

Ofsted Update

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Ofsted update

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Recent developments in governance





Governance handbook

For academies, multi-academy trusts
and maintained schools

January 2017



A Competency Framework for Governance

The knowledge, skills and behaviours
needed for effective governance in
maintained schools, academies and
multi-academy trusts

January 2017

Improving governance

Governance arrangements in complex and challenging circumstances

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) commissioned this survey to investigate the challenges facing governing bodies in schools. The report draws on evidence from visits to 24 improving primary, secondary and special schools that are situated in some of the poorest areas of the country to look at their governance arrangements. It also uses evidence from routine inspections and monitoring visits over the last year and from 2,632 responses to a call for evidence initiated by HMCI in November 2015. The report identifies the barriers faced by governors in these schools and the actions taken to strengthen their professional skills and fulfil their roles as effective, strategic school leaders.

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Improving governance

Governance arrangements in complex and challenging circumstances

December 2016



Improving governance draws on evidence from:



- 2632 responses to HMCI's call for evidence
- Survey visits to 24 primary schools, secondary and special schools, situated in areas of disadvantage, where these schools improved by two Ofsted grades between section 5 inspections
- 90 routine monitoring visits by HMI to schools previously judged inadequate
- Routine inspections of six schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils, between October 2015 and May 2016, at which the schools were judged to require special measures.

The current environment for governance

- The considerable transformation of the education landscape and the changes to structures, assessment, curriculum and statutory testing are having an impact on governance.
- Successive government policy developments have resulted in considerable change to the role of governing bodies.
- The landscape of school accountability continues to change beyond recognition.

The challenges for governance are:

- knowing how to hold leaders to account
- understanding governors' strategic role
- knowing how governors and teachers work together
- making time to manage the workload in a voluntary capacity
- keeping up to date with the changes in education, legal responsibilities and the inspection framework
- ensuring boards have the right skills and knowledge
- recruiting governors with the required skills
- accessing good advice and support.

Where governance was weak, governors did not:

- challenge the headteacher robustly
- have the skills and did not access training to challenge effectively
- have sufficient knowledge about their roles and responsibilities
- have systems and procedures for governance that were fit for purpose
- keep up to date with developments in education
- pay close attention to pupils' outcomes, recognise how progress made compared nationally or understand the impact of pupil premium funding.

Skills and knowledge

Respondents identified that for boards to be effective, a range of skills and knowledge are essential including:

- strategic planning
- human resources
- management
- finance management
- health and safety
- law
- business and marketing
- education

Skills and knowledge

In the survey schools, we found that:

- governors with the right skills and knowledge were not always easy to recruit
- changes were often made to the board to achieve the right mix of skills and knowledge
- as governors became more knowledgeable, it enabled a more professional and open relationship between governors and headteachers
- schools thought governors having an initial induction and regular refresher training would make them effective.

Roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability

The call for evidence identified that there is a lack of clarity about:

- the lines of accountability for governors and who holds governing bodies to account
- the expectations of the 'strategic leadership' role.

Sometimes, when schools become part of a MAT, the roles and responsibilities of local boards are clarified by the introduction of different tiers of governance/trustee accountability.

Effective external support and guidance

This is the biggest factor in school improvement. The quality and timeliness of this support are important and may include:

- visiting other schools to help raise expectations
- external reviews of governance (if done well and speedily)
- alternatives, such as:
 - diocesan and local authority support
 - self-review
 - better and more targeted training
 - setting up an independent body to support governor development.

The ability of governors to reflect on their practice

- Two thirds of schools surveyed had not conducted any self-evaluation of governance.
- 'We didn't know what we didn't know until Ofsted came.'
- Audits of skills were undertaken and used to identify weaknesses and priorities for improvement.
- Robust self-evaluation was then implemented to judge effectiveness and inform training and development.

Supporting professional expertise – professional school clerks support governors to:

- be well organised and fulfil their strategic roles
- review policies
- access accurate minutes and receive papers in good time
- be aware of planned governance activities
- attend mandatory training
- report back to a committee or to the full governing body.

Successful professional clerks:

- are outward facing
- are well-informed about current affairs and planned events
- access termly training briefings and updates
- are members of professional organisations such as:
 - National Governors Association
 - National Co-ordinators of Governor Services
- use information services, such as
 - The Key.

Supporting professional expertise – the current position about paid governance

- The Secretary of State for education can pay any member of an interim executive board that she appoints.
- Local authorities that appoint an interim executive board pay any member of that board appointed.
- The Department for Education's current policy is that chairs and members of interim executive boards are paid only in exceptional circumstances.

