

STRONGER GOVERNANCE FOR EDUCATION

IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Governance in a Covid-19 context
Governance for recovery and resilience



The purpose and core functions of governance (DfE Governance Handbook)

1. Effective Governance

1.1 The purpose of governance

1. The purpose of governance is to provide confident and strong strategic leadership which leads to robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance.

2. All governance boards, no matter what type of school or how many schools they govern, have three core functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

Implications of the current (Covid-19) context for:

- our strategic role
 - The strategic priorities we determine to steer the work of the school throughout the academic year
- our oversight, assurance and holding to account role
 - The aspects that we need to ensure we have clear oversight of, and which we need robust assurances about from the headteacher.

How to use this session

Use the session to **start the process of thinking through**:

- in what ways your strategic plan / school development plan needs to reflect the Covid-19 context;
- how your governance work during the year is going to be structured and organised so that you are:
 - focusing on the progress with your strategic priorities, and
 - focusing on the key areas of overview and assurance.

Following the session you may need to find some time to **develop your thinking, make the key necessary decisions**, and develop **your governance work plan** for the year.

10 key areas of focus for governance

What are the challenges ?

What are the key questions for governance?

Strategy and Assurance linked to:.....

1. The safe opening of our school
2. Reconnecting with strategy
3. Our most vulnerable pupils
4. Our staff and their wellbeing
5. Our school's curriculum and how it will be delivered in different Covid 19 scenarios
6. Effective (value for money) use of dedicated finance to help us to respond well to the new circumstances
7. Safeguarding
8. Rigorous and robust risk assessment
9. Communicating with parents
10. Ofsted: what are their priorities from September 2020 and how are we preparing for external scrutiny

Strategy and Assurance: the safe opening of our school

Key Challenge

The government have produced guidance intended to support schools, both mainstream and alternative provision, to prepare for full opening in September. It applies to primary, secondary (including sixth forms), infant, junior, middle, upper, school-based nurseries and boarding schools. The guidance also covers expectations for children with special educational needs and disability (SEND), including those with education, health and care plans, in mainstream schools.

The guidance is in 5 sections. The first section sets out the actions school leaders should take to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their school. This is public health advice, endorsed by Public Health England (PHE).

The rest of the guidance is focused on how the Department for Education (DfE) expects schools to operate in this new context. This includes:

- school operations
- curriculum, behaviour and pastoral support
- assessment and accountability
- contingency planning to provide continuity of education in the case of a local outbreak.

Key Questions for Governing Boards

- **How is our school's response to the need to provide continuity of education in the case of a local outbreak articulated within our strategic priorities for the academic year?**
- **What arrangements do we need to have in place to assure ourselves that the school is operating within the DfE expectations as described in the guidance.**

Strategy and Assurance : reconnecting with strategy – beyond managing and responding to re-engaging with purpose and values

Key Challenge

Senior leaders, and those who govern, have inevitably spent many months focusing on managing through challenging and uncertain and unprecedented times. ‘How do we manage this?’ has been the focus. It’s important that we start to re-engage with our purpose and intent as educational leaders and ask questions about innovation, development, seeking and using opportunities etc etc. Now is a good time to re-engage with discussions about purpose and values and to engage with staff and parents about these. What do we value? What matters most? Where do we want to be in 5 year’s time and what do we need to do to get there?

Key Questions for Governing Boards

- How are we going to re-engage with considerations of purpose and values? How are we going to find the time and space to do this?
- What do we need to do to ‘lift up our heads’ from the inevitable focus on ‘business continuity’ and risk assessment and look again at the big picture?
- How are we going to deliver our first core function as a governing board - to provide confident and strong strategic leadership?

Strategy and Assurance: our most vulnerable pupils

Key Challenge

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has published a report focusing on the engagement of vulnerable pupils and the children of keyworkers in-school; remote provision and welfare support for vulnerable pupils; and the challenges involved in continuing to offer this provision as schools begin to open more fully. Amongst the extensive finding are fact that:

- Senior leaders (57 per cent) and teachers (75 per cent) reported a lack of pupil engagement in learning as one of their main challenges in supporting vulnerable pupils who are not attending school.
- 54 per cent of senior leaders in the most deprived schools reported significant concerns for the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable pupils, relative to 35 per cent of senior leaders in the least deprived schools.

Key Questions for Governing Boards

- **What are the facts and figures regarding our most vulnerable pupils related to:**
 - **their learning engagement when they could not be at our school?**
 - **levels of concern about their safety and wellbeing?**

What are the implications for the school going forward? Do we need a strategic priority focusing on this? What assurances do we need going forward?

Strategy and Assurance: our staff and their well-being

Key Challenge

Our staff are the key asset, and the most expensive asset, for the delivery of the mission and vision of the school. Staff wellbeing needs to be a pre-requisite of planning for the successful school year. Wellbeing needs to be embedded within school culture and is about developing a philosophy and whole school culture around wellbeing that pervades everything that is done in school – led by a senior leader. knowing staff as individuals is key in terms of building a supportive wellbeing culture; in particular so that leaders are able to put in place support for those staff who have potential vulnerabilities or who have been shielding and therefore may be feeling more nervous about a return to school.

