



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL AND COLLEGE CLERKS

Improving Governance Practices in a Dynamic Education Landscape

Conference Report/Summary



Held on
1st September 2023

www.nascc.co.uk

info@nascc.co.uk



Improving Governance Practices in a Dynamic Education Landscape

NASCC Conference Report/Summary – September 2023

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Conference Summary

On Friday 1st September 2023, the National Association of School and College Clerks (NASCC) hosted its second online conference and this event marked the start of the 2023/2024 academic year. Many of the 400+ clerks and governance professionals that registered were unable to attend due to clashes with; INSET days, new term commitments and some still being on annual leave. However, we had more than 100 dedicated clerks and governance professionals, from across the UK, join the Zoom platform for this event. With insightful sessions, thought-provoking discussions, and an atmosphere of collaboration, the conference was, based on attendee feedback, an unequivocal success.

Improving governance

The positivity during the conference was unmistakable and clerks and governance professionals, alongside the speakers from various educational settings, shared their experiences, thoughts and comments to enhance governance practices in an ever-evolving educational landscape. The conference, with the central theme of *"Improving Governance Practices in a Dynamic Education Landscape,"* provided a platform for sharing innovative ideas and best practices. Our agenda included engaging presentations that delved into various aspects of governance within the sector and the event kicked-off with a warm welcome from NASCC Founder, Sharon Warmington, who emphasised the importance of adaptability and excellence in governance, amid the changing landscape.

Guest speakers

David Ardill and Charlie Weston from Governors for Schools took the stage in a dynamic double act, exploring strategies for improving governor and trustee recruitment within educational institutions. Their insights into effective recruitment and onboarding processes were instrumental in addressing the unique challenges faced by clerks in supporting the recruitment of dedicated governors. Emma Woodhouse of Attingham Education then delivered a compelling presentation, shedding light on the intricate differences between directly employed clerks and those schools using a clerking service. Her discussion on the pros and cons of using a clerking service, from her own clients feedback, provided attendees with an insight into expectations and service delivery.

Following Emma's presentation, Neil Collins from GovernorHub introduced innovative technological solutions to enhance governance practices in education. His session highlighted the transformative potential of technology, emphasising its role in streamlining communication, data analysis, and decision-making processes within educational governance.

Sharon returned to the 'stage', closing the conference by demonstrating how technology, particularly ChatGPT, could be employed daily to support governance professionals in education. The practical applications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) showcased how clerks can harness the power of AI to improve efficiency and effectiveness in governance-related tasks.

The conference was a testament to the dedication and passion of governance professionals working tirelessly to uphold the standards of excellence in education. It facilitated meaningful discussions and invaluable networking opportunities that will undoubtedly catalyse positive change within the governance space.

This conference report/summary aims to encapsulate the insights and enthusiasm shared by our attendees, providing direct feedback from our attendees. It also outlines the support requested by our clerking community, which NASCC is committed to addressing in the coming year. We encourage all attendees to remain actively engaged with NASCC, as our organisation is dedicated to serving the evolving needs of governance professionals.

In light of the conference's theme and the invaluable feedback received, NASCC is dedicated to taking the following key actions:

- **Educational Governance Resources:** NASCC will continue to expand its repository of educational governance resources, providing members with access to tools, templates, and best practices tailored to the unique demands of your role and organisations.
- **Professional Networks:** We will foster stronger professional networks by organising specialised masterclasses, working groups and forums focused on addressing the governance challenges and opportunities specific to the education sector.
- **Technology Integration:** Building on Neil Collins' insights, NASCC will (where possible/practicable) collaborate with technology providers to develop solutions customised for educational governance professionals, aiding them in navigating the dynamic landscape.
- **NASCC's National Certificate in Clerking Practice:** NASCC will design, develop and deliver an accredited programme of study focused on practical clerking practice and not just governance theory.

