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**Shaping Governance: A-Z of Governance**

**Breaking down key governance concepts into clear, digestible insights**

## O is for Ownership: Strengthening Oversight and Accountability in Governance

***Su Turner, CEO of Shaping Governance, shares her thinking…***

In school governance, ownership is about far more than who signs off decisions. It is about who takes responsibility for ensuring those decisions are implemented, monitored and make a real difference. At its heart, ownership is what turns oversight and accountability from theory into practice.

When governors and trustees truly own their role, they don't just ask questions at meetings; they follow the journey of decisions over time. They don't just approve strategies; they reflect on whether those strategies are working and what needs to change. Ownership shifts governance from passive oversight to active, confident accountability.

### Why ownership matters in governance

Ownership is the foundation of effective oversight. Without it, accountability becomes blurred and impact is difficult to evidence. When boards take ownership seriously, governance becomes clearer, stronger and more purposeful.

Ownership strengthens governance by enabling:

- Clear accountability: governors understand what they are responsible for overseeing and how they will assure themselves it is working
- Effective follow-through: actions are revisited, progress is monitored and learning is embedded
- Collective responsibility: boards hold themselves to account, not just the executive
- Stronger strategic focus: time and attention are directed to what matters most



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- Greater confidence: boards are better equipped to challenge, support and make difficult decisions

This is where reviewing governance becomes so powerful. A review provides space for boards to step back and ask: *Are we owning the right things? Are our oversight arrangements strong enough? Are we holding ourselves to account as well as others?*

## Link governors: ownership in action

One of the clearest examples of ownership in practice is the role of link governors. When governors hold responsibility for areas such as safeguarding, SEND, curriculum or inclusion, they bring depth, evidence and insight to board discussions.

Like pieces of a jigsaw, each link governor contributes part of the picture. When those insights are brought together, boards gain a connected and informed view of how strategy is playing out in practice. Strong link governance is not about ticking boxes, it is about meaningful engagement, asking the right questions, and ensuring oversight is grounded in evidence rather than assumption.

Well-designed governance reviews often shine a light on how effectively link roles are working, helping boards strengthen accountability without adding unnecessary burden.

*"Ownership doesn't mean doing everything; it means caring enough to ensure things get done. When governors own their role, whether through link responsibilities or wider strategic leadership, they bring clarity, focus, and commitment to the table. That's where governance becomes truly impactful."*

## Ownership and governance review

Reviewing governance is not about criticism, it is about ownership with intent. It allows boards to reflect honestly on how oversight and accountability operate day to day, and whether structures, roles and behaviours are supporting effective governance.



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At Shaping Governance, we support boards to move beyond surface-level oversight. Through appreciative frameworks and proportionate review approaches, we help governors and trustees:

- clarify responsibilities and accountability
- strengthen the link between decisions, monitoring and outcomes
- build confidence to lead governance with purpose

## Final thoughts

Ownership is the fuel of effective governance. It is what turns oversight into accountability and strategy into impact. When boards take time to review how ownership shows up in their governance, they strengthen not just compliance, but confidence, clarity and commitment.

Let's shape governance where responsibility is embraced, oversight is meaningful, and every decision truly counts.

### Get in touch

If you'd like to explore how reviewing governance can strengthen ownership and accountability, contact us at office@shapinggovernance.co.uk.



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