Effective Challenge & Support in School Governance

...but what does effective challenge look like?

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Aims & Objectives

• Look at the different ways that Governors can provide Challenge & Support
• Provide practical advice & examples of good practice
• Look at the areas Estyn will look at, giving examples of the questions they may ask.
• Allow opportunity for you to discuss issues with peers and ask questions
As a governing body, how do you improve the quality of the work of your school? How do you know if you are successful?

Share knowledge - Work with people you don’t know.
The governing body has the **collective and legal responsibility** for the overall direction of the school and its **strategic management**. This includes the **effective financial management** of the school’s delegated budget and the responsibility for ensuring that the school’s financial resources are utilised in support of **improving learner outcomes** in the most effective and efficient way.

....but what does this look like?
Discuss with your group how the work of your governing body fulfils one of the key roles identified below.

**Task 2**

**Three Key Roles of the Governing Body**

- Provide a strategic view
- Act as a critical friend
- Ensure accountability
Decision Time: Governing Body or Headteacher Responsibility?
Core Responsibilities of the Governing Body

• Promoting high standards of educational achievement and behaviour
• Setting targets for pupil achievement
• Ensuring that all learners have access to a broad and balanced curriculum
• Determining the aims, policies and priorities of the school
• Determining and monitoring the school’s budget
• Staffing – e.g. staff appointments, performance management
• Producing an action plan and monitor progress following an Estyn inspection
• Providing parents with information regarding the school
• The wellbeing and safeguarding of learners
School governing bodies play a key role in improving standards within schools. They:

- have a duty to promote the highest standards of educational achievement;
- must establish the strategic framework for the school; and
- must regularly review the progress made.
How do governors provide a strategic overview?

- Set aims and objectives for the school,
- Agree priorities for improvement
- Set policies for the school for achieving the aims and objectives
- **Set targets for achieving the aims and objectives**
- Understand how school performance shows improvement and compares with other similar schools
- Challenges the school to improve
How do governors provide a strategic overview?

A. ESTYN may ask:
How well do you consider the school is doing?
What are standards like?
How do you monitor progress in attainment?

B. ESTYN may also ask:
If standards are good, what evidence do you have that they are good?
How well do different groups do pupils achieve?
e.g. MAT, eFSM, EAL, ALN, boys v girls

C. ESTYN have also asked:
What impact have the governors had on improving outcomes for pupils and how do you know?
How do governors provide a strategic overview?

1. How well do you consider the school is doing?
2. What are standards like?
3. How do you monitor progress in attainment?
4. If standards are good, what evidence do you have that they are good?
5. How well do different groups do pupils achieve? e.g. MAT, eFSM, EAL, ALN, boys v girls
6. What impact have the governors had on improving outcomes for pupils and how do you know?
How do governors – Act as a critical friend?

The governing body shall act as “critical friend” to the head teacher; that is to say, they shall support the head teacher in the performance of the functions of the post and give the headteacher constructive criticism where necessary.

It is very important that the governing body monitors and evaluates progress. To do this successfully they need to act as a ‘critical friend’ to the headteacher.
The governing body provides the Headteacher and staff with support, advice and information, drawing on its members' knowledge and experience. In these ways the governing body acts as a 'critical friend' to the school.

The term ‘critical friend’ is hard to define - ‘questioning friend’ might be more appropriate.

The governing body operates as a ‘critical friend’ in helping the school and its staff with actions and decisions which affect all aspects of school life and its work.

In doing so, the governing body should seek out and question the reasoning behind the decisions and offer, where possible, careful and considered feedback.
We’re here to support the head. It’s a hard job.

We share the good and bad and ask questions to help the school improve.

We leave it to professionals. They know best. They are well trained.

We are in school all the time keeping an eye on the head the staff and everything that is going on.

How do governors – Act as a critical friend?
How do governors – Act as a critical friend?

1. How supportive are the governing body - attendance at meetings, classroom visits (with SLT), learning walks (with SLT), school trips, concerts, fairs, fund raising?

2. What training has the governing body received to ensure it is able to carry out its statutory duties effectively and in line with current policies?

3. How does it carry out its role of challenging the school? What has the impact been of any challenge? How do they know?

4. How do the governors find out the views of all stakeholders? What have they done as a result?
How do governors ensure accountability?

- Set aims and objectives for the school,
- Agree priorities for improvement
- Set policies for the school for achieving the aims and objectives
- Set targets for achieving the aims and objectives
- Understand progress towards the targets

The governing body is accountable for any decisions and actions taken and shall be prepared to explain its decisions and actions to interested persons.
How do governors ensure accountability?