As we move forward, let us collectively harness the energy and inspiration generated during this event to drive positive change and excellence in educational governance. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all who contributed to the success of this conference, particularly David, Charlie, Emma and Neil for their contributions. Together, NASCC has no doubt that we will continue to improve governance practices within the education space, ensuring that every child/student has access to the highest quality of education possible.

“Really valued the discussion on clerking services for comparison, as I am employed by one. Also enjoyed the general chat in breakout groups as clerking is very isolating.



FOSTERING COLLABORATION AND IDENTIFYING NEEDS



Q. What specific support do you need for this new academic year?

One of the highlights of the NASCC Clerking Conference 2023 was the interactive breakout rooms, a dynamic feature that allowed attendees to connect, share experiences, and discuss their specific needs for the upcoming academic year. Attendees were randomly grouped into small, diverse cohorts, creating opportunities for networking and collaborative problem-solving.

During these breakout sessions, participants were posed with a pivotal question: **'What specific support do you need for this new academic year?'** This question sparked engaging and insightful discussions, generating a wealth of valuable feedback and recommendations from our diverse community of governance professionals.

The feedback gathered in these breakout rooms has been collected and is included in this report. This inclusion underscores the collective spirit of the event, revealing that the challenges and aspirations of governance professionals are not isolated but shared across the community.

Our commitment

It highlights the commitment of NASCC to amplify the voices and needs of our members, ensuring that the support and resources we provide are directly aligned with the real-world challenges faced by governance professionals in the education landscape.

The breakout rooms served as a safe space for the collaborative spirit that defines NASCC, and the insights garnered will guide our efforts in tailoring our offerings to meet the evolving needs of our members and subscribers. We are dedicated to translating these discussions into actionable initiatives, ensuring that governance professionals receive the support, guidance, and resources necessary to excel in their vital roles.



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We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all participants for their active engagement and valuable feedback during the NASCC Clerks Conference 2023. Your thoughtful responses to the specific questions posed have been instrumental in shaping this report. Your contributions have been invaluable, and they reaffirm our shared dedication to enhancing governance practices in education.



THANKS FOR YOUR FEEDBACK



What specific support do you feel/think you need over the new term and/or beyond?



