

Resource Pack



How to create a vision



Clarity of vision is the first of the three core functions for every governing board. It's up to the governors and trustees to ensure that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined.

But a number of barriers prevent governing boards from creating a clear and effective vision.

The first is that there can be confusion about what the word "vision" means. Typically the answer to a question about vision will yield an answer that either articulates the school's values, or references the headteacher's vision. Our view is that the school's vision should state explicitly what the school will look like in three to five years' time, including a concise expression of what the children will have left the school having learned.

How your vision will be met will be determined by the school's ethos and values – both matter but they are different. The importance of a clear vision cannot be overstated. Without it, a school does not know where it is going or what it is aiming to achieve. In projecting forward a few years, we should be aiming to do things better, to continuously improve, to make the experience of school the very best it can be for the children and young people.

The second barrier is a misunderstanding about who owns the vision. The initial visioning work should be carried out by the governors or trustees in partnership with senior leaders.

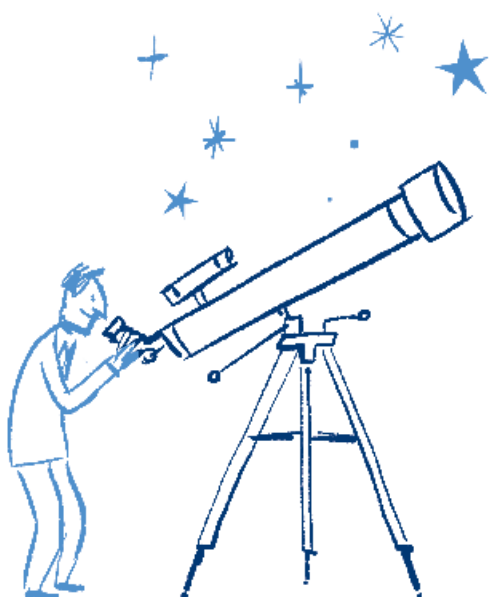
To get to where you want to be, you've got to know where you are now. A good starting point is a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis to ascertain how well the school is doing in the light of both internal performance and external pressures.

It's also important to listen to senior leaders, so they should be given a chance to express their views about the current landscape and possible direction of travel. Not only are they experts and know the likely pitfalls, they are also going to be tasked with achieving the vision – and it must be achievable.

In projecting forward a few years, we should be aiming to do things better, to continuously improve, to make the experience of school the very best it can be for the children and young people.

From this work the governing board should have some key messages that will form the basis of a draft vision which can then be shared with key stakeholders such as staff and parents and the children. Involving the school community in the vision through consulting, and maybe altering and tweaking it at this drafting stage, is invaluable in demonstrating that there is genuine ambition for the school and that the contribution of all stakeholders is recognised.

Finally the vision should be approved by the governing board and handed over to the leadership team for work to begin on the strategy for achieving it.



TIP: Combine this resource with **A Framework for Governance: a flexible guide to strategic planning**



Being strategic

Creating a vision

Mission – Values – Vision



Our school's mission

TIP: Say it in a sentence
Can be a strapline!



Our values

Value 1

Value 2

Value 3

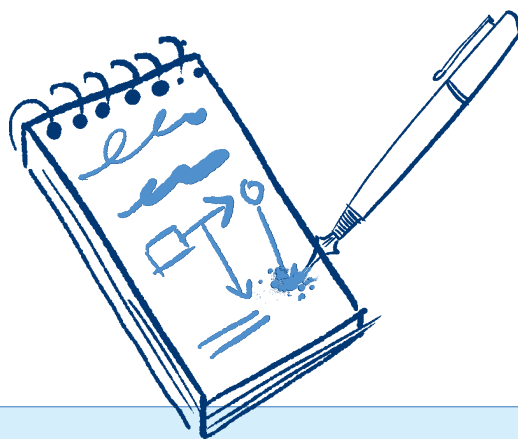
Value 4

Value 5

Being strategic

Creating a vision

Mission – Values – Vision



Our vision

Aim 1

Aim 2

Aim 3

Aim 4

Aim 5

TIP: Write a brief intro then five key sentences describing what the school will look like in three to five years. Include what the children will have left having learned.



Consider

- How the pupils will be prepared for the next stage of their education.
- What the pupils will have left the school having learned in terms of both attainment and progress.
- What other opportunities the pupils will have experienced.
- How your vision will be achieved with reference to the quality of teaching at the school, support for staff, any buildings or infrastructure improvements required, relationships with the community, working collaboratively with others and the ethos in which it will be implemented.
- Beware of confusing vision with values or ethos, they aren't the same.

Achieving our vision

Now that you have a vision, think about how you will know that your vision has been achieved: the 'outcome indicators'. Make sure you know what the risks and barriers are that may get in the way of you achieving your vision. What does the school need to prioritise in order to overcome these risks and barriers?

This is where you turn your vision into a strategy.

