



Department  
for Education

# **External Review of Governance**

**Tool for Facilitated Self-Review**

**March 2016**

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## Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It has been produced to help users conduct and facilitate an external review of a schools governing body.

## Review date

This guidance will be reviewed March 2017.

## Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- Any individual or organization intending to conduct an external review of school governance

## Main points

The review tool draws on the Ofsted School Inspection Handbook and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Education Governance and Leadership's '20 key questions every governing board should ask itself'. Full compliance indicates the board can answer 'yes' to each question in this area.

The review tool covers four core areas:

- **Core Area 1:** Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- **Core Area 2:** Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
- **Core Area 3:** Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent
- **Core Area 4:** Effective Governance Practice

# Core Area 1: Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction

## Questions

1.1 Do governors play a significant role in setting out a vision that is shared by all members of the school community and is based on input from, and consultation with, a range of stakeholders?

Yes  No

1.2 Has the board agreed a strategy with priorities for achieving the vision with key performance indicators against which governors can regularly monitor and review the strategy?

Yes  No

1.3 Does the board's strategic planning cycle drive its activities and agenda setting?

Yes  No

1.4 Does the board ensure decisions are made in line with the school's vision and strategic priorities, and monitor the impact of these decisions?

Yes  No

1.5 Do governors monitor how effectively the policy framework and related practices support the ethos of the school?

Yes  No

1.6 Does the board have a sound understanding of its statutory responsibilities and ensure that these are fulfilled?

Yes  No

1.7 Does the board ensure that the school's curriculum, extra-curricular activities and ethos are preparing pupils for life in modern Britain?

Yes  No

## Guidance

### Evidence to be drawn on

- Ofsted report
- School website
- Board agendas and minutes
- Governance structures, committee work programmes and terms of reference
- School vision statement / aims
- School development plan
- School website
- Headteacher's report to governors
- School self-evaluation documentation
- Views of Headteacher and governors

### Relevant Ofsted criteria

- the leaders' and governors' vision and ambition for the school and how these are communicated to staff, parents and pupils
- whether leaders and governors have created a culture of high expectations, aspirations and scholastic excellence in which the highest achievement in academic and vocational work is recognised as vitally important
- the effectiveness of governors in discharging their core statutory functions
- the effectiveness of leaders' and governors' work to raise awareness and keep pupils safe from the dangers of abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism and what the staff do when they suspect that pupils are vulnerable to these issues
- the effectiveness of safeguarding
- how well the school prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain and promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith
- how well leaders and governors promote all forms of equality and foster greater understanding of and respect for people of all faiths (and those of no faith), races, genders, ages, disability and sexual orientations (and other groups with protected characteristics<sup>1</sup>), through their words, actions and influence within the school and more widely in the community

### The inspectors will consider whether governors:

- work effectively with leaders to communicate the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school and develop a culture of ambition

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<sup>1</sup> As defined by section 4 of the [Equality Act 2010](#).

**Notes**

**Comments**

**Action Required**

## Core Area 2: Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils

### Questions

2.1 Do governors access a range of information about the school in a timely way including:

- The full RAISEonline summary Report?
- The FFT Governor Dashboard (If the school subscribes)?
- The OFSTED data dashboard?
- In-year progress tracking from the school?
- External reports including notes of visits from school improvement partners or equivalent?
- Information from governor visits to school?

Yes

No

2.2 Do governors understand the performance data in a way that enables them to properly hold school leaders to account?

Yes

No

2.3 Is the board confident that performance management for all staff is conducted effectively and that this contributes to improving outcomes for pupils?

Yes

No

2.4 Is performance management of the Headteacher/Principal conducted effectively including meeting statutory and contractual requirements, ensuring performance objectives contribute to improving outcomes and including mid-year review?

Yes

No

2.5 Does the board have a clear understanding of how pay decisions are reached for all teaching staff in line with statutory and contractual requirements?