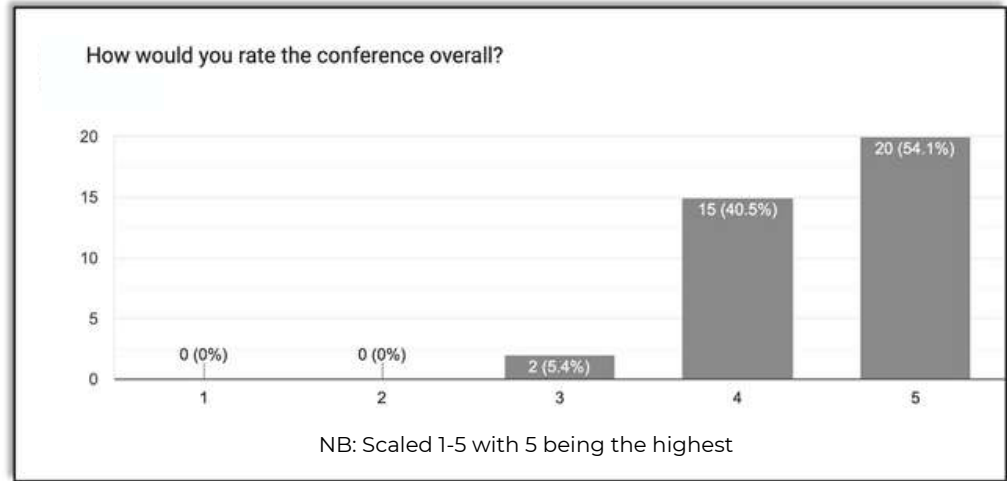
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- Receiving regular updates and what should be added e.g. impact being reflected in minutes is always helpful.
- Some insight into the very different landscape it feels that we are facing right now - issues around extremely tight school budgets, premises issues such as RAAC, a dramatic increase in mental health needs and the impact on behaviour and attendance - so that we can ensure that our Governing Bodies are taking these into proper consideration. I have really noticed the increasing burden on the senior staff in the schools I support and want to play my part in ensuring the GBs are doing what they can to support the SLTs and really focussing on the right areas at the right times.
- What should be worded in minutes to show impact. Anything that can support a Clerk in preparing their Governing Board for Ofsted.
- Networking. Support from chair to manage meeting structure.
- LA secondary school potentially moving to a MAT shortly.
- Networking. Design of board/committee structures.
- Networking with other clerks, termly newsletters and alerts to any legislation changes.
- Guidance on the accreditation will be welcomed.
- Help with suspensions and exclusions.
- Help with hybrid meetings and how to manage.
- Opportunities for growth around governance risk and compliance.
- Better guidance from the DfE - maybe in the form of mandatory training for governors. Generally seeing schools putting more priority for governance generally.
- Time to dedicate to personal development.
- Recruitment of Governors as clerks we coordinate but it's the boards responsibility to recruit and retain. Often the Clerk retains and supports Governors which is not always observed.
- Group sessions to support clerks. When we are involved in appeals/complaints etc its draining and often we can't talk to anyone about the content discussed.
- Mentoring, meetings with the chair!
- Peer support from colleagues is most valued and informal support like chats over coffee rather than formal training.
- Transition from maintained to academy LGB; policy reviews.
- How to manage difficult/challenging conversations - parents/EHTs/Trustees
- Recruitment (governors and clerks), networking to pick up the random queries you get that you can't predict, changing mindset moving into MATs/bigger MATs.
- Most of the above! As a new clerk with little training and nothing left from the last clerk/no handover, I would really appreciate support in understanding my role. I would also really like a timeline of what I have to do and when. Some sort of mentoring would be great!
- Free networking events such as this are invaluable to share best practice, support each other and come up with ideas and solutions for common problems we all face.
- I have clerked for maintained schools only. Two will be transitioning to MAT's, would like to bridge the gap in knowledge between MAT and maintained.
- Self - Evaluation for FGB, never run one before but feel several of my schools need it!
- Ensuring external deadlines are met throughout the year
- Having difficult conversations.
- Complaints.
- Looking at the different role of a clerk in a maintained school governing body and a local governing body (and understanding the transition).
- One of our group will be finding out more about academy clerking through the NGA and GovernorHub elearning.
- I would love support in managing policies.
- We will continue to use the Clerks Facebook group for ongoing support.
- It would be good to have more networking opportunities - local authorities' clerks meetings are being cancelled because of low attendance :-)
- Support on dealing with a difficult to chair who wants everything done their way would be really helpful as I've had governors leaving and its difficult to recruit.
- We discussed CPD and the need for schools to support the clerking role and invest in wider training and support. We mentioned the apprenticeship option, TGI and how training is delivered in one large Trust to all clerks. An area of interest is project management to help with different hats, schools, roles etc. Support is needed to manage the increasing number of PExs and finding panel members. Governor Recruitment is a general issue. Governors for Schools is an excellent service but the cost of recruiting a Trustee for a small SAT is prohibitive.
- As self-employed access to support for general queries that at present I can only access via NASCC. NGA etc are useful but only can get information for specific schools.
- Ad hoc meetings eg IEBs, IRPs.
- I work for a MAT school and would appreciate support from the Trust by providing the relevant paperwork to me, within reasonable time for me to amend for my school and get sent out to my LGB. Networking with the other clerks within the Trust. I find NASCC very helpful - thank you.
- Complaints Panel management and managing difficult conversations.
- Would love to know any ways to automate sorting/reviewing/renewing policies! 'Every' do a package but do not want to listen to how clerks need support rather than SBMs.

What specific things are you looking forward to and/or what specific things are you not looking forward to?

