Disadvantage: Behind the labels



Fiona Fearon, Policy and Projects Manager

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This session will cover

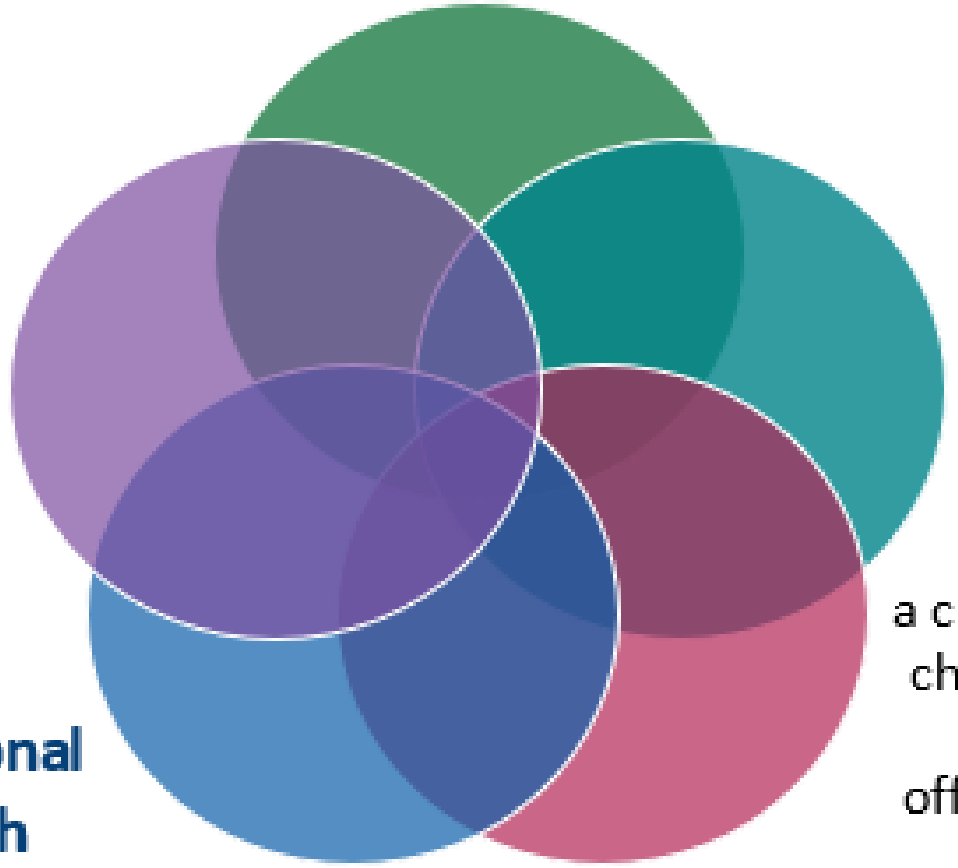
- What do we mean by ‘disadvantaged’?
- Losing the label and identifying the need
- Addressing the need – the how, the who and the what
- The governing board’s role
- Top tips: What are schools and their boards doing where disadvantaged pupils are thriving
- Resources, including on SEND; poverty and the pupil premium

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Children living in poverty:
those in receipt of pupil premium and others who are not entitled

SEND
(special educational needs and disability) – in particular SEN support



Certain **ethnic minority groups**

Those experiencing or struggling with **low wellbeing, emotional and/or mental health problems**

Vulnerability:
a child on a child protection plan, child in need plan, an early help plan, accessing the youth offending service, a looked after child or a young carer

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Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- Data published in June last year states that there are currently 355,566 children on an EHC plan but there are 1,129,843 children with SEN support (gov.uk, 2022).
- In 2020/21, 18.3% of pupils with SEN achieved grades 5 or above in English and mathematics GCSEs, compared to 58.0% of pupils with no identified SEN (DfE, 2022).
- Children with an EHC plan are 2.5 times more likely to be permanently excluded than non SEN peers and those with SEN support are 5 times more likely, with children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs being recorded with the highest rates (DfE, 2022)

This SEND toolkit reviews available evidence on how SEND can act as a driver of disadvantage, questions for governing boards and school leaders to explore and signposts to available resources to help tackle disadvantage.

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Poverty

- 71% of children currently growing up in poverty live in a household where at least one adult is working, as a result many will not be eligible for free school meals or identifiable by schools - (CPAG, 2023)
- 31% (800,000) of children in England are living in poverty but not entitled to free school meals (Anstey et al, 2021). The Child Poverty Action Group
- Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) made less progress between 11 and 16 years old than those not eligible for FSM, with national average Progress 8 scores of -0.53 and 0.06 respectively (ONS, 2020)

The poverty toolkit identifies the link between poverty and educational disadvantage, signposts resources to help tackle disadvantage, and includes questions for governing boards to explore.

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Vulnerability

- Children who had a social worker in their GCSE year were around half as likely to achieve a strong pass in maths and English than their peers (DfE, 2022)
- 27% of young carers (aged 11-15) miss school or experience challenges in their education. They achieve an average of one grade lower than their peers at GCSE and are more likely to not be in education, employment or training (NEET) between the ages of 16-19 (The Children's Society, 2022)
- Children on a child in need plan are four times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than their peers and children on a child protection plan are three and a half times more likely. (Timpson, 2019)

The vulnerability toolkit reviews available evidence on how vulnerability can act as a driver of disadvantage, questions for governing boards and school leaders to explore and signposts to available resources to help tackle disadvantage.

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Pupil mental health and wellbeing

- Higher Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores are significantly associated with lower attainment at GCSE. In 'Understanding Society' this meant that every one point increase in the young person's SDQ score at 11 to 14 was equal to dropping one grade at GCSE at 16. (NatCen, 2019)
- Children with poor mental health are more likely to be excluded (Timpson Review, 2019)
- Mental health difficulties increase absenteeism (EBPU, 2019) with children facing mental health challenges twice as likely to miss school than their peers (NHS, 2021).

The pupil mental health and wellbeing (MHWB) toolkit reviews available evidence on how MHWB can act as a driver of disadvantage, questions for governing boards and school leaders to explore and signposts to available resources to help tackle disadvantage.

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Ethnicity

- Children from a Black Caribbean background are three times more likely to be excluded than their White peers (Timpson, 2019) and on average 10.9 months behind academically by the end of year 11 (EPI, 2020)
- A lack of diversity in the curriculum was considered to be a barrier to 43% of young Black people achieving in schools according to research carried out by the YMCA in 2020.

Ethnicity	Gap in months (2019)
Gypsy / Roma	34.0
Traveller of Irish Heritage	23.8
Late-arrival EAL	20.7
Black Caribbean	10.9
White and Black Caribbean	7.4
Any other Black background	6.9

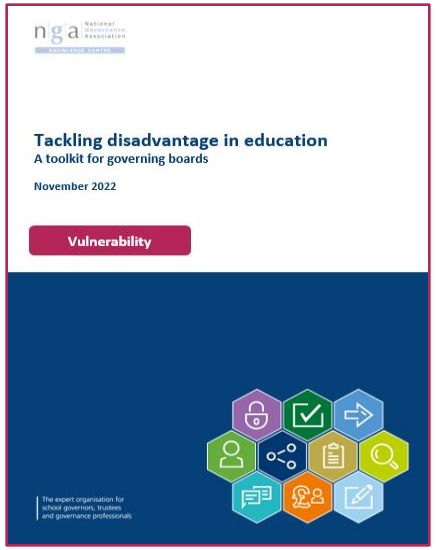
The ethnicity toolkit reviews available evidence on how pupils from some ethnic minority backgrounds can be vulnerable to educational disadvantage, questions for governing boards to ask school leaders signposts to available resources to help tackle disadvantage.

