What the current data says about ethnic diversity in governors

Schools (primary, secondary, academies/trusts) – England-focused evidence

- **NGA's 2024 annual governance survey** (respondents who disclosed ethnicity) reported **95% White**, **1% Black**, **2% Asian**, **2% mixed/multiple** (with small proportions in other categories).

- NGA also summarises this as **only 5%** of governing board members identifying as being from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

- Longer-running research often cited in the sector (e.g., NFER work referenced by multiple governance reports) has reported figures around **3.5%** for Black, Asian and ethnically school governors in England (noting that different surveys use different methods/response bases).

The 7 principles for an Ethnically Diverse Governors Mentoring Network

Designed to support people to **get in, stay in, and lead** (new to governance, recently appointed, and long-term governors).

1) Open Doors, Not Hidden Rules (Access & transparency)

We will: demystify what governance is, who can do it, and how appointments work.

- "What governors actually do" sessions for schools/colleges/universities
- Plain-English pathways: maintained schools, academies/trusts, FE corporations, HE councils

2) Representation With Purpose (Community-rooted governance)

We will: centre pupil/student/community experience and remove "token" dynamics.

- Match mentors with context (phase, local authority, faith/community context, SEND, safeguarding experience)
- Encourage lived-experience expertise alongside professional skills

3) Belonging Is a Governance Issue (Retention & culture)

We will: tackle the reasons ethnically diverse governors leave exclusion, microaggressions, "silent sidelining".

- Buddying for the first 6 months (meeting prep + debrief)
- "You don't have to earn your seat" norms: speaking order, committee inclusion, chairing opportunities

4) Confidence Through Craft (Capability-building)

We will: build competence in the areas people often don't feel confident in.

Core modules (with examples/templates):

- Reading data (attainment, exclusions, progress measures, recruitment/HR dashboards)
- Finance basics, risk, and audit questions
- Safeguarding governance
- Ofsted/quality frameworks (education settings-specific)

5) Sponsorship, Not Just Mentoring (Progression into leadership)

We will: actively support members to step into influence.

- "Sponsor asks": mentors introduce mentees to chairs/clerks, recommend committee roles, support vice-chair/chair pathways
- Leadership pathways: committee chairing, link governor roles, trustee roles, FE/HE board committee roles

6) Accountability That's Kind and Clear (Standards & challenge)

We will: set expectations for respectful conduct and measurable development.

- Network code: confidentiality, anti-racism, respectful challenge, time commitment
- "Board impact" goal setting: one governance action each term (e.g., policy scrutiny, data challenge, inclusion audit question set)

7) Make It Sustainable (Care, time, and practical support)

We will: recognise workload, caring responsibilities, and burnout risk.

- Flexible participation (online options, recorded learning, optional WhatsApp/Teams support)
- Termly clinics: "Bring a paper you're worried about" / "How do I challenge respectfully?"

"Why be a governor?" – messaging you can use

- Improve outcomes for children/learners by shaping strategy and holding leaders to account.

- Bring community voice into decisions about safety, behaviour, curriculum, and inclusion.

- Develop leadership skills: influencing, strategic thinking, finance, risk, HR, and scrutiny.

- Create visible pathways: pupils/students seeing leaders who reflect them matters.

(For schools/trusts, DfE recruitment guidance explicitly encourages widening diversity including ethnicity.)

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/effective-governance-resources/recruiting-governors-and-academy-trustees-resources

"How to apply"

Schools / academies

- Ask your local school or trust clerk about vacancies or respond to adverts.

- Be clear on what you can offer (community insight, finance, HR, SEND, safeguarding, lived experience).

- Use recognised recruitment routes and good-practice guidance for advertising and appointing.

  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/effective-governance-resources/recruiting-governors-and-academy-trustees-resources

FE colleges

- Use the DfE FE governance space and college corporation vacancy routes (and cite the DfE dataset in your pack to show the current gap).

  https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-catalogue/data-set/970dfc60-7e51-4696-8893-8b425f849610

Universities

- Watch for governing council/board vacancies advertised on institution websites and sector channels; prepare a governance CV highlighting strategic oversight experience and values-led leadership.

  https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/diversity-he-boards-boosted-increase-women-ethnic-minorities-and-disabled-governors

The support EDUK can offer

For aspiring governors (Get in):

- Application clinics (personal statement + "governance CV")

- "Governance 101" onboarding and role-matching

- Confidence coaching for interviews and first meetings

For new governors (Stay in):

- Mentor + buddy pairing for the first 2 terms

- Meeting prep/debrief support

- Monthly drop-in: policies, data, finance, safeguarding

For experienced governors (Lead):

- Leadership pathway: committee chairing, vice-chair/chair readiness

- Specialist masterclasses (finance/risk, exclusions, SEND, staff EDI, complaints)

- Sponsor programme: stepping into MAT trustee roles / FE corporation committees / HE board committees