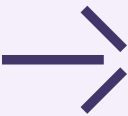


External Board Review Services

fea.co.uk



Overview

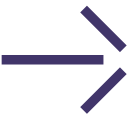


As an independent provider of governance reviews, we believe that a well informed, thoughtfully conducted and personalised board review is essential to the long-term success of any Sixth Form or FE college. The Department for Education (DfE) outlines that external governance reviews are required every three years and are a vital mechanism for strengthening governance through independent, expert evaluation. As the DfE states, an external review “examines the effectiveness of the board” and provides assurance that boards are fulfilling their responsibilities.

Our reviews offer boards an honest, evidence-based reflection on how well they lead, challenge and support their organisations. By bringing an objective perspective, free from internal assumptions, an informed review can highlight both strengths and areas for development, build confidence among stakeholders and create the space for meaningful improvement. We approach each review with this responsibility in mind, working carefully and collaboratively to ensure our insights are robust, balanced and genuinely useful in helping boards enhance their impact, strengthen accountability and continue delivering high-quality outcomes for learners and communities.

While fully aligned with DfE guidance and relevant codes, our process is designed to add value by treating the review as a genuine development exercise rather than a compliance-driven task. Every review begins with our understanding of the college’s unique circumstances and our framework is applied in a way that reflects your specific governance context and maturity. In practice, this means a personalised, tailored approach that supports boards in growing, evolving and excelling.

Our Reviewers



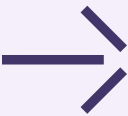
What sets our board reviews apart is the exceptional calibre and unique perspective of our reviewers. We value bringing together individuals who combine first-hand governance expertise with recent, relevant college leadership experience. Our reviewers are not only highly experienced governors, but also former college senior leaders. They bring a deep understanding of the post-16 sector and a clear appreciation of the pivotal role that strong governance plays in the success, sustainability and strategic direction of every college.

This rare dual perspective enables them to evaluate governance with real depth, credibility and practical insight. As a result, our reviews go beyond surface-level assessment. We deliver a genuinely 360-degree evaluation of governance, grounded in professional experience, that speaks directly to both boards and executive teams.

This means our recommendations are practical, relevant and immediately actionable, ensuring meaningful impact for both governors and senior leaders.



Our Board Review Process



Stage	01 →	Understanding Context & Scoping	→	This initial stage focuses on gaining a comprehensive understanding of the college, its governance context and arrangements, strategic priorities and key areas of focus.
Stage	02 →	Stakeholder Engagement & Governance Analysis	→	This stage focuses on collecting a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence to assess the effectiveness of governance arrangements and identify areas of strength and development.
Stage	03 →	Interim Feedback	→	This stage focuses on sharing emerging findings and providing an opportunity for the Board and college to reflect on the review’s initial conclusions.
Stage	04 →	Reporting, Action Planning & Moderation	→	This stage focuses on finalising the review’s conclusions, developing a meaningful improvement plan and ensuring that findings and recommendations are appropriately moderated and tested.
Stage	05 →	Ongoing Development & Governance Support (Optional)	→	Recognising that effective governance is a continuous journey rather than a one-off review, a range of tailored development and support services can be provided to help Boards embed recommendations, build capacity and sustain improvements over time.

Review Framework



Our governance review process is structured around four interdependent elements: **Culture and Behaviours**, **Structures and Assurance**, **Strategy and Impact** and **Board Development**. The review will evaluate both the effectiveness of governance arrangements and the extent to which they support high-quality decision-making, accountability and continuous improvement.

Through engagement with governors, senior leaders and the Governance Professional, observation of Board and committee meetings and a review of key governance documentation, we will identify strengths, areas for development and opportunities to enhance governance practice. The review is designed not only to provide assurance regarding current effectiveness, but also to support the Board in strengthening its impact, improving governance maturity and ensuring it is well positioned to meet future challenges and opportunities.



Culture & Behaviours

Culture is a key determinant of governance effectiveness. We assess how the Board operates through its collective behaviours, including openness, constructive challenge, collaboration and trust. We consider how the Board reviews its behaviours and promotes a positive culture.