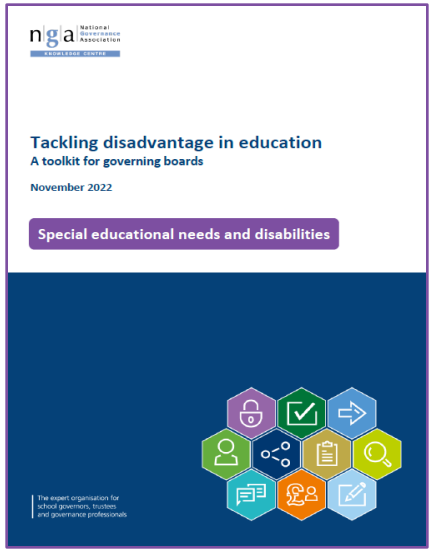
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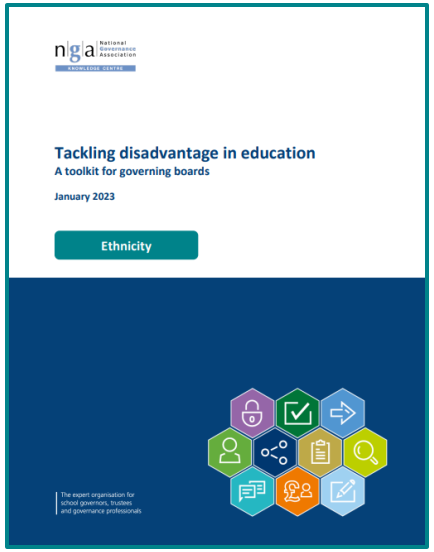
The toolkits and guidance

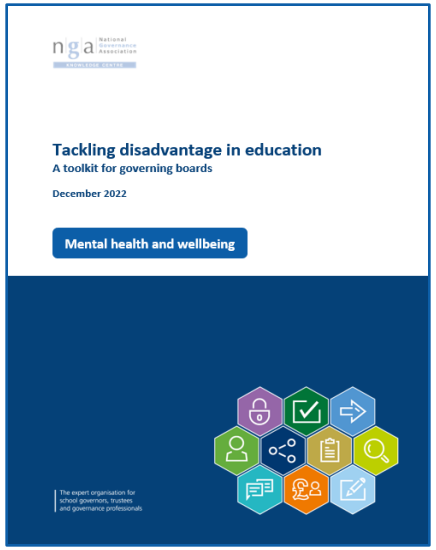












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Losing the label, identifying the need

"Schools must identify pupil need and base their strategies around this. It is critical that strategies focus on pupils' needs rather than any labels that might be ascribed to them" – **Addressing educational disadvantage in schools and colleges the Essex Way**

Labelling pupils does not identify the specific needs of pupils but rather makes way for deficit thinking and takes the emphasis off quality teaching and interventions.



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Understanding the local context of your school is key



By identifying **needs not labels** through **assessment not assumptions**, schools reduce the risk of creating a generalisation about pupils from less affluent backgrounds and isolating those pupils and families that are experiencing disadvantage (whether or not they qualify for pupil premium)

National picture

Considering your own school context in relation to disadvantage will create opportunities for governing boards to set strategies with their school leaders that are meaningful, targeted and more effective for pupils

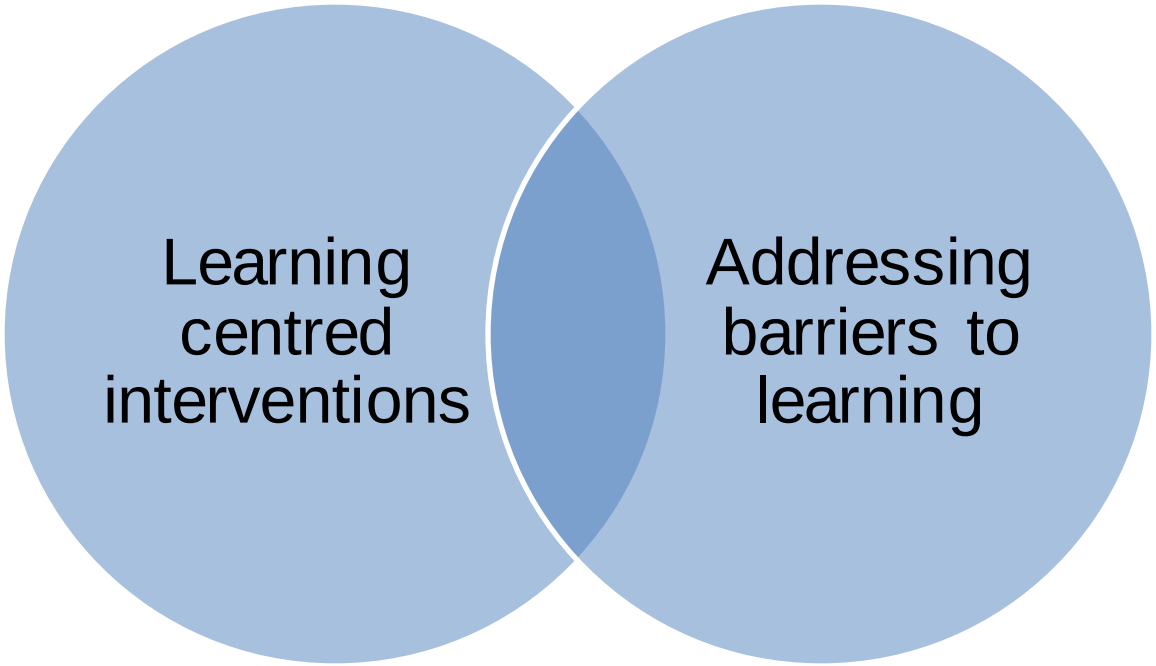
Local picture

Your picture

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Meeting the need – the what

Identifying the pupils' needs will inform what specifically schools do to address disadvantage within their setting.



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Spotlight on disadvantage: NGA research

1. Analysis uncovered a 'disconnect' between the pastoral barriers to educational achievement identified for individual pupils and the teaching and learning initiatives funded by schools through the pupil premium
2. Governing boards viewed internal data and the opinions of senior members of staff more favourably than external data, academic research and the EEF toolkit when considering how to spend the pupil premium
3. Effective strategies i.e. those with good outcomes for pupils had clear monitoring and success criterion for each initiative; and clarifying which group of pupils will receive funding



bit.ly/NGA-Spotlight

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Losing the label, identifying the need – using data

Pupil groups
SEND
Ethnicity
Vulnerable
Mental health and wellbeing
Pupil premium

Relevant data
Progress and attainment
Attendance
Safeguarding incidences
Behaviour incidences
Pupil and parent voice

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The governing board's role – understanding data

We recommend that governing boards use the following data to verify what has been provided by school leaders:

- Analyse School Performance (ASP) data which may be limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- National performance tables that provide information on pupil attainment and progress, school finances, pupil absence and school workforce. Used to compare performance with other local or similar schools.
- the Fischer Family Trust FFT dashboard, which some schools use to access online analyses of school performance and interactive comparison tools
- the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Families of Schools Database which compares a school with others that have similar pupil characteristics
- The DfE guide to school performance data further explains how to use these sources.

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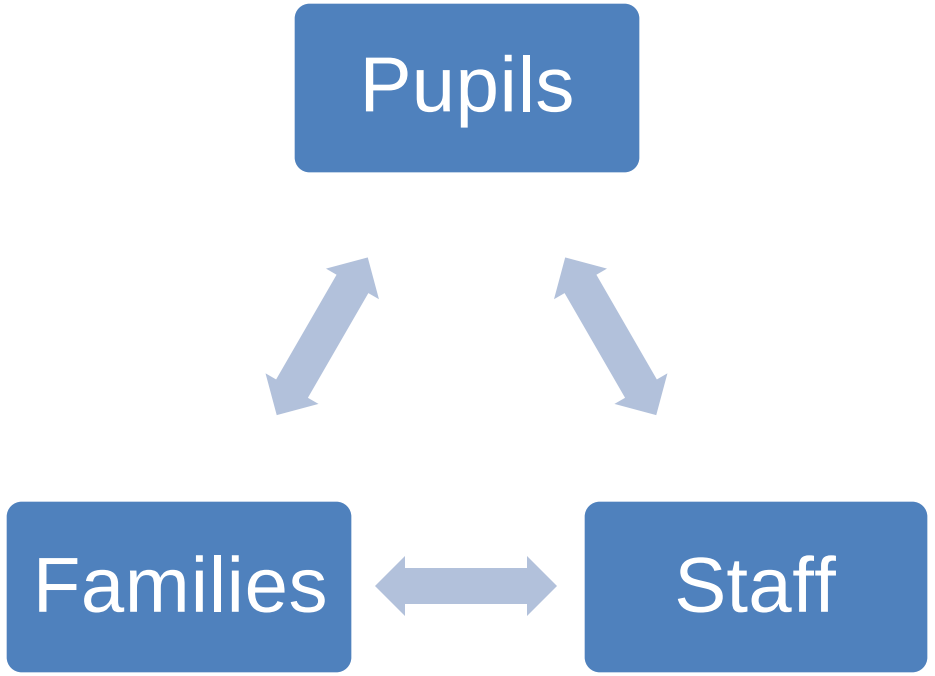
Understanding and meeting the need – who knows what?

