



External Review of Governance 2025 & 2026

The Department for Education recommends an External Governance Review every three years, and that the review should be undertaken by an independent reviewer with proven experience and expertise in governance. Our External Governance Review was conducted by Tim Craven who is a consultant with the National Governance Association (NGA). He examined the effectiveness of the trust board and completed the review in Q1 (Jan – Mar) 2025 followed by a Progress Review in Q1 (Jan – Mar) 2026.

A summary of their findings in Q1 2025 are detailed below:

- The trust board and trust committees at Crossley Heath School are effective in carrying out the three core functions of governance.
 - There are strong, respectful, and collaborative relationships between the trustees and school leadership that enable a focus on driving school improvements. The trust achievement and welfare committee support that focus and drive.
 - Further development is needed to make better use of link trustee roles and to distribute the governance workload more evenly, develop a three-year strategic plan for the school and improve oversight of HR matters.
 - The board also needs to ensure it embeds its practices relating to risk management, sharing financial information and providing induction training for new trustees.
- Jaswinder Sandhu Chair of Trustees Crossley Heath School

Findings from the Follow Up in Q1 2026 are detailed below:

The progress review found that **good progress has been made against the recommendations from the 2025 review**, with a strong and sustained focus from trustees and leaders on improving governance practices.

The trust board is now operating with:

- **Clearer structures and more effective ways of working**
- **Improved governance documentation and processes**
- **A stronger focus on strategic priorities and school improvement**

Trustees and leaders continue to work in **strong, respectful and collaborative partnership**, ensuring effective oversight and support for the school. This builds on the positive findings of the original review, which judged governance to be effective in delivering its core functions.

Key developments since the 2025 review



Significant progress has been made in a number of areas, including:

- Strengthening governance structures and clarifying roles and responsibilities
- Improving the distribution of workload and increasing trustee involvement through link roles
- Updating key governance documents, including the scheme of delegation
- Introducing a three-year strategic planning framework
- Enhancing induction, training and support for trustees
- Strengthening financial oversight and committee effectiveness

The review also highlighted **positive improvements in governance culture**, with trustees reporting a more focused and effective board.

Next steps

The board recognises that some developments now need to be **fully embedded and sustained over time**, particularly in relation to:

- Strategic planning beyond the immediate year
- Further development of HR oversight and reporting
- Embedding link trustee monitoring and visit processes
- Continuing succession planning and board development

Conclusion

The 2026 progress review confirms that the governing board has **responded positively and proactively** to the findings of the 2025 ERG. Governance at Crossley Heath School continues to be effective, with clear evidence of improvement and a strong foundation for further development.