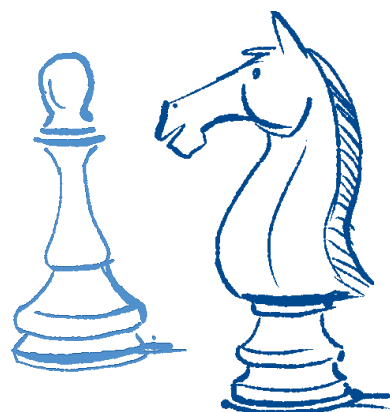


Vision breakdown	How will we know our vision has been achieved – the outcome indicators?	What are the risks and barriers that may stop us achieving our vision?	What does the school need to do to overcome the risks and barriers and achieve its vision?

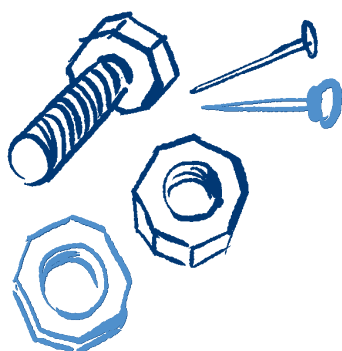
Turning vision into strategy

Determine the strategy

- Identify a key priority for achieving each aspect of the vision.
- Don't be afraid to identify big ideas such as joint working opportunities.
- Each key priority must be measurable; in other words expected impact should be defined at the outset.
- Each priority must be supported by the appropriate budget and staffing structure.
- Key priorities should be broken down into annual, and then termly, measures.
- Try not to have more than six key priorities.
- Don't forget that the strategy should be approved by the governing board but then handed over to the school in order for them to develop their operational (school development) plans.

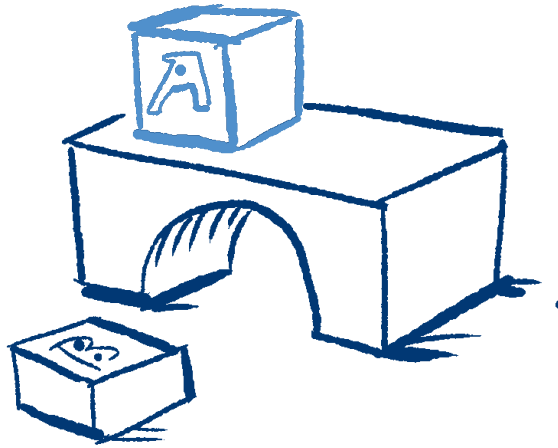


TIP: How each key priority will be achieved is not for the strategy document. Instead, these priorities will form the basis of the School Development Plan (SDP). Think of the SDP as the action plan for your priorities. The headteacher will report progress achieving the priorities termly.



TIP: Combine this resource with **A Framework for Governance: a flexible guide to strategic planning**





Key priorities

Priority 1

Priority 2

Priority 3

Priority 4

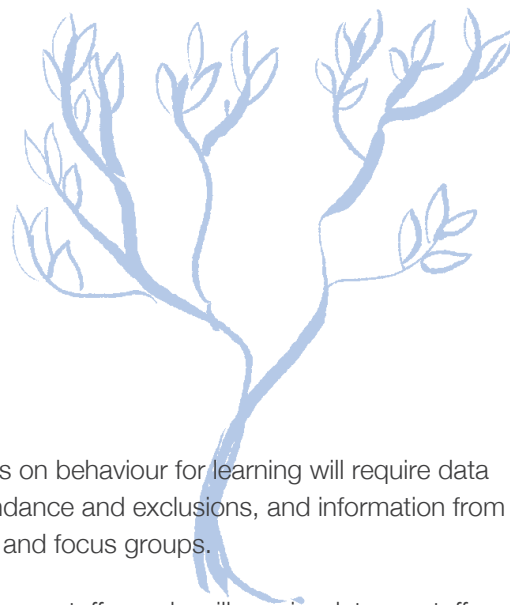
Priority 5

Priority 6

TIP: Start with six and make them SMART
(specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound)



Being strategic



Now you have a vision and a strategic plan. The next step is **Monitoring the strategy**.

Headteachers should produce a termly report on how the strategy is working. This should be the main focus of the termly meeting, and should include updates on progress being made towards achieving each key priority. Governors can then question the head on any aspect of the strategy that they wish.

Consider how the governing board will expect progress to be evidenced. Here are some examples.