Yes

No

## Guidance

### Evidence to be drawn on

- Ofsted report
- Board agendas and minutes, and other board papers
- Committee terms of reference and minutes
- Headteacher's reports to governors
- Records of Headteacher's performance management
- Views of Headteacher and governors

### Relevant Ofsted criteria

- the rigour and accuracy of self-evaluation and how well it leads to planning that secures continual improvement
- the effectiveness of the actions leaders take to secure and sustain improvements to teaching, learning and assessment and how effectively governors hold them to account for this
- how well leaders ensure that the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching staff to deliver a high quality education for all pupils, and how effectively governors hold them to account for this
- how effectively leaders monitor the progress of groups of pupils to ensure that none falls behind and underachieve, and how effectively governors hold them to account for this

### The inspectors will consider whether governors:

- understand the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on the progress of pupils currently in the school
- ensure that assessment information from leaders provides governors with sufficient and accurate information to ask probing questions about outcomes for pupils
- provide support for an effective headteacher or are hindering school improvement because of a lack of understanding of the issues facing the school
- understand how the school makes decisions about teachers' salary progression and performance
- performance manage the headteacher rigorously
- the quality of continuing professional development for teachers at the start and middle of their careers and later, including to develop leadership capacity and how leaders and governors use performance management to promote effective practice across the school

## Notes

### Comments

### Action Required

## Core Area 3: Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent

### Questions

3.1 Is the board confident that the school's financial management systems are robust?

Yes  No

3.2 Does the board access financial benchmarking information and use this to ensure the school is achieving value for money?

Yes  No

3.3 Does the board regularly review the staffing structure to ensure that it meets the needs of the school and ensures good value for money?

Yes  No

3.4 In academies: is the board familiar with the requirements of the Academies' Financial Handbook and ensuring that all its financial responsibilities are met?

Yes  No

3.5 In maintained schools: have all the standards within the schools financial value standard been met?

Yes  No

3.6 Does the board ensure that available resources, including pupil premium, are allocated to school development priorities and removing barriers to learning?

Yes  No

3.7 Is the pupil premium being used effectively, so that the school is closing any gaps in achievement between pupil premium pupils and their peers?

Yes  No

## Guidance

### Evidence to be drawn on

- Ofsted report
- Board agendas and minutes
- Pay committee terms of reference
- Headteacher's reports to governors
- Performance data relating to the performance of pupil premium children and their peers
- Views of headteacher and governors

### Relevant Ofsted criteria

- how effectively leaders use the primary PE and sport premium and measure its impact on outcomes for pupils, and **how effectively governors hold them to account for this**
- how effectively leaders use additional funding, including the pupil premium, and measure its impact on outcomes for pupils, and **how effectively governors hold them to account for this**

### The inspectors will consider whether governors:

- ensure that the school's finances are properly managed and can evaluate how the school is using the pupil premium and the primary PE and sport premium

**Notes**

**Comments**

**Action Required**

## Core Area 4: Effective Governance Practice Questions

4.1 Does the board keep its size and structure (including number and terms of reference of any committees) under review to ensure they reflect school and national priorities and support effective and efficient working?

Yes  No

4.2 Does the board regularly audit the skills of its members and use the analysis of this to inform governor recruitment and development?

Yes  No

4.3 Are governors able to clearly evidence the impact of governor training and development on the quality of governance in the school?

Yes  No

4.4 Does the board have a professional clerk who has a good understanding of the statutory context in which the school operates and effective governance practices, produces accurate and timely minutes and provides legal and procedural advice and support?

Yes  No

4.5 Does the board have plans in place to ensure effective succession, including leadership succession for the board?

Yes  No

4.6 Does the chair lead the board effectively?

Yes  No

4.7 Does the board have effective mechanisms in place to hear from and inform pupils, staff and parents?

Yes  No

4.8 Is the school supporting and drawing support from other schools and do governors have an understanding of and involvement in these collaborations?

Yes  No

4.9 Is the board having a positive impact on outcomes for pupils and are governors able to articulate this?

Yes  No

## Guidance

### Evidence to be drawn on

- Ofsted report
- Board agendas and minutes
- Committee terms of reference and members
- Governor code of conduct
- School website
- Headteacher's reports
- Views of Headteacher and governors

### Relevant Ofsted criteria

- how well leaders and governors engage with parents, carers and other stakeholders and agencies to support all pupils

### The inspectors will consider whether governors:

- provide support for an effective headteacher or are hindering school improvement because of a lack of understanding of the issues facing the school
- are transparent and accountable, including in recruitment of staff, governance structures, attendance at meetings and contact with parents
- provide a balance of challenge and support to leaders, understanding the strengths and areas needing improvement at the school

## Notes

### Comments

### Action Required



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