

Section 3 – People

1. The effectiveness of a board depends on the quality of its people and how they work together and with school leaders. This section explains the principles underpinning how the board must be constituted.

3.1 Constitution and membership of the board

2. While boards in some schools have more flexibility than in others, all boards have a choice about how they are constituted. It is the constitution of the board that determines how many and what type of people govern the school.
3. All boards of maintained schools, academies and MATs should be tightly focused and no larger than they need to be to have all the necessary skills to carry out their functions effectively, with every member actively contributing relevant skills and experience. In general, the department believes that smaller boards are more likely to be cohesive and dynamic, and able to act more decisively. Boards cannot afford to carry passengers.
4. The need for boards to establish committees, or panels, for exclusions or disciplinary matters, does not necessitate in itself a large board. Committees or panels can be established specifically for these purposes, to which non-board members may be appointed, and/or a committee may be established as a joint committee with another school.
5. The membership of the board should focus on skills, and the primary consideration in the appointment and election of new governors should be acquiring the skills and experience the board needs to be effective. Boards should therefore develop a skills-based set of criteria for governor selection and recruitment which can also be used to inform ongoing self-evaluation and governor training. For maintained schools, the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 require all appointed governors to have the skills required to contribute to effective governance and the success of the school.
6. Meaningful and effective engagement with parents, staff and the wider community is vital, and not achieved by the presence of various categories of governor on the board. Governors must govern in the best interest of pupils; it is not their role to represent a stakeholder group. Stakeholder engagement is an important, but distinct, activity for which boards will need to assure themselves that appropriate structures and arrangements are in place. Governors themselves should seek to assist their school to build relationships with business and other employers, in order to enhance the education and raise the aspirations of pupils.
7. Boards should carry out regular audits of governors' skills in the light of the skills and competences they need, and actively seek to address any gaps they identify – through either recruitment or training as discussed further below. They should also reflect regularly on whether they have the right overall balance of people and skills, and consider the benefits that might result from restructuring the board's constitution and membership. 'A Possible Road Map for Governing Board Reconstitution' aims to help boards with the practicalities of how to approach the process of reconstitution.