"Positive relationships start with the governing board holding the whole school community in high regard and offering supportive and sensitive feedback that highlights the school's strengths and any further opportunities" - **Addressing educational disadvantage in schools and colleges the Essex Way**

"see school life through the lens of disadvantaged pupils and their families"

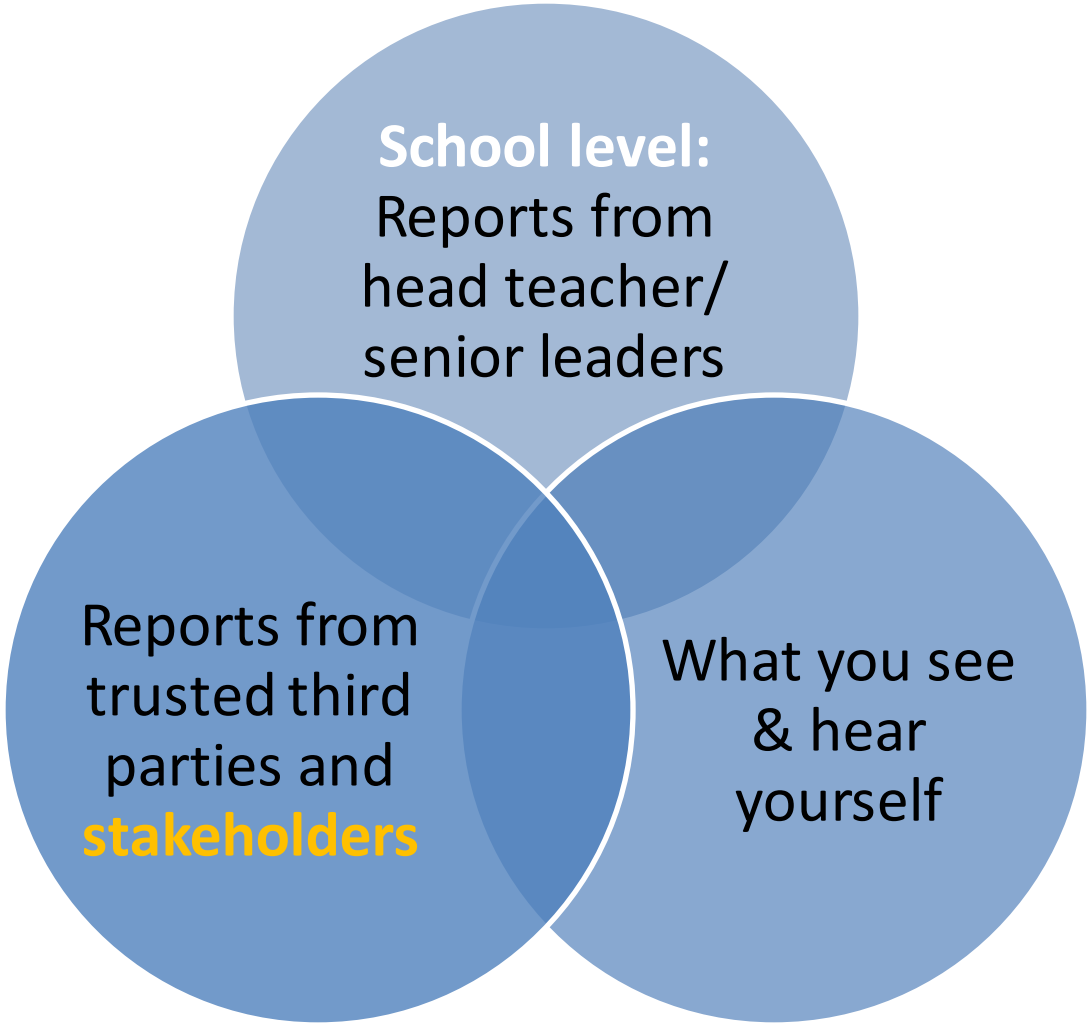
Marc Rowland, Adviser for improving outcomes for disadvantaged learners, the Unity Schools Partnership, - in Governing Matters Nov 2022

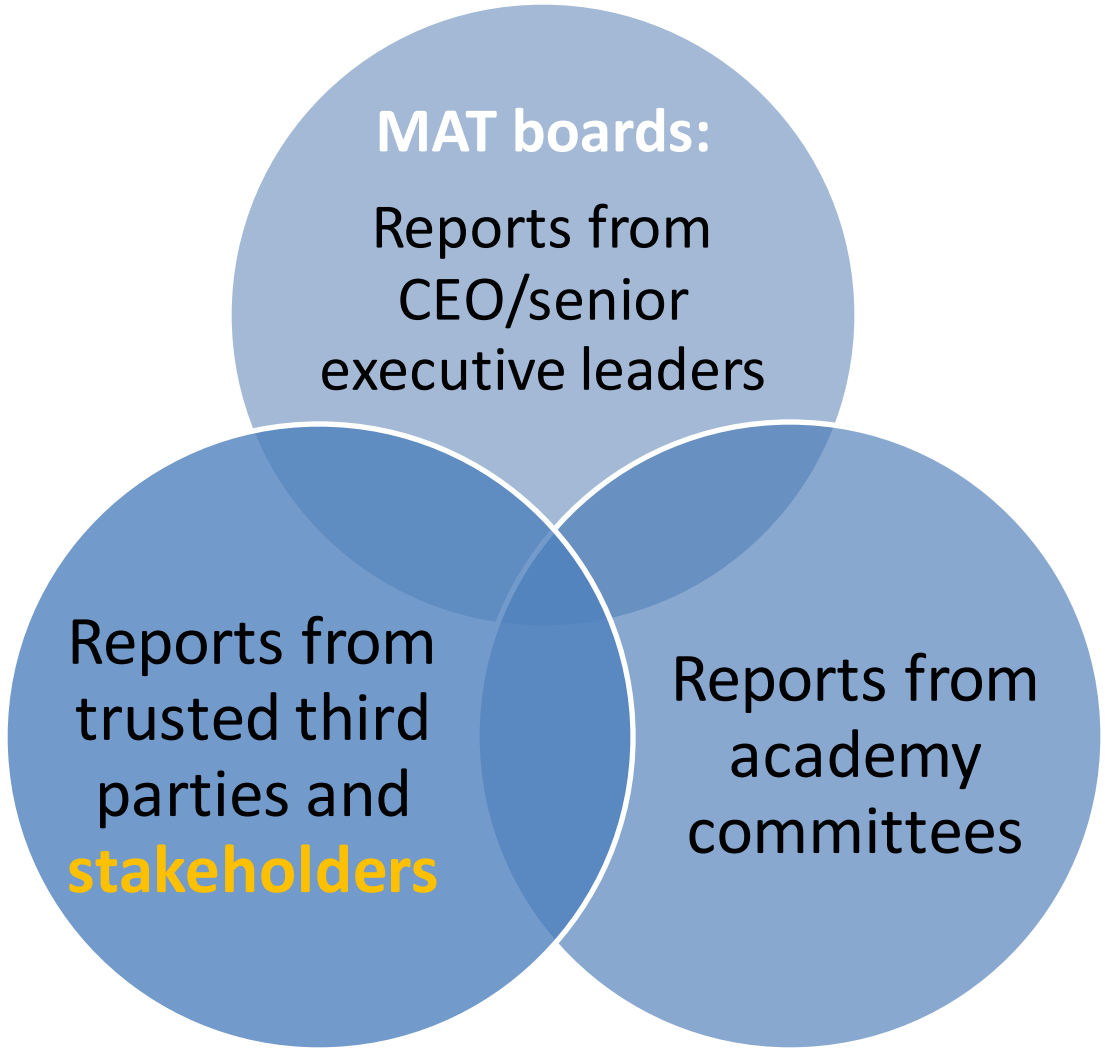
25 top tops for addressing disadvantage



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Information for boards: triangulation of data for good decisions





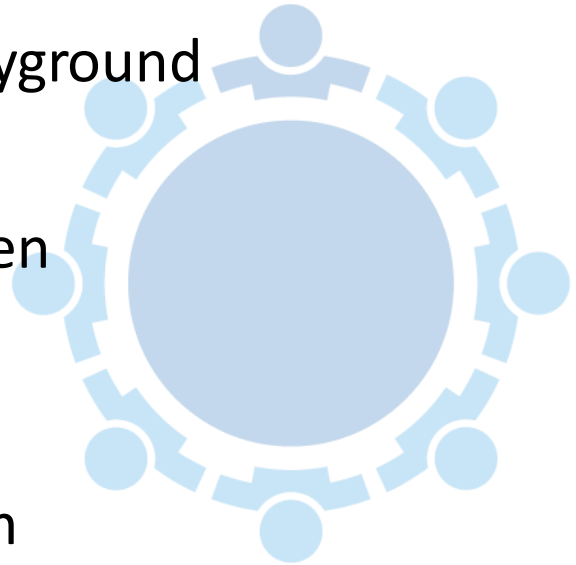
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4th core function of governing boards: stakeholder voices

Engaging with pupils, staff, parents and the wider community helps governing boards get to know their school or trust and ensure robust decision-making. It also models a culture that is key to breaking down some of the barriers between pupils and their families and the school system.

