes when boardroom strategy connects with classroom reality; and when schools, staff, governors, pupils, and communities feel part of the journey. That's the heart of **Joined-Up Governance**: not just a phrase, but a principle that makes governance meaningful and effective.

Read Su's reflections on why joined-up governance matters; and what it looks like in practice.

Need to catch up on our A-Z so far - click here to read all.

Locally Led, Strategically Strong



Our most popular campaign to date, *Locally Led, Strategically Strong*, highlighted the vital role of connected governance across multi-academy trusts. It opened up conversations about how local voice and strategic leadership have the greatest impact when they work hand in hand.

At Shaping Governance, we support trusts at every stage of their journey; from first steps through to growth and maturity.

With Su's extensive experience, we help boards stay focused on what matters most:
Governance that makes a real difference for children.

If you're a MAT Chair or CEO and want to explore how this could look in your trust, get in touch. Su would be delighted to have that conversation with you.

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

Financial sustainability remains the top priority, and greatest challenge, for England's academy trust leaders for the second year running. A new CST survey of 390 trust CEOs found that over half of trusts are considering cuts to classroom staff to balance the books, with 60 per cent planning to reduce teaching assistant hours.



Why this matters for governors:
For governors, this means facing increasingly difficult conversations about how to deliver strategies that raise the quality of education and strengthen inclusion on ever tighter resources. At the same time, it is essential to protect the wellbeing of school leaders and staff, who are under growing pressure to achieve more with less. This is where governance must take an appreciative and supportive approach. By focusing on constructive scrutiny and solution-oriented challenge, boards can foster collaboration and help ensure the best possible outcomes for children.

The Prime Minister has announced a new, higher target for the number of under-25s in university, college, or apprenticeships. The announcement places greater emphasis on skills training linked directly to jobs, while still leaving decisions about what and how to study with individual students in England.



Why this matters for governors:
For governors of secondary schools and further education settings, this shift in political tone signals the need to look beyond simply monitoring NEET numbers. Boards should consider how effectively their settings are preparing and guiding young people towards meaningful pathways; whether academic or vocational—that align with future opportunities.

Our Services

Our services span the full governance journey: from skills and confidence mapping that builds strong boards, to professional clerking that keeps governance running smoothly. We also support External Reviews of Governance for those seeking external assurance, and offer our award-winning *Learn, Reflect, Improve* programme to help boards develop as a team and grow their impact year on year. Plus many more services.

In addition for Multi Academy Trusts, our support includes:

- **Creating or refining governance structures** that are clear, inclusive, and effective.
- **Conducting Governance capacity reviews** that show boards their strengths and next steps.
- **Providing guidance for mergers** backed by Su's first-hand experience, so trusts can grow with confidence.
- **Assurance checks** to keep compliance simple and effective.
- **Schemes of delegation** refined to match your vision and ways of working.
- **Tailored coaching and mentoring** that supports CEOs and Chairs in leading with confidence. Also available for Governance Professionals.

Take a look at what our clients think about our support and its impact.

Our signature approach to evaluating and improving your governance

Map it



Shape it



ERG it



Contact us if you need any help or advice

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