Ensure Accountability

The governing body ensures that:

• It receives reports that teachers’ classroom performance (teaching and learning in the classroom) is systematically assessed by other education professionals and considered to be at least ‘good’.
• Headteacher’s Performance Management is systematic and follows statutory guidance.
• it received reports that allows it to understand if all pupils achieve the expected (targeted) skill levels in literacy (Welsh/English), numeracy, ICT/Digital competence based on their ability and previous attainment.
• pupil feedback has been used to help make decisions about things that affect their experiences in school, including the way teaching and learning is delivered in the classroom.
• pupil attendance meets governing body set targets over three years and there are no significant variations between particular groups of pupils.
How do governors ensure accountability?

1. How often does the governing body review polices?
2. What's the role of the finance committee?
3. What are the priorities for spending?
4. How are these priorities decided?
5. What progress has the school made towards achieving its targets for improvement?
6. How do the governors support or challenge the judgments made in the school self evaluation document?
7. How do you know the school's money has been well spent?
8. How has the PDG been spent and what impact has it had?
Addressing issues of under-performance

Governors must evidence that they:
“use relevant management information about performance to address underperformance and to set objectives and targets that are strategic priorities”

Task 7

How do we know about underperformance?

If its teaching that needs to be improved, how can governors bring about improvements?

It’s the headteacher that needs to improve, what can governors do?
Common Inspection Framework

Inspection areas (IAs):

- **IA 1**: Standards
- **IA 2**: Wellbeing and attitudes to learning
- **IA 3**: Teaching and learning experiences
- **IA 4**: Care, support and guidance
- **IA 5**: Leadership and management
Governors will be able to show evidence, in minutes of meetings (committees and governing body) that they ask relevant questions about school performance and are able to show that improvement over time can be linked to their intervention. They can demonstrate support for the head, balanced with an appropriate level of challenge through the questions asked and comments noted in the minutes.

Evidence of Impact: ESTYN will want to know that governors...

- Understand their roles
- Are informed about the performance of the school and issues that affect it
- Provide a sense of direction for the work of the school
- Support the school as a critical friend
- Hold the school to account for the standards and quality it achieves
- Take reasonable steps to inform pupils, members of staff, parents/guardians or any other person of the procedures if they wish to make a complaint or appeal
- Make sure that the complaints are dealt with promptly by disinterested parties
What structures do we need to ensure we are an effective Governor Body?

Full Governing Body Meetings

Complaints Committee

Finance Committee

Standards & Curriculum Committee

Performance Management Committee

Health & Safety / Premises Committee

What is missing?
2.20 Governing bodies are accountable for ensuring effective policies and procedures are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in accordance with this Guidance and monitoring its compliance with them.

2.22 Governing bodies will identify a designated governor for child protection to:

- take responsibility for child protection matters
- ensure the governing body reviews the school’s policies and procedures annually
- be the designated governor to maintain contact with the statutory authorities in relation to child protection staff disciplinary cases as set out in Welsh Government guidance Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedures for School Staff (002/2013), and
- ensure that the governing body/proprietor undertakes an annual review of safeguarding policies and procedures and how the above duties have been discharged.

Keeping Learners Safe: The role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002
Finally, consider these questions from Estyn:

1. How frequently is the school's self-evaluation report/SIP discussed? What are the current priorities in the SIP? Do they consider these to be the right priorities or are there too many?

2. How is the school preparing to deliver the new curriculum?

3. How do the governors find out the views of all stakeholders? What have they done as a result?

4. If standards are good, what evidence do you have that they're good? How well do different groups of pupils achieve? e.g. MAT, eFSM, EAL, ALN, boys v girls.

5. Does the governing body ever challenge the progress that's being made with the SIP?

6. Does the clerk give governors appropriate and timely updates on any statutory changes to the role of governance to ensure they are meeting all statutory requirements?
Additional Reading & Support

• **Welsh Government: Education & Skills**
  – Education in Wales: Our National Mission 2017-21
  – Governors Guide to the Law: A reference guide on the roles and responsibilities of a school governing body
  – Learning Wales: A source for the latest education policy, guidance, research and more
  – My Local School: Publically available School Data

• **Central South Consortium**
  – Weekly Bulletin / Termly Newsletter
  – Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin etc)
  – Knowledge Bank: A repository for Central South & National education resources

• **Local Authority**
  – Website, Newsletters & Social Media
  – Governor Support Team
  – Governor Associations
Any Questions?

Contact your LA Governor Support

Contact us at:

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