- Moving a school from a maintained to an Academy. Transfer happening today and first meeting is mid September.
- Recruitment for a Charity Trustee who would then also be a Trust Appointed Governor (in Norfolk).
- Looking forward to Starting Level 4 Academy Governance qualification and working with new Chair of Governors.
- Not looking forward to chasing governors for information again.
- We are desperately short of governors, our last LGB meeting was inquorate! I am not looking forward to similar things happening this year, if people are ill or away. Trying to get governors (bar two!) to take on roles and make a difference is hard work.
- I am actively trying to find new governors to join our LGB. I am hopeful that we can find new people to join us and take on roles. I am looking forward to working with our Head and Chair who work hard to try and make our school so much better.
- I'm looking forward to getting more organised. I'm hoping to learn more. I hope I can support governors well.
- You're right with the prompt, I am not looking forward to chasing declarations, availability, etc. It's so time consuming!
- Looking forward to a focus on Environmental Sustainability with a Development Plan focus and new Link Governor role filled. Dreading the ongoing financial and wellbeing pressures on schools and its detrimental effect.
- Dreading the ongoing hunt for new governors. Looking forward to supporting the school as it moves to an academy. It would be great to have support for how to make the process easier
- Time management - dealing with priorities and working out the best systems to support LGBs to be more autonomous. Increased PEx panels and finding governors and clerks for these takes a huge chunk of time in the week due to the deadlines.





What specifically did you enjoy/like/find useful?

- Sharon's enthusiasm.
- Current/future IT issues.
- ChatGPT sounds really interesting - will definitely be looking at it.
- Being with likeminded people.
- Chat GPT & Technology.
- Governors for Schools presentation and AI demo.
- Really useful discussions around technology and AI.
- ChatGPT and the live demo.
- The sharing of knowledge and the information on ChatGPT.
- David from Governors For Schools talk, I will follow up with them to try and recruit new governors for my school.
- ChatGPT.
- Everything.
- ChatGPT and opportunity to talk with other Clerks.
- All the presentations were very helpful thank you.
- Interesting to see ChatGPT demo and good to get back into the new academic year.
- Most useful regarding AI/ChatGPT.
- New information about AI tools that I hadn't explored before.
- Information on AI - was not expecting that!
- Discussion on clerking services - for comparison as I am employed by one. General chat in breakout groups as clerking is very isolating. AI updates and demos.
- AI section very useful.
- Great opportunity to network.
- AI information and demo.
- CharGPT and policy system called 'Robin' coming out this autumn.
- AI.
- Networking and reviewing the use of AI. I had been flirting with the idea but you have given me more confidence to utilise the functions.
- Presentations on governor recruitment and also on AI.
- Discussions in breakout rooms/AI information.
- A great new way to network.
- AI information, an area that is totally new but could be revolutionary.
- Particularly interested in the possibility of a system for policy assistance and the idea that you can ask a question such as 'what does this policy say about ...?'
- Chat GPT session.
- AI information and demo was excellent and eye opening. Enjoyed Emma's interesting feedback from her clients on her clerking service.
- AI section a real eye-opener - will definitely look into using this. Also made a really good contact via the breakout room and have connected via LinkedIn.
- Only able to attend the tech talks, but very interesting.
- Good thought provoking and forward thinking ideas and suggestions - as always! Great that it is free, a really good shop window for you.
- The AI demonstration - putting the abstract into reality.
- All was really good but the session on AI was so well timed!
- Technology session.

“AI section a real eye-opener - will definitely look into using this. Also made a really good contact via the breakout room and have connected via LinkedIn.”

What specifically did you feel could have been better?