Ways that boards are doing this (annual governance survey 2022):

- surveys for pupils, parents and staff
- meeting with parents informally at the school gate and in the playground
- community coffee mornings
- support for and from local charity targeting disadvantaged children
- governors' assemblies, annual governor awards
- governors attending staff meetings if relevant to their remit
- Governors asking parents for views on particular issues each term



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Visible Governance in schools

Questions and discussion

Identifying disadvantage & the related needs

And then onto how to respond to those needs



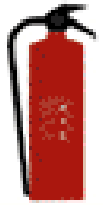
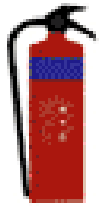
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Does the response match the barrier?

- Teaching and learning strategies
- Reading/oracy/vocabulary
- Pastoral support
- Specialist support
- Broad and balanced curriculum
- Careers education
- Extra curricular opportunities: building cultural capital
- Parental engagement
- Improving attendance

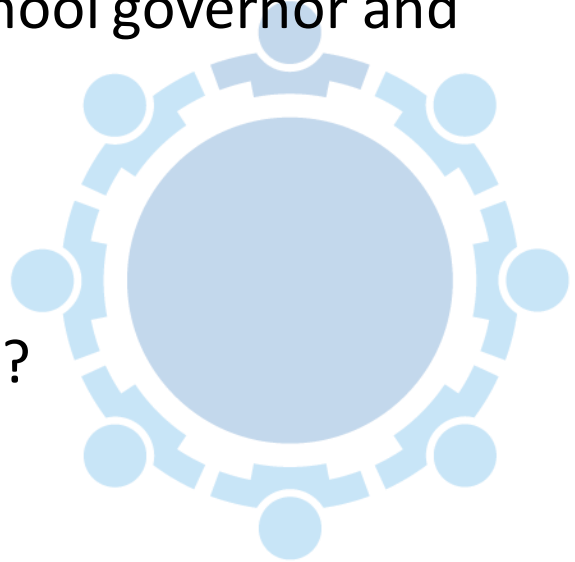
Fire Extinguisher Types

Extinguisher		Type of Fire					
Colour	Type	Solids (wood, paper, cloth, etc)	Flammable Liquids	Flammable Gasses	Electrical Equipment	Cooking Oils & Fats	Special Notes
	Water	✓ Yes	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No	Dangerous if used on 'liquid fires' or live electricity.
	Foam	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✗ No	✗ No	✓ Yes	Not practical for home use.
	Dry Powder	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✗ No	Safe use up to 1000v.
	Carbon Dioxide (CO_2)	✗ No	✓ Yes	✗ No	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	Safe on high and low voltages.

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The Education Endowment Foundation - the use of evidence

- Once the governing board and their school leaders have identified the needs of their disadvantaged pupils, it is important to implement strategies that match those needs and are rooted in evidence.
- The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) generate evidence of 'what works' to improve teaching and learning
- EEF has produced a guide on becoming an evidence-informed school governor and trustee, which includes:
  - How well are pupils achieving in your school?
  - How effectively is your school spending money?
  - How does your school support effective teaching and learning?



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Focusing on a small number of initiatives

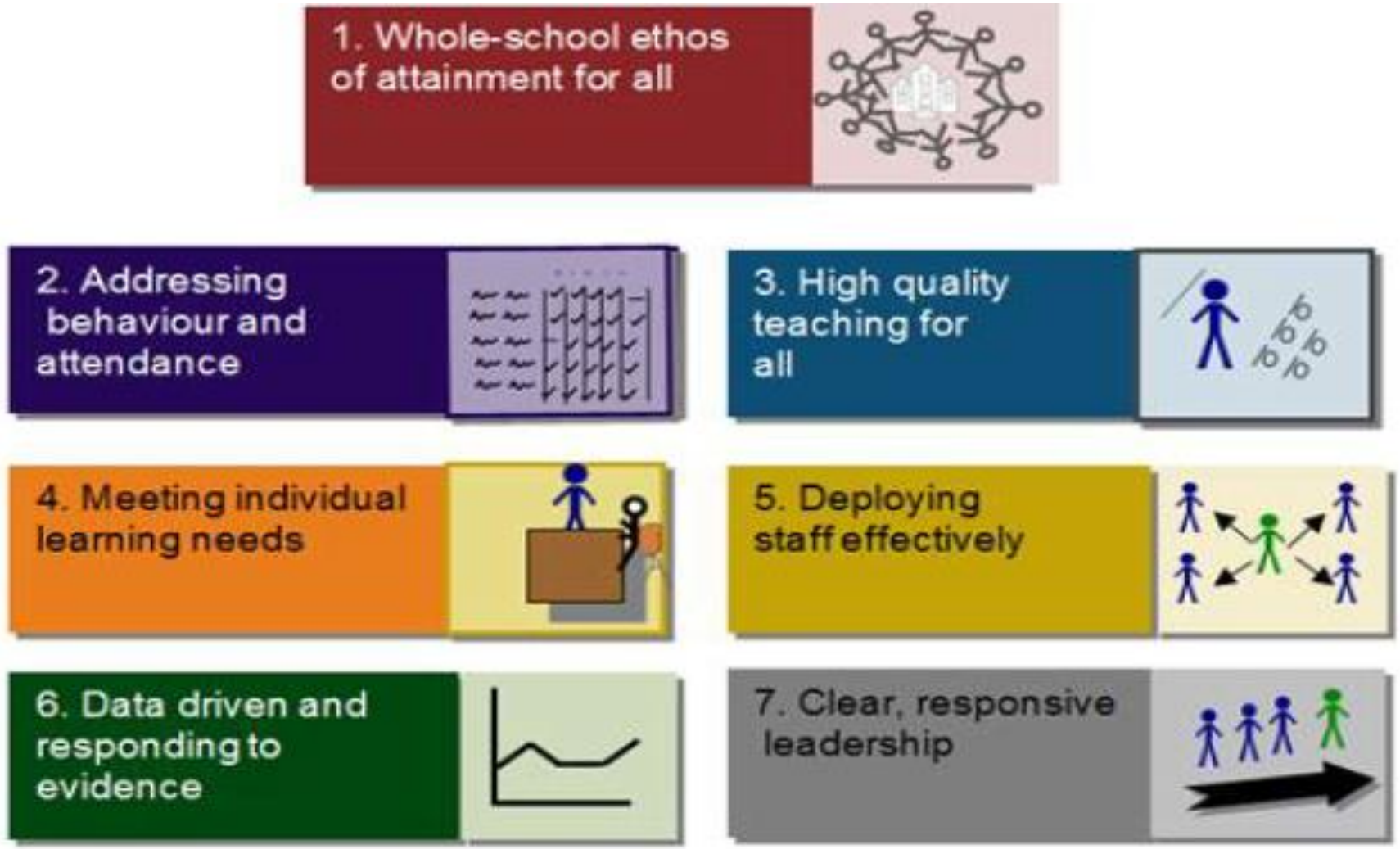


The EEF guide recommends an approach that balances the following principles:

- **Improving teaching** (eg investing in teacher CPD) so that an effective teacher is in front of every class, and every teacher is supported to keep improving.
- **Targeted academic support** (eg one-to-one or small group intervention) on those who are not making good progress across the spectrum of achievement.
- **Wider initiatives** designed to address significant non-academic barriers to success that are relevant to the school and its context (eg attendance, behaviour and social and emotional support)

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Most effective ways to support disadvantaged pupils' achievement NFER research