Supporting professional expertise – paid governance



Respondents to HMCI's call for evidence had mixed views.

Those who were in favour recognise a need to professionalise governance given the increased demands of governors and thought that payment:

- could reduce problems in recruitment, retention, knowledge, skills and commitment
- could increase the number of people available to become governors
- could increase accountability.

Supporting professional expertise – paid governance

It is suggested that governors could be paid:

- an allowance
- a retainer
- a bursary
- a stipend
- an honorarium

Respondents also thought there should be a systematic arrangement for governors to be released from work, with employers compensated.

Supporting professional expertise – paid governance



Among those who thought that governors should not be paid, there was a common view that:

- being a member of the governing board is a means to give something back to the community
- that paying governors could change the motivation of governors into one of self-interest, rather than one which places the interest of the school and pupils first.

Governance in some of the poorest parts of the country

Governors of the schools surveyed in these areas:

- had very little understanding of how the best schools reduced the differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others, nationally.
- after following external advice and support, became more focused and aware of strategic approaches to tackle the specific barriers to learning
- worked hard to understand the particular issues of the school's community and found innovative ways in which to address disadvantage.

Improving understanding of and engagement with the community

Actions taken by some of the schools surveyed, included:

- an audit of skills that included a 'knowing the local community' measure
- recruiting people who work in the local community and could relate information from school to families and vice-versa
- recruiting governors from small local firms and local religious organisations
- encouraging parent governors to share information both from the community and to the community, and to contribute to higher aspirations.

Recommendations from the report

Governing boards of all schools should:

- ensure clarity of roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability for governance, particularly where multi-level governance makes accountability complex
- publish information about governance on the school's website in line with statutory requirements or the academy funding agreement to ensure transparency and clarify roles and responsibilities
- ensure that they have a robust review mechanism in place to assure themselves that the board continues to be effective
- secure professional support and effective governor training, as needed, to ensure effective governance.

Recommendations from the report

Multi-academy trusts should:

- review schemes of delegation annually and ensure clear lines of accountability, back to trust board level, are understood and effective
- publish each individual academy's annually reviews scheme of delegation on the website of the multi-academy trust and ensure that local governing boards, where they exist, fully understand their roles and responsibilities
- ensure that local governing boards use support, from experts across the trust and beyond, to closely monitor the performance of schools where they have delegated responsibility for doing so.

Recommendations from the report

The Department for Education should consider:



- publishing national quality standards to encourage robust self-assessment and use the findings to continue to improve governance
- expanding the number of effective national leaders of governance and the provision of professional clerks so that schools can access the right level of professional support for their needs
- ensure greater co-ordination by the NCTL of national leaders of governance
- improving the effectiveness and the consistency in the quality of external reviews of governance.

Ofsted will:

- Report more robustly on the extent to which governors are committed to their own professional development in order to secure sustained improvements in governance practices.

Key messages for governors



Key messages

- No major changes in the section 5 school inspection handbook, August 2016
- Amended grade descriptors in outcomes to reflect changes to national assessment and accountability measures
- Staff and pupil surveys are online - no paper copies
- Parents able to provide a 'free text' comment on Parent View
- Clarification about who inspectors need to meet with to inspect governance at the school – maintained schools and academies

Key messages: inspectors consider whether governors

- work effectively with leaders to communicate the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school and develop a culture of ambition
- provide a balance of challenge and support to leaders, understanding the strengths and areas needing improvement in the school
- understand how the school makes decisions about teachers' salary progression and performance

Key messages: inspectors consider whether governors

- performance manage the headteacher rigorously
- understand the impact of teaching, learning and assessment to 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

Key messages: inspectors consider whether governors

- ensure the school's finances are properly managed and can evaluate how the school is using pupil premium, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, primary PE and sport funding, and special educational needs
- are transparent and accountable, including in recruitment of staff, governance structures, attendance at meetings and contact with parents

Key messages: meeting governors

Inspectors will always seek to meet those responsible for governance during the inspection. This will usually include maintained school governors or academy trustees (including sponsor representatives, where they exist). However, in a multi-academy trust, the board of trustees may have established a local governing body to which it may have delegated certain functions. In some other cases, there may be a local governing body that is wholly advisory, with no formal governance responsibilities delegated to it. Inspectors should ensure that meetings are with those who are directly responsible for exercising governance of the school and for overseeing its performance.

Key messages: inspecting governance in multi-academy trusts (MATs)

Lead inspectors, as part of their initial telephone call with headteachers (School Inspection Update, March 2017):

- ensure they understand the governance structure for the school
- where the school is part of a MAT, check whether there is a chief executive officer (CEO) or equivalent for the MAT and obtain the contact details for that person
- confirm that the CEO or equivalent and the chair of the board have been informed of the inspection, and make arrangements to meet them as part of the inspection.