Key Questions for Governing Boards

- **What do we have in place to support staff wellbeing and is it good enough given the current context? Does a focus on staff wellbeing need to be a strategic priority for us?**
- **How are we going to be assured that staff wellbeing needs are being address appropriately and successfully?**

Strategy and Assurance: our school's curriculum and how it will be delivered in different Covid-19 scenarios

Key Challenge

The DfE are clear that they expect school to schools to make significant amendments to their curriculum plans to take into account:

- the need to support pupils in 'catching up' with their learning as a result of their time out of school;
- the need for approaches to curriculum delivery to take into account the possibility of local lockdowns – ie approaches which integrate/blend school learning and home learning.

Key Questions for Governing Boards

- **How is the above reflected in our strategic priorities for the academic year?**
- **How are we going to obtain the assurances we need that the school is making effective provision by adjusting curriculum planning etc?**

Strategy and Assurance: effective (value for money) use of dedicated finance top help us to respond well to the new circumstances

Key Challenge

DfE has published guidance on the catch-up premium. The £650 million of universal catch-up premium funding will be available for all state-funded mainstream and special schools, and alternative provision.

Schools' allocations will be calculated on a per pupil basis, providing each mainstream school with a total of £80 for each pupil in years reception through to 11. Special, AP and hospital schools will be provided with £240 for each place for the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

Schools and trusts have the flexibility to spend their funding in the best way for their cohort and circumstances. The Education Endowment Foundation has published a support guide for schools and trusts with evidence-based approaches to catch up for all pupils.

Key Questions for Governing Boards

- **How are we going to scrutinise our schools' approach to catch-up including the plans for the use of the catch up funding?**
- **How are we going to determine the impact of the use of the funding to ensure value for money?**

Strategy and Assurance: safeguarding

Key Challenge

The government has released their updated guidance for safeguarding in schools, [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020](#). **There are new requirements that come into effect from the start of the Autumn Term 2020.**

The document outlines what school staff and **those governing must do** to ensure children are safe in school, as well as their compliance requirements such as safeguarding checks. Key changes include:

- A change to the definition of safeguarding;
- New requirements on mental health when it is also a safeguarding matter;
- A reformatted part two, which is the section that **those governing should read**.

Key Questions for Governing Boards

- **Are all members of the Board aware of the changes and the revised expectations?**
- **How are we going to engage with our DSL so that they can give us the assurances we need that the school is implementing the updated guidance?**
- **Are there any aspects of safeguarding that we need to focus on as a strategic priority during the year?**

Strategy and Assurance: rigorous and robust risk management

Key Challenge

Ensuring that the school has a rigorous and robust risk management process which not only covers health and safety matters (especially those related to Covid -19) but which includes the full range of potential risks linked to: safeguarding, staffing, finance, reputational damage, standard of education etc?

Key Questions for Governing Boards

- **How are we being assured that the school's approach to risk management is sufficiently rigorous, robust and wide enough in scope?**
- **How can we be actively involved in the risk management process rather than just the receivers of information about it?**
- **How can we ensure that our risk management process is aligned to our strategic priorities?**

Strategy and Assurance: communicating with parents

Key Challenge

Ensuring that parents are confident that:

- the arrangements the school is making to keep their children safe are robust;
- the curriculum takes account of the lost learning time whilst the schools has not been fully open;
- the school will ensure that parents are informed, on an ongoing basis, of any and all matters linked to the safety of the children and to the impact of the work the school is doing to **close learning gaps due to school closure**.

Key Questions for Governing Boards

- **How are we communicating with parents to assure them that the school is safe for their children? How frequently are we going to do this?**
- **How are we communicating with parents to assure them that the school's curriculum will address gaps in learning due to school closure? How will we assure them that we are making good progress with this?**

Strategy and Assurance: OfSTED – what are their priorities from September 2020 and how are we preparing for external scrutiny

Key Challenge

Despite full inspections being postponed until January next year, Ofsted inspectors have announced a separate programme of visits to schools and colleges starting in September.

Inspector will look at **“how leaders are ensuring pupils resume learning the school’s extant curriculum, including the blend of classroom teaching and, where necessary, remote education”**.

Inspectors will also look at:

1. Identifying the barriers schools have faced and are still facing in managing the return to full education for pupils.
2. How pupils are settling back into expected routines and behaviours.
3. **How any identified and specific health and wellbeing issues for particular pupils are being addressed** and what may be needed at local and/or national level to support this.
4. Safeguarding.

Key Questions for Governing Boards

- **How can we obtain the assurances we need in relation to 1, 2 and 3?**
- **How can we be assured that the school has a clear strategy for developing a blended approach to learning especially in preparation for a possible local lockdown?**
- **Is the development of a blended approach to curriculum delivery one of our strategic objectives?**