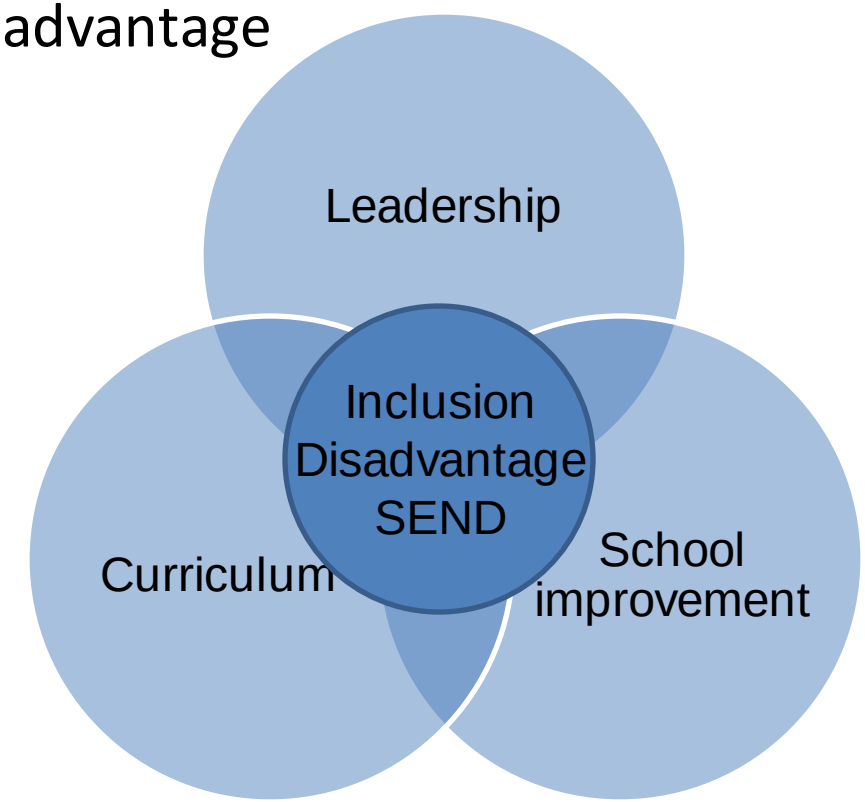
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Meeting the identified needs – the how

- Whole school culture and ethos

Governing boards are responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of their organisation, championing the needs of all pupils, working closely with senior leaders to develop a strategy that addresses disadvantage

- How to report to boards on individual needs & impacts?
- Do policies reflect this approach?
- Staff CPD
- Governing board CPD
- Collaborative working with other local schools
- Learning from other networks



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Visible Governance in schools

Questions and discussion

Responding to identified needs

And then onto poverty proofing



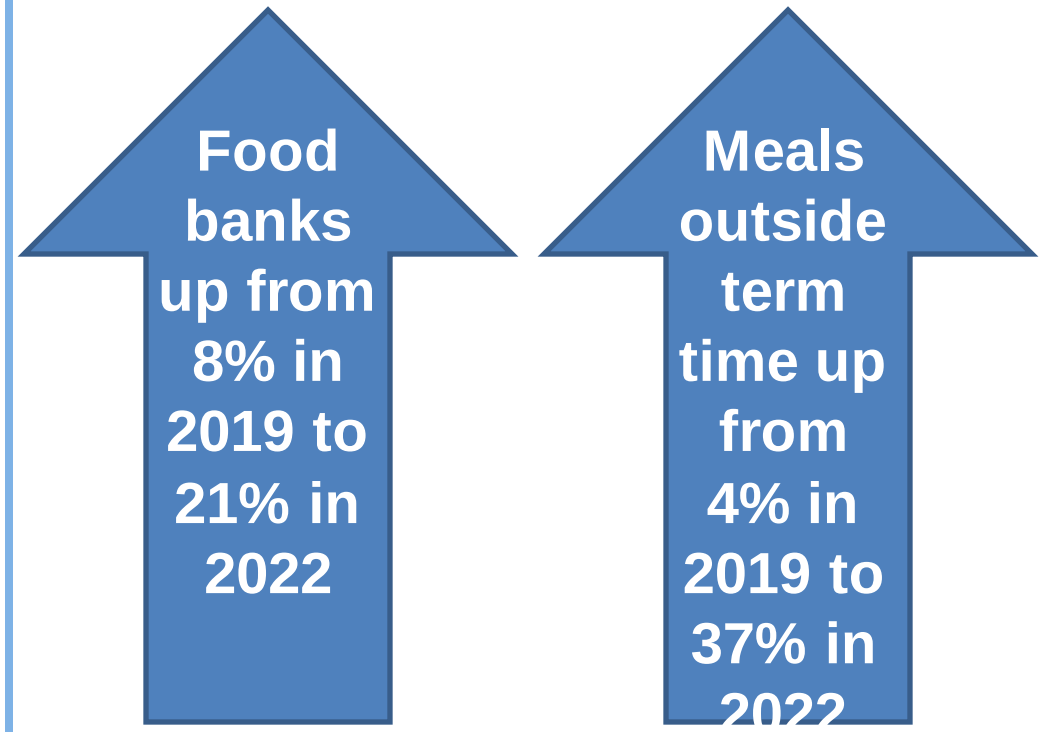
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Services schools provide for families (in addition to education) from the Annual Governance Survey 2022

- Second hand uniform provision (66%)
- Wrap around before and after school care (54%)
- Providing pupils with breakfast (47%)
- Meals outside of term time (37%)
- Financial support with purchasing school uniforms (36%)
- Family learning (21%)
- Food banks (21%)
- Advice about income and benefits (15%)
- Washing of school uniforms (6%)
- Emergency loans (2%)

95% of schools/trusts offer additional services to families and pupils in need.



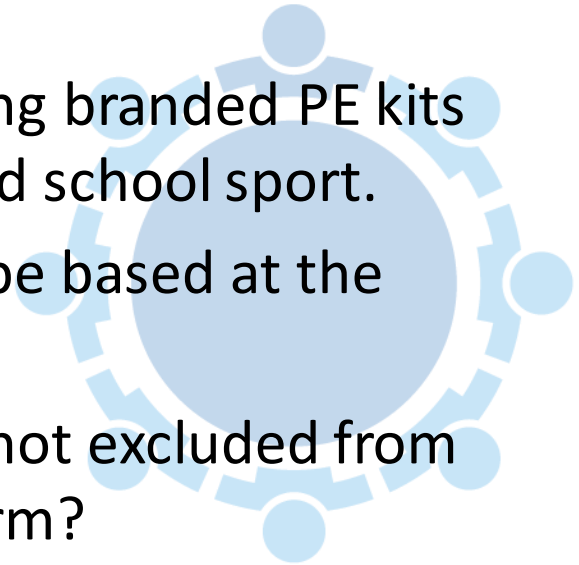
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Poverty proofing your school

Governing boards have a role in ensuring that pupils living in poverty are not excluded from activities due to cost barriers

What can you influence?

- **Uniform**
  - Is there unnecessary requirement for branded items? Requiring branded PE kits for example can deter pupils from getting involved with PE and school sport.
  - Is there access to a second hand uniform provision? This can be based at the school or in partnership with a local provider
  - How does your policy ensure that pupils living in poverty are not excluded from activities or disproportionately sanctioned for incorrect uniform?



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Poverty proofing your school

Governing boards have a significant role in ensuring that every pupil experiences a curriculum that is broad and balanced, and which equips them with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. This curriculum should be accessible to all.

- **Curriculum costs**
  - Does your broad and balanced curriculum ensure that cost does not deter pupils living in poverty from taking part? E.g food technology, PE, music
  - Do equipment requirements for lessons disproportionately sanction or exclude children living in poverty? E.g scientific calculators, special maths equipment, access to revision guides, IT
- **Poverty-proofing enrichment**
  - Can children living in poverty access extra-curricula activities such as trips and clubs?

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Poverty proofing your school

Aside from the physical benefits of a healthy, balanced diet, research has shown a link between a good diet and healthy brain development in early years, as well as concentration in lessons and overall increased academic attainment.

- **School food**
  - Are children on FSM able to access a full healthy meal with their allowance?
  - Are all children who are eligible for FSM identified and signed up?
- **Breakfast clubs**
  - Access to breakfast clubs can not only ensure that children are getting a healthy start to their day, but can also remove barriers to employment for parents

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Poverty proofing your school

The Child Poverty Action Group have produced a great resource to support governing boards in looking at this called The Cost of the School Day Calendar; it gets to the essence of making the school day more equitable, more inclusive for everybody, helping a larger group of families that sit outside of the thresholds for pupil premium but might still be experiencing poverty.