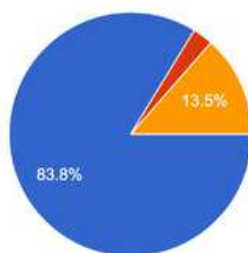
- In term time.
- Sales pitches from service providers.
- Nothing.
- Nothing - it was awesome!
- Clerking Services section.
- Information on any legislation changes for the coming year
- Getting everyone in at the start of the session. I was one of the people who couldn't access.
- It would have been good to hear how much Attingham pay their clerks as part of presentation.
- All good.
- Five more minutes for the break!
- None.
- Nothing at this time.
- It was really useful as it was.
- N/A
- Not all of it was relevant to me (have used - not very successfully - Governors for Schools so it didn't tell me anything new) but that's fine, it's good to have a mix and usual in conferences. I also felt the slot on clerking services was more selling to schools so less relevant to me (and while I got the daftness of some of the school feedback, it felt a little like it was being used to show how clerking services are better than independent clerks - maybe I'm taking that too personally!).
- Keeping to timings, unfortunately sessions overran.
- Nothing really.
- More content on what to do in the year ahead.
- Logging on. Stressful when it said there were no more spaces!
- Breakout rooms - couldn't join and had to rejoin the conference and was not very clear when I got there what was being discussed. Not many joined in the discussion.
- N/A.
- Nothing.
- All good.
- It was responsive and flexible - no EBIs from me.
- Noises of people joining and leaving!
- Shorter presentations from speakers to allow for more speakers if possible.
- An informative session leading to the climax at the end.
- Recruiting governors session (David and Charlie) could have been presented in a more lively fashion - it was a lot of corporate speak.
- No specific comment on this. I know Governors for Schools well, so this was the less interesting session, but always good to hear from them as recruitment is a huge issue.
- Tech issues around capacity caused me to join late - however, the issues were quickly resolved.
- Access at the beginning - but this was out of your control :)



- From a clerk's perspective it may have been good to have more example tools and templates that are commonly used or shared. But I understand that may have been difficult without knowing the experience of the audience.
- I'm not sure the session from Governors for Schools added much value. It felt a bit like a sales pitch.
- I liked the way Sharon moved things around to accommodate time (ie didn't have the last breakout group, so nothing to add really,
- Clerking service and Governors for Schools sessions felt a bit too much like they were just selling their services.



Are you already on our mailing list?



- Yes
- No (If No, please visit the www.nascc.co.uk to subscribe)
- Unsure

NB: You join our mailing list via our website

What specific training are you interested in? (if any)

- Complaints/admissions/panels - I understand the policy and procedure, but a sounding board when it happens as reassurance is helpful. Perhaps a clerks checklist such as have you thought about xyz.
- The clerks accreditation but I do have the Hampshire one.
- Academy clerking.
- Anything that can support with developing clerks.
- Minute taking.
- I would really like to be involved in the pilot National Certificate in Clerking.
- Always wanting to learn more to assist with my role.
- Having difficult/challenging conversations - with parents, EHTs, Trustees
- Nothing really. Any career progression training.
- Overall clerk training.
- The best ways to keep up to date!!
- Trust board clerking.
- Nothing specific but need to be constantly updated, things change so fast.
- Nothing specific currently.
- All Clerking stuff as this is my first day as a clerk!
- Exclusions/appeals/staff disciplinary and staff dismissals meetings.
- What NASCC offer is already great.

- Juggling different roles and priorities - time and project management.
- Governance risk and compliance.
- One thing that our group discussion triggered that I would like to explore further in relation to supporting church school clerks/GPs, is the impact on GPs/clerks in the governance transition from maintained to academisation. I would really appreciate a chat about your thoughts on this! I am thinking from the start ie. from the concept of the move for a governing board, to the practicalities, guidance, managing expectations - all from a clerk's perspective including the personal impact on them.
- A clerks qualification to formalise my knowledge without taking huge amounts of time (i.e. recognising what I already know and do).
- Diversifying the Board membership.



Any other comments you'd like to make? Add your email address if you'd like to be added to our mailing list.

