STRONGER GOVERNANCE FOR EDUCATION

IN LINCOLNSHIRE

How to carry out a governance self – review / 'health check'

Documents

Governance handbook

Ref: DFE-00022-2017

PDF, 1.48MB, 138 pages

1. Effective Governance

1.1 The purpose of governance
1.2 The key features of effective governance

The key features of effective governance

Effective governance is based on six key features:

Strategic leadership that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy
Accountability that drives up educational standards and financial performance.
People with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity.
Structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements.

Evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance.

The first two features are the core pillars of the board's role and purpose. The second two are about the way in which governance is organised, and the last two are about ensuring and improving the quality of governance.

7. Evaluation

1. This section is about the importance of regular evaluation by both the board and objective third parties of the effectiveness of governance and the performance of schools. It concludes this handbook with a summary of the support available to boards to help them improve their effectiveness.

7.1 Developing the board's effectiveness

2.Boards should regularly evaluate their own effectiveness. As explained in guidance for maintained schools, the chair has a particular responsibility for ensuring the effective functioning of the board. Good chairs lead by example and ask for regular feedback from their board to improve their own effectiveness and have an annual conversation with each person to discuss the impact of their contribution to the work of the board.

LINCOLNSHIRE
TEACHING SCHOOL ALLIANCE

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CONSULTANCY

SUPPORT TOOLS FOR SELF-REVIEW/PEER-REVIEW

LIBRARY OF KEY RESOURCES

GOVERNANCE IN A COVID-19 CONTEXT: RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

Support Tools for Self-Review/Peer-Review

A range of key resources is provided for Governing Boards to help them strengthen their governance arrangements. These tools can be used to evaluate the current effectiveness of the governance arrangements of the School/Trust.

Three tools are available for:

- Maintained Schools including Federated Schools
- Single Academies
- Multi Academy Trusts

The tools come with some guidance about how they can be used by an individual governing board and as a part of the school's peer-review process. Having identified their profile of Governance strengths and weaknesses, governing boards will then be able to identify which parts of the Stronger Governance offer they are going to engage with to ensure that they are working as effectively as possible.

The key features of effective governance

Strategic leadership that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy

Accountability that drives up educational standards and financial performance.

People with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity.

Structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements.

Evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance.

LINCOLNSHIRE
TEACHING SCHOOL ALLIANCE

⬇ ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN GOVERNANCE TEMPLATE

⬇ MAINTAINED SCHOOLS INC FEDERATED SCHOOLS

⬇ SINGLE ACADEMY TRUSTS

⬇ MULTI ACADEMY TRUSTS

1. Strategic leadership. References: Governors' Handbook pages 14 – 16; A Competency Framework pages 8 – 13; Understanding your data.
Strategic leadership that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy through:

Aspect	Recognised best practice constituting strong governance	What we need to do to strengthen our governance
1a: a clear and explicit vision for the future set by the board, in collaboration with executive leaders, which has pupil progress and achievement at its heart and is communicated to the whole organisation.	The vision statement is clear and has been developed in collaboration by the board and the executive leaders. It is a true vision statement providing a description of where the trust sees itself in 5 years' time ie a projection rather than a statement of what the trust stands for. Pupil progress and achievement is at the heart of the statement which has been effectively communicated to the whole organisation and to other key stakeholders via the website.	
1b: strong and clear values and ethos which are defined and modeled by the board, embedded across the organisation and adhered to by all that work in it, or on behalf of it.	The board has discussed and agreed the distinctive characteristics of the academy and the key values that underpin its work. The values are clearly linked to the behaviours (of pupils, staff and governors) that characterise the ethos of the school. The ethos and underpinning values of the school are monitored and form a part of the assurance work of the governing board.	
1c: strategic planning that defines medium to long-term strategic goals and development and improvement priorities which are understood by all in the organisation.	The chair takes a lead in working with the executive leadership in defining a set of strategic priorities and goals for the trust which the governing board uses to monitor the progress the trust is making and to hold the executive leadership to account. The priorities and goals are explicitly linked to data regarding the trust's performance. The priorities and goals are clearly communicated to ensure clear understanding across the trust.	

Competency framework for governance

Ref: DFE-00021-2017

PDF, 676KB, 27 pages

Education & Skills
Funding Agency

Understanding your
data

A guide for school governors and
academy trustees

June 2018

Understanding your data: a guide for school governors and academy trustees

HTML

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2. Accountability. References: Governance Handbook pages 18 – 26; A Competency Framework pages 14 – 20; Understanding Data.
Accountability that drives up educational standards and financial performance through:

Aspect	Recognised best practice constituting strong governance	What we need to do to strengthen our governance
2a: rigorous analysis of pupil progress and attainment information with comparison against local and national benchmarks and over time.	The board commissions information/data reports from the executive leader and has used the Understanding Your Data publication to help it to determine the most helpful content and format for these reports linked to pupil progress and attainment. The board is able to interpret the provided data/information - to spot trends and patterns and to make comparisons with available benchmark data for example – and use this to hold the executive leader to account. The board questions the executive leader on how the in-school assessment system is used to support pupils' attainment and progress.	
2b: clear processes for overseeing and monitoring school improvement and providing constructive challenge to executive leaders.	The board has a robust process for assuring that the school is making effective provision linked to: pupil behaviour management, safeguarding, provision for pupils with SEND, Health and safety, etc etc. The board has agreed the areas/aspects that it will focus its assurance work on, the information/data it will need and in what form from executive leaders plus any additional assurance related activities that it will undertake or commission from others. Good use is made of the Understanding Your Data publication. The board uses its assurance work as the basis for constructive challenge to executive leaders where appropriate. The Board has a set of key roles linked to assurance work (compliance and quality of provision) in reaction to SEND and safeguarding.	
2c: a transparent system for performance managing executive leaders, which are understood by all in the organisation, linked to defined strategic priorities.	The chair is confident to undertake the executive leader's performance appraisal and makes effective use of an external adviser. The executive leader's performance is evaluated in relation to the board's agreed strategic priorities and a set of associated key performance objectives. The whole board fully understands the process used to evaluate the executive leader's performance and, in broad terms the outcomes of the last review.	