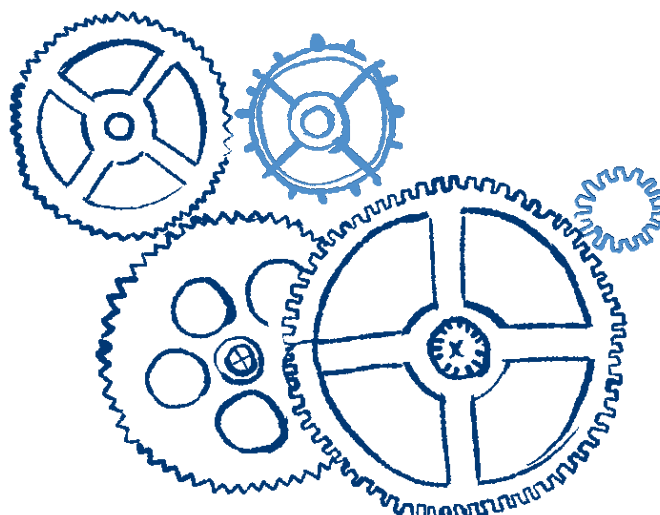
- Progress in raising attainment will require data on pupil standards.
- Progress in improving the quality of teaching will require data on pupil progress.
- Progress on behaviour for learning will require data on attendance and exclusions, and information from surveys and focus groups.
- Progress on staff morale will require data on staff absence and survey information.
- Progress on engagement with parents will require data on complaints and survey information.

Will the school's judgements need to be externally validated? Your call. But have a position!

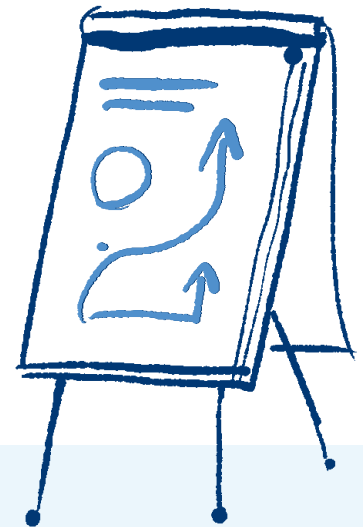
Governors will also need to check that the budget is on track and continues to support the key priorities.

You might decide that you require less information if a priority is on target. If it isn't, you might want to ask for more information.

TIP: Governors' visits should align to key priorities. So if a key priority is to improve attainment and maths is a specific focus, a governor could be aligned to the head of maths in order to understand how the school ensures improved attainment in maths.

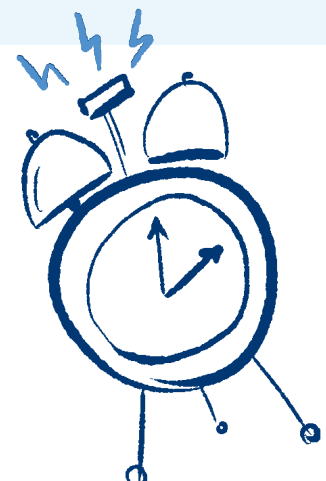


Evaluation



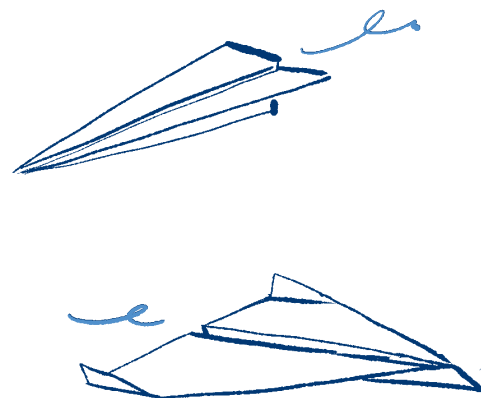
The strategy should be reviewed each year to consider:

Targets/key performance indicators	Are they being met? If not, is this for good reason or are excuses being made?
Unpredictable external factors	Has something unforeseen changed the landscape in which the school is working?
Long term sustainable improvement	Is this still the focus or are you constantly firefighting?
Courageous conversations	Are these happening? Are relationships productive?
Adjusting	A strategy is not a plan but is an approach, and as such, must be adaptable to changing events.
Review	At the end of the three to five year period, plan enough time for a review of the school's vision which includes all stakeholders.



Being strategic

From vision to strategy



CONSULTANCY & TRAINING

As part of NGA's training and consultancy service, we have a session designed to help trustees or governors develop their mission, values, vision and strategy. The session serves to introduce the concepts and to promote discussion and thinking about the trust or school's future direction.

An NGA consultant will work with trustees or governors to produce key draft documents which will contribute to developing their school's vision and strategy by:

Recapping on the current context for governance

- Defining terms and the language we use
- Discussing the principles of being strategic
- Looking in detail at your mission or purpose, values and vision
- Drafting initial thoughts
- Feedback and plenary
- Determining next steps

“ This was a timely session and left us with a clear plan to take forward some key areas, now with a shared language and understanding about mission/values’.”

“ Systems will certainly improve, there will be a robustness to challenge & a real sense of shared priorities for setting the strategic direction of the school going forward...”

The audience for the session

This session is designed for trustees or governors and senior leaders. Senior leaders will be given a specific role in the session.

How the session works

The session is designed to both give information and to promote question and discussion which will be facilitated throughout. It is best delivered as a half day 'away day' style event.

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