- Thanks.
- It was great - thanks.
- More often please!
- Very enlightening thank you all for an excellent productive morning.
- I joined the first conference that you did and this, like that one has been so useful, so thank you. I hope that there will be another conference next year.
- Excellent session.
- Thank you for a really useful few hours.
- I believe I am on the mailing list.
- I really enjoyed today's session. I was glued throughout.
- Great speakers.
- It was fantastic thank you 😊
- Thank you to everyone.
- Great set of info. Love being a member of NASCC.
- Great start to my new job!
- Looking forward to the next one.
- Love that the conference was by Zoom so I could dip in and out without appearing rude. Absolutely brilliant session on ChatGPT. Just to see it in action was WOW. Thanks again!
- I really enjoyed this conference as it was relevant to all levels of governance. It was good to chat to other participants too in the break out room, but we only had four and one person didn't engage, but this was a good length of time to get to know each other a bit and hopefully provide some useful feedback.
- It is good to have a forum for sharing clerking information and experience.
- NASCC is great to have as a source of support.
- Perhaps a crib sheet of things not to forget in week one of term!
- The conference was well organised. Thanks for putting it on.



Closing Summary/Actions

The NASCC Clerks Conference held on 1st September 2023, under the theme of "Improving Governance Practices in a Dynamic Education Landscape," was a resounding success, leaving attendees inspired and equipped with valuable insights. As a follow-up to this event, we are delighted to share a summary of the key takeaways and recommendations for our next steps based on the invaluable feedback received from attendees.

Regular Updates: Many attendees expressed a desire for regular updates on governance trends and best practices. NASCC will heed this call by improving its platform for ongoing communication and knowledge sharing, ensuring that governance professionals remain informed and well-prepared.

Learning How to Show Impact in Meeting Minutes: Effective governance requires documenting the impact of decisions. In response, NASCC will develop resources and training modules/videos on how to articulate and showcase the impact of governance actions in meeting minutes and effective minute taking.

Being Prepared for Ofsted: With Ofsted inspections a central concern for educational governance, NASCC will collaborate with experts to provide guidance and resources on how to prepare for and navigate Ofsted inspections effectively.

Networking: The importance of networking in the governance community was evident during the conference. NASCC will facilitate more networking opportunities, including online forums and where possible in-person events, to encourage the exchange of ideas and experiences among governance professionals.

Managing Meeting Structures: Attendees expressed interest in improving meeting structures for better efficiency. NASCC will offer workshops and guidance on effective meeting management techniques, ensuring that governance meetings are productive and focused.

Joining a MAT: The topic of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) generated significant interest. NASCC will provide resources and support for those considering joining or establishing a MAT, addressing the unique governance challenges in this context.

Training and Accreditation: Attendees highlighted the importance of training and accreditation. NASCC will work on expanding training programs and exploring accreditation opportunities to enhance professional development.

Exclusions and Suspensions: Addressing exclusions and suspensions is a critical governance responsibility. NASCC will develop promote resources and guidance on navigating these complex issues while upholding stakeholder rights and ensuring due process.

Personal Development: Personal development was a recurring theme. NASCC will introduce personal development initiatives tailored to governance professionals, helping them grow in their roles.

Support Groups and Coffee Meetings: Building support networks is essential. NASCC will create online support groups and coffee meetings, providing a space for governance professionals to share challenges, solutions, and experiences.

Policies and Policy Schedules: Effective governance relies on well-structured policies. NASCC will provide guidance on developing a policy review schedule, review and its implementation, emphasising the importance of keeping policy schedules up-to-date.

there's clearly a lot to do and whilst we may not achieve everything, we will definitely make a start! In conclusion, the NASCC Clerks Conference 2023 was a milestone event that has empowered governance professionals to face the challenges for the year ahead. NASCC are committed to implementing the recommendations/actions above and continuing to provide valuable resources, training, and support to ensure that governance professionals thrive in their crucial roles.

Together, we will shape the future of educational governance, fostering excellence and positive impact for children/students and organisations alike.

Thank you for being a part of this journey and have a great year.





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