3. People References: Governance Handbook pages 29 – 40; A Competency Framework pages 20 – 21; Clerking Competencies.
People with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity who:

Aspect	Recognised best practice constituting strong governance	What we need to do to strengthen our governance
3a: understand the purpose of governance and the role of non- executive leadership and have all the necessary skills, as outlined in the Department's Competency Framework, to deliver it well.	The board has a clear collective understanding about the purpose of non-executive governance and how to discharge the responsibility effectively. The Competency Framework is used to review the collective skills set of the board and to help them to understand their roles in behavioural terms. There are no significant skills gap on the board in terms of the analysis provided by the Competency Framework.	
3b: include an effective chair and vice-chair with the ability to provide visionary strategic non-executive leadership.	The chair of the board is strong and meets the description of an effective chair in the Competency Framework in terms of knowledge, skills and effective behaviours. The chair has vision and a strong strategic outlook as well as being a good team leader and manager of meetings. There is a clear role description for the vice chair which includes more than stepping up for the chair in their absence.	
3c: are recruited through robust and transparent processes against a clear articulation of required skills which are set out in a role specification.	The board has a clear written recruitment policy and process which it has agreed. There are detailed role specifications – which make effective use of the Competency Framework – for the role of: governor; chair; vice-chair, committee chair, SEND governor, Safeguarding governor.	
3d: use active succession planning to ensure the board, and the whole organisation, continues to have the people and leadership it needs to remain effective.	A succession plan for the key governance roles is in place which is clearly linked to a training and development plan. The chair understands the critical importance of succession planning, training and development and is committed to making sure that they are in place.	

4. Structures. References: Governance Handbook pages 41 – 55; A Competency Framework page 22.
Structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities through:

Aspect	Recognised best practice constituting strong governance	What we need to do to strengthen our governance
4a: appropriate board and committee structures that reflect the scale and structure of the organisation and ensure sufficient and robust oversight of key priorities.	The board's committee structure is reviewed annually to ensure it is fit for purpose. The board is clear how governance functions are distributed and delegated to different individuals and committees and how decisions are made. The current arrangements work well and support strong governance.	
4b: clear separation between strategic non-executive oversight and operational executive leadership which is supported by positive relationships that encourage a professional culture and ethos across the organisation.	The separation between strategic non-executive and operational executive functions is clearly understood by all parties and is underpinned by positive, effective working relationships.	
4c: processes for ensuring appropriate communication (particularly to ensure transparency of decision-making) between all levels and structures of governance and to pupils/students, parents/carers, staff and	The communication between all levels and structures of governance is clear and works well. The board effectively communicates the work it does and the impact it makes to key stakeholders. Its agendas and minutes are in the public domain.	

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2b: clear processes for overseeing and monitoring school improvement and providing constructive challenge to executive leaders.	The board has a robust process for assuring that the school is making effective provision linked to: pupil behaviour management, safeguarding, provision for pupils with SEND, Health and safety, etc etc. The board has agreed the areas/aspects that it will focus its assurance work on, the information/data it will need and in what form from executive leaders plus any additional assurance related activities that it will undertake or commission from others. Good use is made of the Understanding Your Data publication. The board uses its assurance work as the basis for constructive challenge to executive leaders where appropriate. The Board has a set of key roles linked to assurance work (compliance and quality of provision) in reaction to SEND and safeguarding.	2. Work with HT to arrive at a mechanism for providing GB with assurance information linked to pupil behavior management. 3. Linked to 1 above. We need to discuss and agree what areas will be the focus of our assurance work. 4. Establish a GB role focusing of SEND 5. GB discussion re how we can 'up our game' re providing constructive challenge.
2c: a transparent system for performance managing executive leaders, which are understood by all in the organisation, linked to defined strategic priorities.	The chair is confident to undertake the executive leader's performance appraisal and makes effective use of an external adviser. The executive leader's performance is evaluated in relation to the board's agreed strategic priorities and a set of associated key performance objectives. The whole board fully understands the process used to evaluate the executive leader's performance and, in broad terms the outcomes of the last review.	6. Add to next board agenda

The Governing Board of a federation of Lincolnshire primary schools used the review tool with the support of a Leader of Governance:

"This was an excellent process to focus the mind and involve groups of governors in in-depth discussion. It informed our strategy for more effective governance and highlighted those areas where we needed to prioritise our CPD".

7. Evaluation

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7.1 Developing the board's effectiveness

2.**Boards should regularly evaluate their own effectiveness**. As explained in guidance for maintained schools, the chair has a particular responsibility for ensuring the effective functioning of the board. Good chairs lead by example and ask for regular feedback from their board to improve their own effectiveness and have an annual conversation with each person to discuss the impact of their contribution to the work of the board.

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Contact us if you want to make use of Lincolnshire Leader of Governance support with governance evaluation/review work