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National Governance Association

Visible Governance in schools

Questions and discussion
Poverty proofing



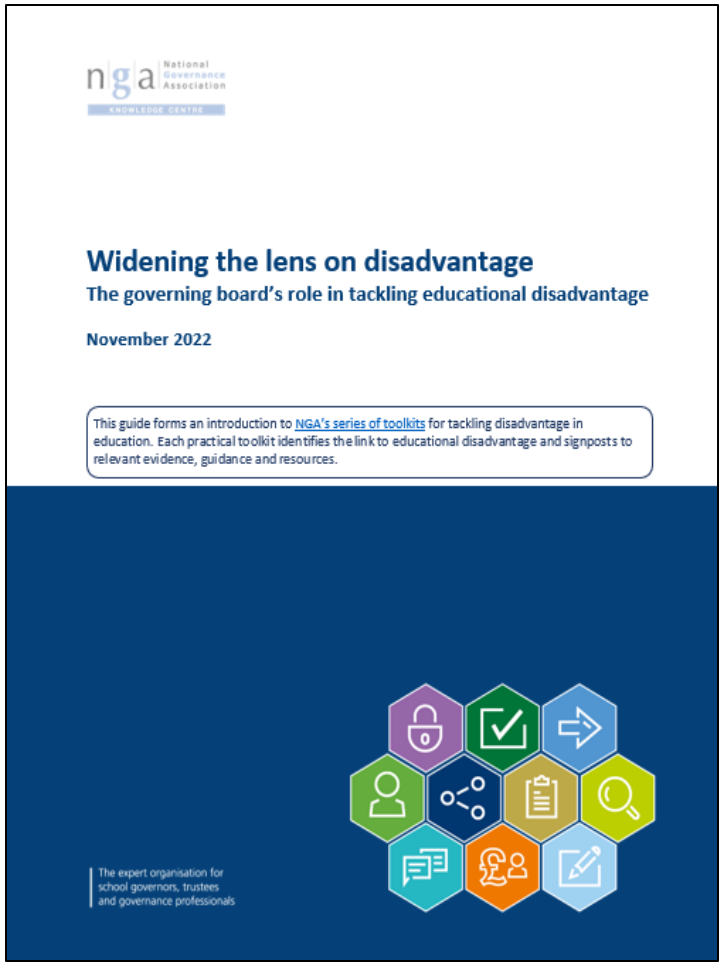
Before we finish: resources and where next …..

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Widening the lens of disadvantage – top tips

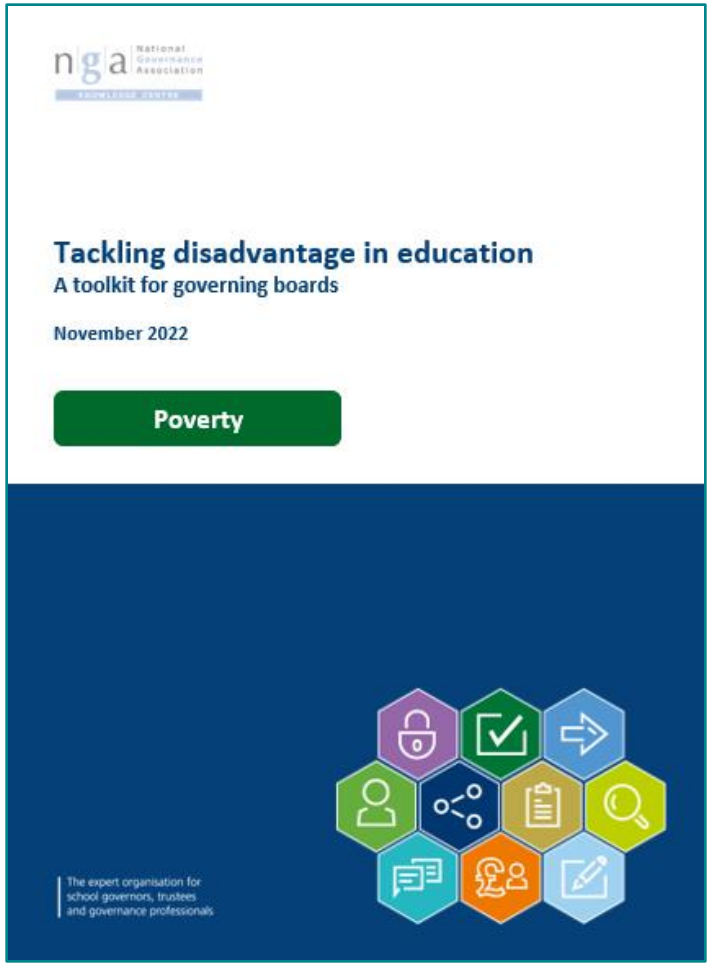
- **School culture, expectations, coherence and principles**
  - Remove the deficit discourse around disadvantage and its impact on learning and participation in school life. Disadvantaged pupils and their families are not a problem to be solved. They are our school community and held in high regard.
- **Assessment of need, evidence-informed responses**
  - Assessment, not assumptions, are at the heart of an effective approach. Start with the needs of the individual pupils and build a strategy around emerging themes and common issues.
- **Priorities and partnerships**
  - Poverty proofing is a key ingredient of inclusive schools where disadvantaged pupils are thriving. This should cover both the formal and informal curriculum, as well as uniform, equipment and other resources.
- **Evaluation and implementation**
  - Governors and trustees should play a key role in rigorous, dispassionate impact evaluation. Decouple impact evaluation from accountability.



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Poverty

- It is important to understand how poverty impacts your school or trust community and who is at increased risk of experiencing poverty outside of pupil premium eligibility. End Child Poverty data shows child poverty levels and how they vary across nations, regions, local authorities and parliamentary constituencies.
- Poverty proofing your school is a great way of ensuring that the children living in 'invisible poverty' are not impacted by the cost of the school day:
  - **Curriculum:** Does your broad and balanced curriculum ensure that cost does not deter pupils living in poverty from taking part? E.g food technology, PE, music
  - **Enrichment:** Can children living in poverty access extra-curricula activities such as trips and clubs?
  - **School food:** Are children on FSM able to access a full healthy meal with their allowance?



With thanks to Child Poverty Action Group

NGA would like to thank Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) for providing their expertise and support in the production of this toolkit.

CPAG work on behalf of the more than one in four children in the UK growing up in poverty. They work to understand what causes poverty, the impact it has on children's lives, and how it can be prevented and solved – for good.

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Ethnicity

- It is important for governing boards and school leaders to consider how representative their workforce is of the school population and to be conscious of this in their recruitment and selection process.
- Racial literacy means **having the knowledge, skills, awareness and dispositions to talk about race and racism**. Staff growth and development is essential to improve practice.
- Ensuring that you have clear and unambiguous school policies in relation to equality and diversity are an important part of creating an inclusive environment for all pupils.
- A diverse curriculum should be inclusive of the experiences and histories of minority ethnic groups and allow young people to "see and be seen" in the curriculum (Diverse Educators).



With thanks to Class 13

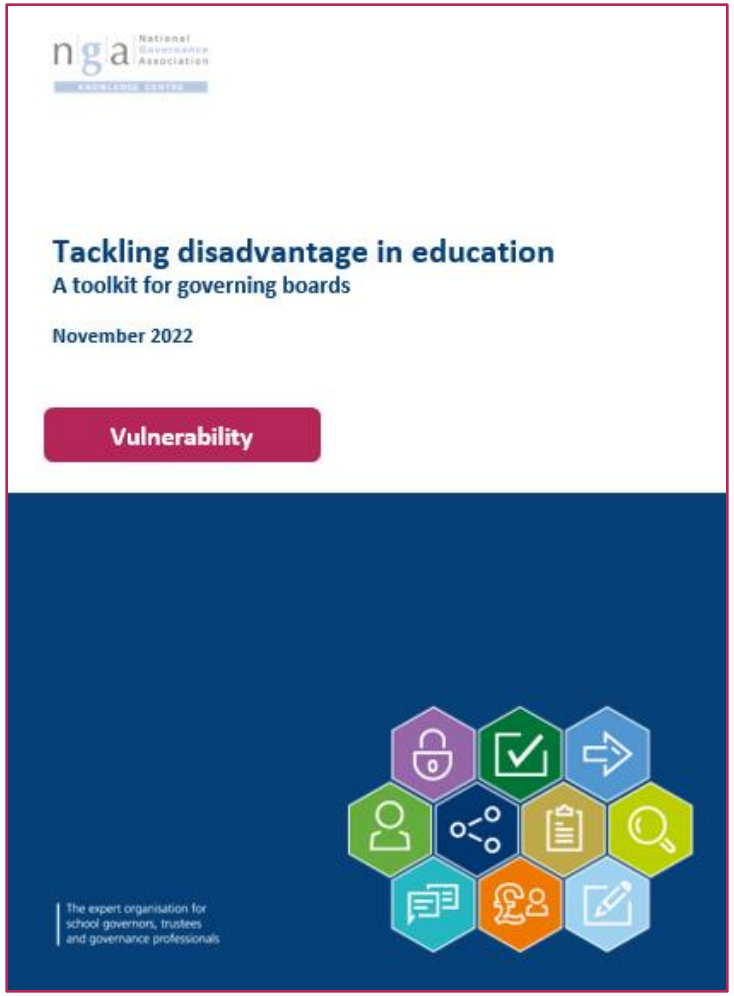
NGA would like to thank Class 13 for their support and expertise in the production of this toolkit. Class 13 are an award-winning anti-oppressive charity on a mission to transform the education system. They seek to empower educators to become an active threat to inequality.

