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Annual governance statements

An annual governance statement is required for an academy and good practice for a maintained school. Get guidance on what yours needs to contain, and take a look at examples of statements from other schools.

Last reviewed on 22 May 2025

School types: All • School phases: All • Ref: 4774

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Who is this article for?

If you're an **academy trustee**, your board is required to produce this statement as part of its annual report. Read on to find out what must be included.

If you're on a **local governing body (LGB)**, you won't be very involved in producing one, but your board of trustees might ask you about the work your LGB has done this year.

If you're a **governor at a maintained school**, your board isn't required to produce a governance statement, but it's good practice to do so. Use it as an opportunity to get an overview of how you're fulfilling your duties. You'll find examples of governance statements from maintained schools at the bottom of this article.

Requirements for academy trusts

Academy trusts are required to submit their annual report and financial statements to the Department for Education (DfE) by 31 December every year. The aim is to demonstrate that your trust is appropriately managed and is looking after public money properly.

The annual report **must** include a governance statement. It must be signed by a trustee (usually the chair) and accounting officer – usually the CEO of your trust.

This is set out in the DfE guidance, [academies accounts direction](#) (paragraph 1.17).

This requirement applies to all types of academy trust with a funding agreement with the secretary of state, and an open academy at any point during the accounting period.

Put your statement together

Most of the statement should be produced by your board, with a few small sections from your accounting officer.

It's a good idea to assign a couple of trustees to work on this together at the beginning of the autumn term. That way, they can bring it back to the full board for approval in November, so the chair can sign it well in advance of the December deadline.

It'll be easier if those putting the statement together stay in the loop with your trust's CEO. Trustees can ask the CEO for any information they need, as well as making sure the CEO's sections are completed.

You'll find a **model governance statement** in the DfE guidance, [academies model accounts](#) (page 19 to 24).

You can use this as a basis for your own statement. It includes suggested wording and examples of what to write, but should be modified to reflect your trust's own circumstances and performance.

What to include

Here's a summary of the sections you need to include. These are also set out in the [academies accounts direction](#) (paragraph 2.32 to 2.49) and the model governance statement in [academies model accounts](#) (page 19 to 24).

Scope of responsibility

Describe how your trust manages the responsibility for an effective system of control.

In practice, this means acknowledging that the board of trustees has overall responsibility, but that the day-to-day responsibility for ensuring financial control is delegated to your CEO as accounting officer (in most cases).

For the wording to use, take a look at the example governance statement in the academies model accounts guidance, linked above (page 19).

Governance

Include:

- Your governance framework, committee structure, key changes in your board's composition, attendance and coverage of your work (if you haven't included this elsewhere in the annual report). This should also cover the audit and risk committee
- Meetings:
 - The number of times your board of trustees met
 - If this was fewer than 6 times, you **must** describe how you've maintained effective oversight of funds with fewer meetings
- How your trust manages conflicts of interest
 - This covers both management and governance, so you'll need to check with your CEO on this one. A potential area mentioned in the example set out in the model accounts guidance, linked above, is ownership or control of joint ventures, subsidiaries or associates
- How your trust has reviewed the effectiveness of your board, and when it will do so again

- If you've completed a [self-assessment of your board](#) or had an external review, explain the findings, actions taken as a result and the impact on governance

Review of value for money

This one's for your accounting officer (usually your CEO) to complete. They should include:

- A declaration acknowledging the accounting officer's responsibility for value for money
- Examples illustrating how they've achieved value for money during the year
 - There are some suggestions of what you could describe here in the academies accounts direction guidance, linked above (paragraph 2.43).

Purpose of the system of internal control

Adapt the wording from the model governance statement to reflect your own trust's context.

It includes:

- A description of the purpose of the system
- A statement confirming that the system has been in place for the year up to the date the accounts were approved

Capacity to handle risk

- Describe:
 - How your board has considered and reviewed the risks your trust is exposed to
 - The financial and compliance controls in place to mitigate those risks
- Make a statement to confirm that your board is aware that there's a formal ongoing process for identifying, evaluating and managing the trust's significant risks

Risk and control framework

You'll probably need to work with your CEO to get all the information you need.

- Describe your system of internal financial control, including:
 - Budgeting and monitoring arrangements
 - Reviewing of reports, plans and forecasts by the finance committee
 - Measuring financial performance
 - Purchasing (including capital investment) guidelines
 - Risk identification and management

- Describe your internal scrutiny arrangements, including a named person who's been appointed by your board to perform an audit or programme of checks
- Explain why your board chose the above option for internal scrutiny
- List the checks your auditor makes, how often they report to the board and when they prepared a written report
- Confirm:
 - Whether the auditor has delivered the work as planned
 - Any issues that arose
 - What remedial action is being taken to rectify any issues

Review of effectiveness

This one's for your accounting officer, too. It's a statement that acknowledges that they're responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of the internal system of control described above.

Your accounting officer needs to list what information they've used to inform their review, including:

- The work of the internal auditor/reviewer
- The financial management and governance self-assessment process or your school resource management self-assessment tool
- The work of the executive managers who have responsibility for the internal control framework
- The work of the external auditor
- Correspondence from the DfE

Examples from trusts

- [Northern Education Trust](#), a multi-academy trust of 30 schools, has its governance statement included in its annual report and financial statements 2023-24 (pages 19 to 25)
- [Reach2 Academy Trust](#), a multi-academy trust (MAT) of 62 schools, has its governance statement included in its financial statements 2023/24 (pages 30 to 33)
- [St Mary's Catholic High School](#), a single-academy trust in Derbyshire, has its governance statement included in its annual report and accounts to 31 August 2024 (pages 30 to 32)

These examples follow the DfE's model governance statement we've referred to in this article.

Good practice for maintained schools

An annual governance statement isn't required for maintained school governing boards, but it's good practice to have one.

Your statement should explain how your board has fulfilled its responsibilities, particularly regarding the core functions. Include:

- The governance arrangements that are in place, including the remit of any committees
- The attendance record of individual governors at board and committee meetings
- An assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the board and any committees, with details of any particular challenges that have arisen

This is set out in the DfE's non-statutory guidance, [The School Governance \(Roles, Procedures and Allowances\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](#) (page 6).

Examples from maintained schools

- [Settle College](#) in North Yorkshire has an annual governance statement that includes governance arrangements and attendance
- [St Mary's CofE Primary School](#) in Trafford includes a list of governors, their committees, attendance and training undertaken in its annual governance statement

Sources

Steve Ward is a former national leader of governance. He chairs a MAT board and a LGB, and is also a trustee and member at a secondary academy.

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