



The role of vice chair

The vice chair can be very important in sharing the leadership of the board, not only making the role of chair more manageable but also acting as a sounding board when there are challenges and opportunities to reflect on. NGA provide [model role descriptions for governors, trustees and chairs](#). We've put together an overview of the vice chair's role given that it can vary greatly between individual schools and trusts.

Vice chair role purpose

The purpose of the vice chair's role is to:

- act as a sounding board for the chair
- share tasks with the chair when agreed, ensuring a manageable workload
- be the chair's deputy in times of absence

Vice chair duties

The vice chair carries out all the duties that are expected of a governor or trustee. In addition, the chair may decide to delegate specific tasks or responsibilities to the vice chair. This could include:

- co-ordinating the induction of new governors
- co-ordinating and monitoring the training and development of individual governors and the governing body

Everyone on the governing board needs to be clear on their role and responsibilities. As such, any duties delegated to the chair should be documented – this could be in a [role description](#) and/or [article of association](#) (in an academy trust).

Required skills, knowledge and behaviour

The vice chair works in close partnership with the chair and so they will need to develop a strong working relationship. A relationship that's built on an understanding of one another's strengths and experience leads to efficient sharing of workload that increases the leadership capacity of the governing board.

The vice chair needs to be able act as chair for any meeting of the governing board, if required. In a period of extended absence, the vice chair also needs to be able to take on other responsibilities and duties normally performed by the chair. As such, the vice chair may need to undertake training and/or shadow the chair to ensure they are well prepared to step in.

Succession planning

Governing boards must plan for the chair's replacement before they step down - often, the vice chair is an aspiring chair. In such cases, appropriate support and training should be provided to prepare the vice chair for the role of chair and ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the board and the school(s).

NGA support and development

The NGA [Leading Governance leadership development programme](#) provides chairs, vice chairs, committee chairs and future chairs opportunities for developing leadership skills and confident governance. The programme provides opportunities for networking and peer support.

Further reading and resources

[The Chair's Handbook](#) (also useful for vice chairs)

[Skills audit and matrix](#) - tools for governing board self-review

[Model role descriptions](#) for chairs, governors, trustees, clerks and governance professionals

[Preparing you board for the future](#) - a practical guide to succession planning

[The right people around the table](#) - a guide to recruiting and retaining governors and trustees