They support educators to recognise, reflect and respond to their racial and wider biases so that all children can access an education that promotes free expression, as guaranteed to them by Article 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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Vulnerability

- The effective use and monitoring of safeguarding and behaviour data can help to identify vulnerable pupils.
- Understanding the link between safeguarding issues, vulnerabilities, indicators and appropriate interventions is foundational to addressing the educational disadvantage of vulnerable pupils.
- Sharing best practice and collaborative work with other schools, local statutory and non-statutory services is essential when addressing contextual safeguarding issues that may be prevalent in your local area or region.
- Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education lessons play an important role in educating all pupils on staying safe and accessing support



With thanks to The Children's Society

NGA would like to thank The Children's Society for providing their expertise and support in the production of this toolkit.

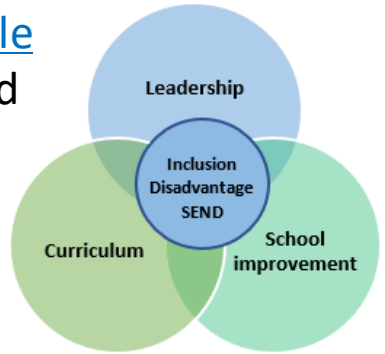
The Children's Society are a national charity working to transform the hopes and happiness of young people facing abuse, exploitation and neglect. They campaign tirelessly for the big social changes that will improve the lives of those who need hope most.

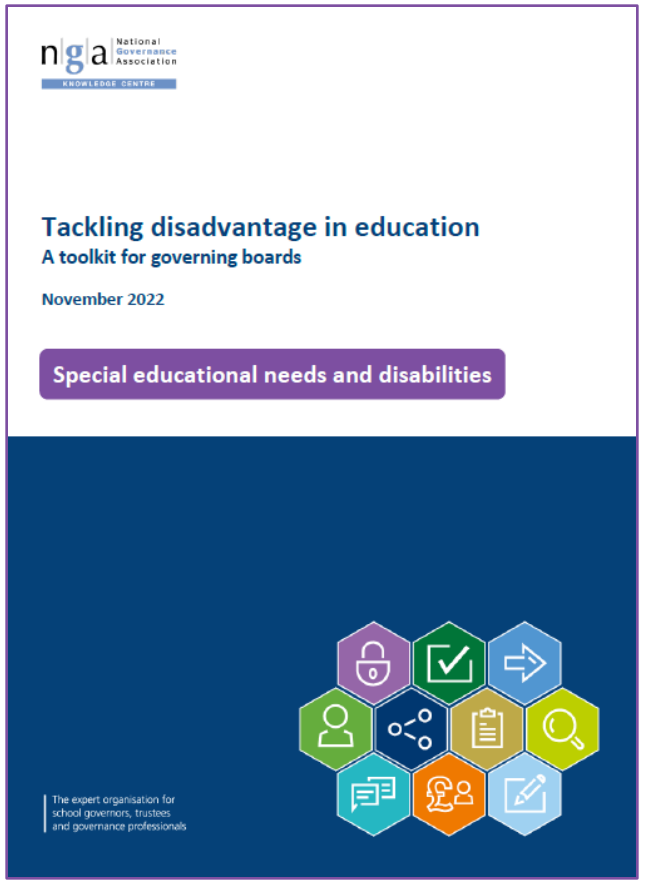
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Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- ‘Think SEND!’ is a concept that emphasises the responsibility that every governor/trustee and every staff member has to look through the lens of SEND in their respective roles.
- Consistent, collective understanding of inclusion and inclusivity and placing “inclusion at the heart of decision making and thinking” (Rowland, 2021) is foundational to addressing educational disadvantage faced by pupils with SEND.
- Engaging with parents/carers is one of the most important elements of supporting children with SEND. It is important to remember that parents and carers will be the experts when it comes to their child.
- The approach that is needed to embed inclusive practice across all schools regardless of type, phase and size has been outlined by Whole School SEND and includes the views of children and their families and professionals both school and sector wide.

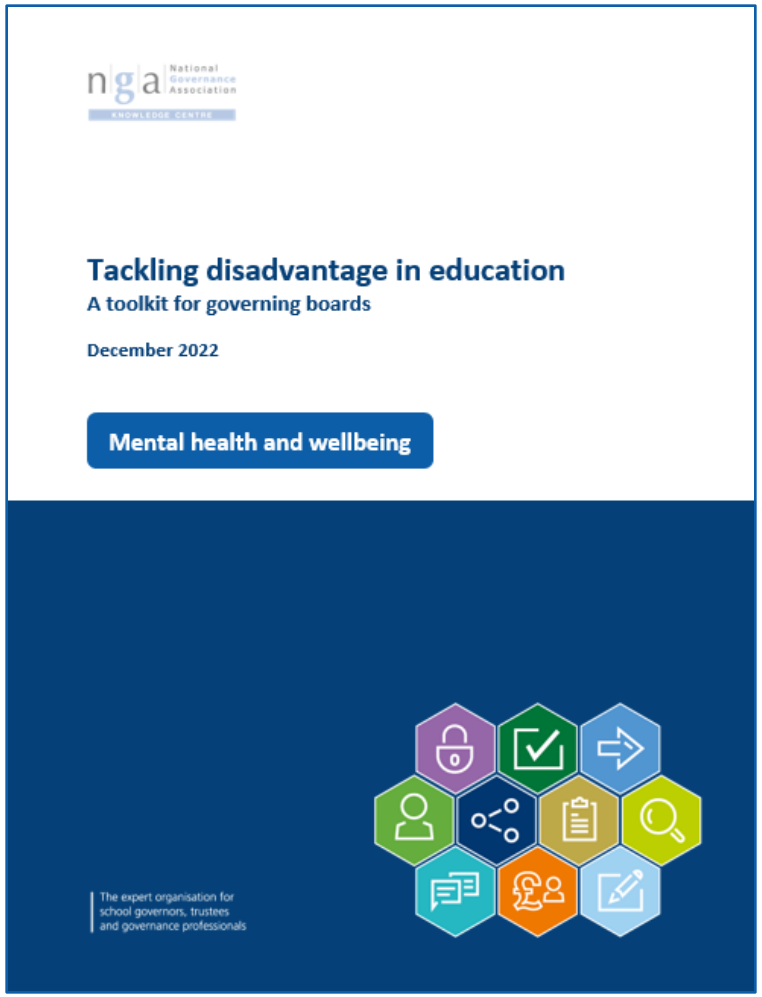




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Pupil mental health and wellbeing

- Governing boards and school leaders need to understand the mental health and wellbeing needs of their school or trust community and who is at increased risk of experiencing poor mental health.
- School policies adequately explore the link with pupils being educationally disadvantaged through mental health and wellbeing issues.
- School leaders and governing boards should consider how they ensure staff have the knowledge, skills, and training to effectively support pupils and how they support staff wellbeing.
- The appropriate systems should be in place to identify and support those pupils at risk of or struggling with poor mental health.
- Engaging with families is fundamental to identifying pupils who are at an educational disadvantage due to challenges with their mental health and wellbeing.



Place2Be

NGA would like to thank Place2Be for providing their expertise and support in the production of this toolkit.

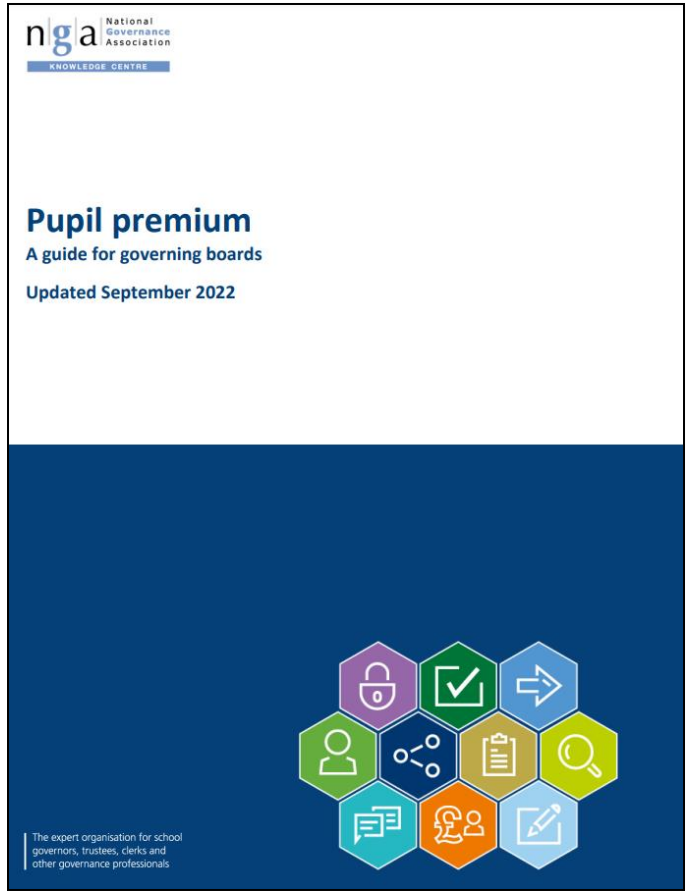
Place2Be is a children's mental health charity providing school-based support and in-depth training programmes to improve the emotional wellbeing of pupils, families, teachers and school staff.

