Promoting Excellence in School Governance

Philip Wood, NGA Advice Manager
NGA is a membership organisation

• Represent and advise governors and trustees in all state funded schools in England

• Our aim is to improve the effectiveness of governing boards by providing expert and tailored information and advice, and challenge when appropriate

Standard Governing Body membership is £75

GOLD Governing Body membership is £260

and includes an advice line
What we’re going to cover

- Governance in the spotlight
- The strategic role
- Governing a group of schools
- Holding to account
- Governance making an impact
Governance in the spotlight

• The great & the good are taking an interest – and now the press
• The Sept 2012 Ofsted framework raised the expectations
• More autonomy brings more responsibility & more risks, but organisations with strong governance do not fail
• More decision-making is being devolved
• Different schools structures bring different governance structures, particularly when governing more than one school
• Learning from other sectors, especially on role of Trustees and Directors of limited companies
High quality governance

...in all types of schools is characterised by a relentless focus on the three core strategic functions:

a. Setting vision, ethos and strategic direction;

b. Holding headteachers to account for the educational performance of pupils & performance management of staff;

c. Ensuring finances are managed well leading to probity, solvency and effective use of resources.

From DfE’s Governors’ Handbook

Governing boards to operate as non-executive boards: this requires cultural change
The strategic role

Where do we want the school to be in 3-5 years time?

To achieve that, how do we:

- position the school to succeed,
- take advantage of opportunity,
- minimise risks and
- use resources?

How do we get there?

• having considered the Trust’s vision, the GB must set goals and agree the school’s development priorities (between 4 and 6)
• each of these priorities needs a target for the short & longer term
• most of the GB business is monitoring progress against these, and
• at the end of the year formally review
Framework for strategy development

Senior staff

Governing Board

Strategy origination

Strategy approval

Strategy implementation

Monitoring

Review and amendment

Source: Caroline Copeman, 2011
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic governance</th>
<th>Operational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring reports on quality of teaching against pupils’ outcomes</td>
<td>Making judgements about quality of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving financial audit report</td>
<td>Governor coming into school to supervise book-keeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring necessary audits have been carried out by qualified professionals</td>
<td>Governors undertaking audits eg. Health &amp; safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing senior leaders</td>
<td>Interviewing teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeing to invest in school buses</td>
<td>Organising the bus routes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeing to a building project</td>
<td>Obtaining quotes for cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring school is marketed well</td>
<td>Writing school prospectus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Staying strategic

• Do you have a short sharp school strategy with priorities?
• Distinguish when you are governing and when you are volunteering in another capacity
• Using time to best effect - on the key school priorities, not just compliance and ‘policies’
• Differentiate ‘principle’ from ‘procedures’
• Are school leaders equipped to do their jobs (including HR, procurement) without operational support from governors?
• Do not do someone else’s job: see joint statement with ASCL and NAHT: “What governing bodies should expect from school leaders and what school leaders should expect from governing bodies”
• Change the culture: zero tolerance for interference
Governing groups of schools

• Will small schools be sustainable in the future?
• But this is not just about small schools ... 
• Clear benefits for children (as well as governance);
• Opportunities for staff development = school improvement;
• Multi-academy trusts (MATs) or LA federations have one board governing a number of schools:
  – How many schools can be governed well in a group?
  – What is delegated to school level & what is kept at the centre?
Holding to account

• Understanding data – knowing your school
• Committee structure?
• Chair’s role: working with the headteacher
• HT performance management & appraisal
  – Setting objectives
  – Don’t forget CPD (Continuing Professional Development)
• Information in HT reports
• Triangulation
• And now what?
Knowing your school guides

Knowing Your School
A series of briefing notes for school governors from the National Governors' Association produced in association with partners

RAISEonline for Governors of Secondary Schools

Questions for governing bodies to ask
Briefing note: 6
July 2013

The FFT Governor Dashboard for secondary school governors
Briefing note: 5b
May 2013
There is an equivalent briefing note (3b) for primary schools

Available from www.nga.org.uk
Self Valley Primary  Self evaluation: School dashboard

Summary  Attainment & achievement  Pupil groups  Subjects  Pupil list  Pupil premium  School context

Actual results – attainment, 2013

Average fine grades

4.52

-FFT Rank: 55
-Your school (all pupils) 60%
-Similar schools (all pupils) 65%
-National average (all pupils) 67%

In line with the national average (4.6)

% Level 4b+: ReWrMa

82%

-FFT Rank: 31
-Your school (all pupils) 60%
-Similar schools (all pupils) 60%
-National average (all pupils) 57%

Significantly above the national average (57%)

Key Stage 2 performance summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual results</th>
<th>Pupils’ progress - act. vs est.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils / % match</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Level 4+: ReWrMa</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Level 4B+: ReWrMa</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Level 5+: ReWrMa</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average fine grade</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 2 Levels progress: Reading</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 3 levels progress: Reading</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 2 Levels progress: Writing</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 3 levels progress: Writing</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 2 Levels progress: Mathematics</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 3 Levels progress: Mathematics</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pupils’ progress – achievement, 2013

Average fine grades: ReWrMa

-FFT Rank: 92
-Your school (all pupils) 60%
-Similar schools (all pupils) 60%
-National average (all pupils) 60%

Significantly below the national average (zero)

% Level 4b+: : ReWrMa

+6%

-FFT Rank: 18
-Your school (all pupils) 60%
-Similar schools (all pupils) 60%
-National average (all pupils) 60%

Significantly below the national average (zero)

Results over time

Average fine grade

% Level 4b+: ReWrMa
8 Elements of effective governance

1. The right people round the table
2. Understanding role & responsibilities
3. Good chairing
4. Professional clerking
5. Good relationships based on trust
6. Knowing the school – the data, the staff, the parents, the children, the community, the quality of teaching
7. Committed to asking challenging questions
8. Confident to have courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people
Governance making an impact

• Review GB structure and practice regularly
  – Streamline agendas for two hour meetings
  – Do your strategic priorities drive GB business?

• Review GB effectiveness:
  – Resources: eg ‘APPG 20 questions for GBs to ask themselves’, GovernorMark, Target Tracker’s GSET: see [www.nga.org.uk](http://www.nga.org.uk)
  – External reviews of governance
Governance making an impact

Change the culture:

• Be honest and not defensive
• Is improving the offer to children your focus?
• Is collaboration encouraged?

Bottom line: targets are being met and children’s outcomes are positive, but what did governance contribute?
Join us: GOLD membership

As a GOLD member of NGA the school is entitled to:

- Access to NGA’s advice line and legal advice;
- Access to the guidance centre on NGA’s website for all governors & the clerk;
- The bi-monthly 40 page NGA members’ magazine *Governing Matters* for all;
- A weekly e-newsletter for all governors/trustees & clerks;
- Free places at NGA regional and national conferences;
- *A Chair’s Handbook*, and *Welcome to Governance*
- Induction guides for all new governors/trustees

For a £30 discount from GOLD membership, quote DIS0070 when joining