Structures & Assurance

This element focuses on the process aspects of governance, assessing whether the Board’s structures, composition, delegation and assurance arrangements are fit for purpose, proportionate and effective. A significant focus in this element is to examine how the Board secures assurance and triangulates the information it receives from senior leaders.

Strategy & Impact

Effective boards clearly define and demonstrate their role in shaping, approving and monitoring strategy, while overseeing organisational performance. This element of the review assesses whether the Board operates with a clear purpose and maintains an appropriate balance between strategic leadership, scrutiny and its core governance and regulatory obligations.

Board Development

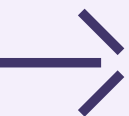
Boards that prioritise continuous development are best placed to maximise their impact on performance, progress and culture. A governance review is not only an assurance mechanism, it is a catalyst for improvement. This area examines how the board plans for its own development, fosters improvement and adapts its governance practices to meet changing priorities, challenges and organisational needs.

Our Specialist Offer to Catholic Sixth Form Colleges



Our governance reviews for Catholic Sixth Form Colleges assess how effectively Boards understand, promote and safeguard the college’s Catholic mission and ethos. We consider how the Catholic values shape strategy, decision-making, culture and the student experience and how the Board works with leaders to embed these across the organsiation. Drawing on our expertise in catholic education and governance, we provide constructive feedback to help Boards strengthen and sustain their mission, ensuring leadership is rooted in purpose, dignity, service and the common good.

Board Development Planning



A key differentiator of our approach is the way we translate review findings into meaningful, sustained improvement. Unlike many external board review processes, we don’t stop at evaluation; we work with Boards to co-create a tailored Board development plan grounded in your context, priorities and ambitions.

This collaborative approach ensures that the Board is not only clear on areas for development but also fully equipped to take ownership of and drive improvements aligned with governance best practice. Our plans are practical, focused and strategically aligned, enabling progress that is both achievable and impactful.

To support ongoing development, we also offer a range of optional follow-up support opportunities. This ensures that momentum is maintained and that governance continues to evolve, strengthening the Board’s effectiveness and its contribution to the success of your College.

Services we offer include:

Action Plan Implementation Support

Coaching for the Governance Professionals

Chair Development and Appraisal Services

Board and Committee Effectiveness Reviews

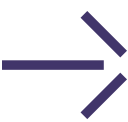
Governance Strategy Day Facilitation

Governor Development and Training

Board Dynamics and Team Development

Mentoring and Leadership Support

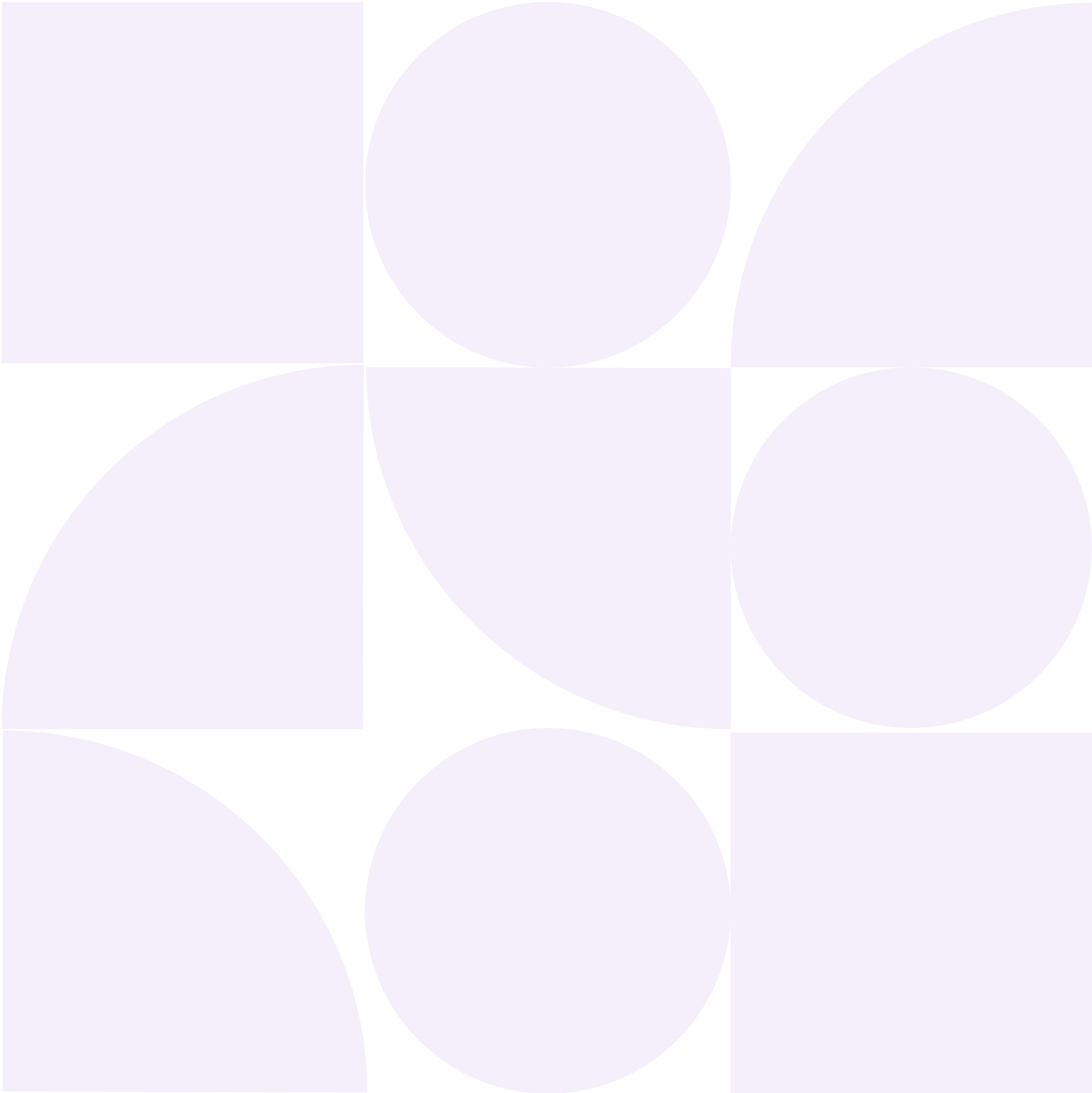
Quality Assurance



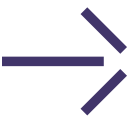
To ensure the highest standards of quality, each board review is subject to an independent moderation process. This provides assurance that findings are robust, evidence-based and balanced and that recommendations are practical, measurable and focused on improvement.

Moderation helps ensure that the review findings are valid, reliable and clearly supported by evidence. An independent moderator acts as a critical friend to the lead reviewer, providing challenge, support and professional scrutiny throughout the review. Any suggested amendments are discussed and agreed with the lead reviewer. In the unlikely event that consensus cannot be reached, an independent resolution process will be used to ensure that final conclusions remain objective, evidence-based and fair.

The moderation process ensures the Board Review is comprehensive, individualised, evidence-based and focused on improvement. It confirms that findings, strengths, areas for development and recommendations are well supported, aligned to the review scope and designed to promote effective governance. Reports are also reviewed for accuracy, clarity and quality, providing boards with confidence that the final report is balanced, insightful and focused on driving meaningful governance improvement.



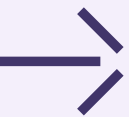
Data Management and Confidentiality



We understand the importance of protecting sensitive governance, organisational and personal information. All information shared as part of an External Board Review is handled securely and in accordance with UK data protection legislation.

For full details of how we manage and protect your information, please refer to our Privacy Policy:
→ fea.co.uk/privacy-policy

Next Steps



To secure your **External Board Review**, please contact:



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To learn more about



→ fea.co.uk

To discover more about



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→ [01454 617707](tel:01454617707)



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