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The governing board's role – pupil premium

The governing board is responsible for ensuring that the spending is targeted at the right pupils and has an impact on their attainment and progress:

- exploring the barriers to learning faced by pupils eligible for pupil premium
- using data, information and research to both support and challenge the school's approach
- contributing towards and approving the school's strategy for spending the pupil premium
- monitoring the implementation and impact of the pupil premium strategy



www.nga.org.uk/pupil-premium-guide

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Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) – Brand new module

The EDI programme's fourth and final module will aim to assess whether the learning contained in the series has had the intended impact on you and your board.

New: Equality, diversity and inclusion: Measuring impact

This module will enable you to:

- understand how EDI work can go beyond compliance
- explore ways your school or trust can take action
- revisit the questions from the first module and monitor progress you have made
- measure the impact of the EDI programme on your governance

More modules in the EDI programme…

Equality, diversity and inclusion: first steps

Equality, diversity and inclusion: Beyond compliance

Equality, diversity and inclusion: taking action

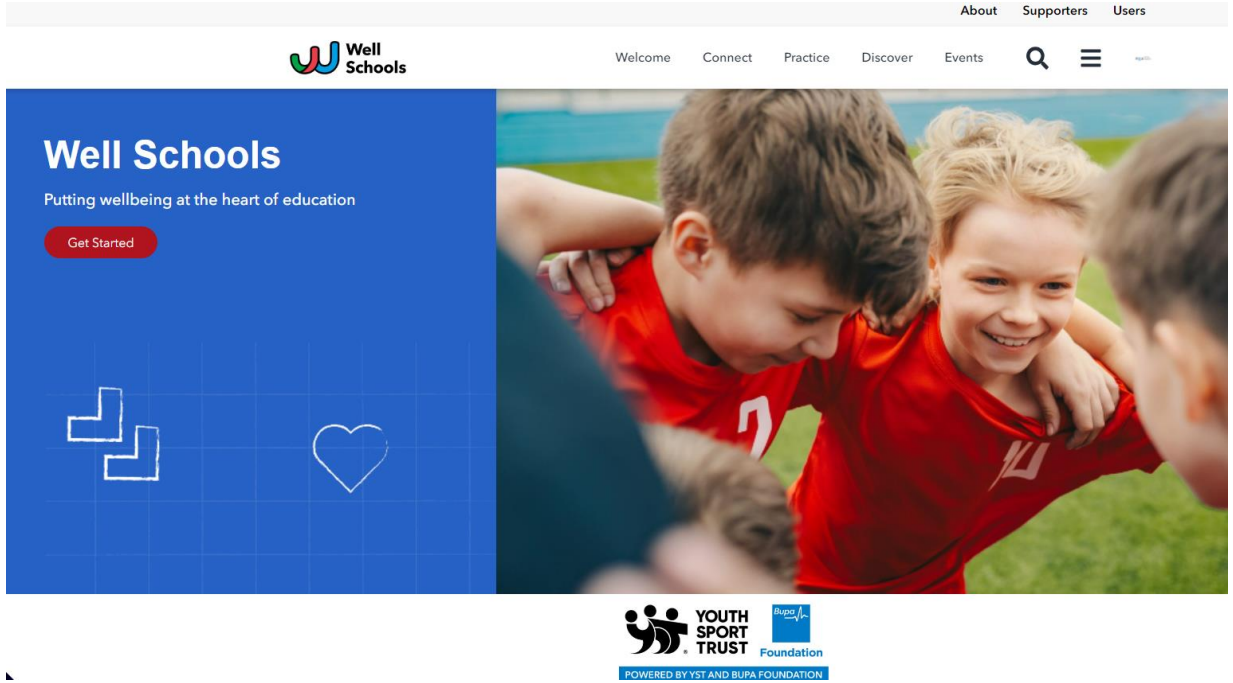
This module is available to all Learning Link subscribers now and freely available to those who sign up for a free trial of Learning Link.

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Well Schools Movement

NGA is proud to sit on the Well Schools Advisory Board
Promoting a culture of well-being: the board's role

Free online community where schools can sign up and access resources shared by others on wellbeing. Powered by Youth Sport Trust. www.well-school.org





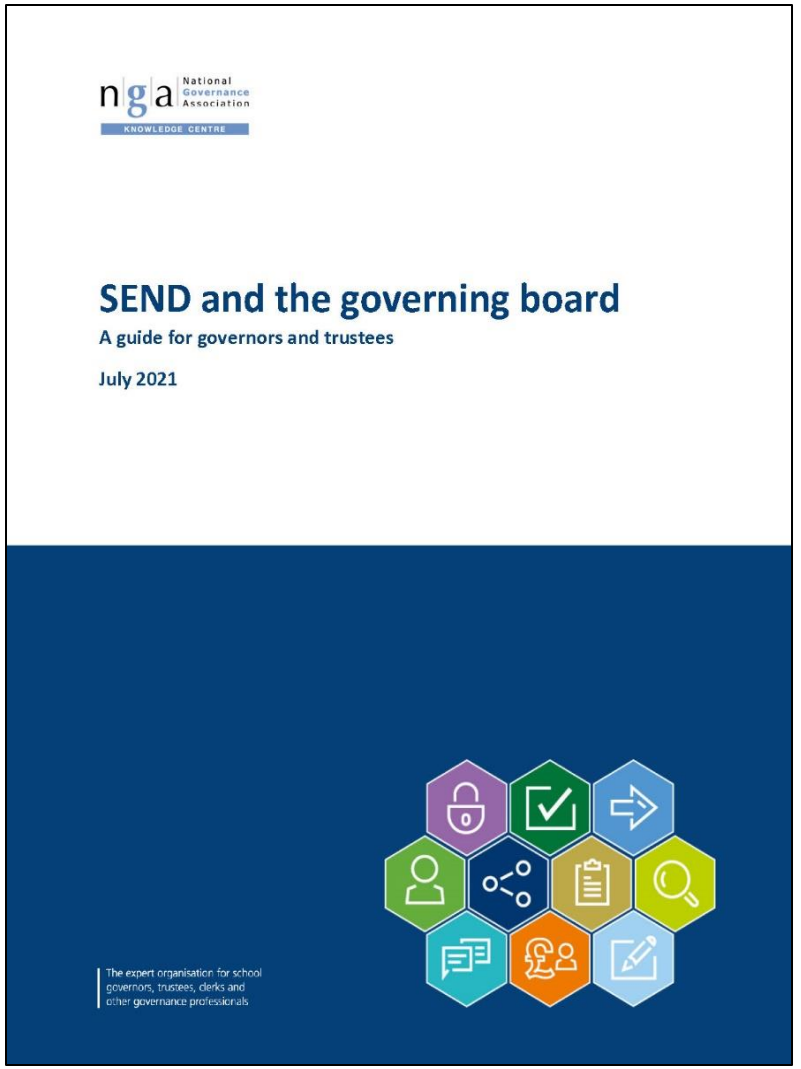
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NGA guidance: SEND & the governing board

- Think SEND!
- Look closely at the SEND funding you receive and the impact it has
- Make SEND everyone's responsibility
- Ensure every leader is a leader of SEND
- Co-production with children and families
- Maximise the impact of the SENCO

The guidance also:

- Sets out the legal duties of governing boards and explains how these responsibilities are met
- Details the governing board's influence on an inclusive culture in their schools and trusts
- Includes a **role description** for the SEND link governor/trustee and **checklist** on governing board SEND responsibilities



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Your Views Matter

Annual Governance Survey 2023

Have Your Say & Share your:

- ☑ **Experience** of volunteering
- ☑ **Views** on education policy
- ☑ **Insight** into board practice



National Governance Association

Visible Governance in schools

Thank you

For more information or to share your views and experiences contact **Fiona.Fearon@nga.org.uk**



The expert organisation for school governors, trustees and governance professionals

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