Key messages: inspecting governance in multi-academy trusts (MATs)

The CEO or equivalent and the chair of the board of trustees should be invited to join the headteacher in observing the final team meeting and attend the final feedback meeting to the school.

It is important the lead inspector makes it clear that observers at the team meetings are attending to listen to the scrutiny of evidence and formation of the judgements made by the team. As appropriate, the lead inspector may request that observers clarify key points during the meeting.

Key messages: coasting schools

- Regional schools commissioners have powers to take formal action in any school falling within the coasting definition.
- Intervention could include requiring a maintained school to become a sponsored academy or a coasting academy being moved to a new sponsor trust.
- The front page of your school's inspection dashboard has a coasting indicator on it.

Coasting schools definition: primary

2014 and 2015: fewer than 85% of pupils achieved a level 4 in English reading, English writing and mathematics and below the national median percentage of pupils achieved expected progress in all of English reading, English writing and mathematics.

2016: fewer than 85% of pupils achieve the expected standard at the end of primary schools and average progress made by pupils is less than -2.5 in English reading, -2.5 in mathematics and -3.5 in English writing.

Coasting schools definition: secondary

2014 and 2015: fewer than 60% of pupils achieved 5 A*-C GCSEs (including English and mathematics), and the school has less than the national median percentage of pupils who achieved expected progress in English and mathematics.

2016: the school has a progress 8 score below -0.25 and the upper band of the 95% confidence interval is below zero.

Key messages: publishing information

- Every local authority maintained school must publish specific information on its website to comply with The School Information (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012.

Key messages: publishing information

- For most academy schools, these requirements will be reflected in their funding agreement.
- Some early academies still have funding agreements that do not specify a requirement to publish certain information e.g. pupil premium.
- DfE has published guidance setting out what academies and free schools should publish. Not a statutory duty but it is recommended by the DfE.
- Section 5 report template has a section to record whether schools are meeting these requirements.

Key messages: safeguarding

Safeguarding policy – Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016, September 2016

Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings

Guidance for inspectors undertaking inspection under the common inspection framework, August 2016

Key messages: progress

- Inspectors give most weight to the progress of current pupils in all year groups.
- Inspectors evaluate achievement across the curriculum, not just in English and mathematics.

Key messages: secondary accountability

Progress 8 is now the secondary accountability measure

- reference to 5A*-C (including English and mathematics) is only made in relation to historic performance
- exemption from inspection for secondary schools that secure a progress 8 score of +1.0 or higher
- exemption will apply in the calendar year following the publication of the final performance tables in 2016
- if a school requests, Ofsted can inspect during this period.

Key messages: pupil groups

- Inspectors will report in a meaningful way so that it is clear whether or not schools are challenging the most able pupils.
- Disadvantaged: pupils who attract government pupil premium funding - pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.
- Inspectors will include a focus on the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Inspectors will include a focus on pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Key messages: myth busting

- Inspectors do not advocate a particular method of planning, teaching or assessment.
- Lesson planning – no specific requirements to produce plans for Ofsted, no requirement about how planning is set out, inspectors assess impact.
- Self-evaluation – for schools to determine format and business as usual for the school – the ‘working document’.
- Lesson observations – no grading of lessons, teaching or outcomes in a lesson.

Key messages: myth busting

- Pupils' work and marking – no specific requirements for quantity, frequency or type.
- Evidence for inspection – Ofsted does not expect schools to provide evidence for inspection beyond that set out in the inspection handbook.
- Ofsted will report on any failure to comply with statutory arrangements where these form part of the inspection framework and evaluation schedule.

Useful references for governors



Useful references for governors

Improving governance: governance arrangements in complex and challenging circumstances

www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-governance

School inspection update March 2017

www.gov.uk/government

Ofsted inspections: myths

www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015/ofsted-inspections-mythbusting

Useful references for governors

What governors can expect during an inspection:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=676mZrDrY9o>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6vySUUIPhs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txehqOy-2TU>

Useful references for governors

Governance handbook

www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook

A competency framework for governance

www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook

Useful references for governors

National Governors Association

<http://www.nga.org.uk>

National Co-ordinators of governor Services

<http://www.ncogs.org.uk/>

School Governors' One Stop Shop

www.sgoss.org.uk

Inspiring Governance

<http://inspiringgovernance.org/>

Ofsted on the web and on social media

www.gov.uk/ofsted

<http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>

 www.linkedin.com/company/ofsted

 www.youtube.com/ofstednews

 www.slideshare.net/ofstednews

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