



Strengthening governance in nursery schools

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The core functions

High quality governance in all types of schools is characterised by a relentless focus on the three core strategic functions:

- a. Setting vision, ethos and strategic direction
- b. Holding headteachers to account for teaching, achievement, behaviour and safety, and challenging and strengthening their leadership;
- c. Ensuring finances are managed well leading to probity, solvency and effective use of resources

The DfE want all GBs to operate as non-executive boards

Governors' Handbook May 2013, updated May 2014

Effective governance

1. The right people round the table
2. Understanding role & responsibilities
3. Good chairing
4. Professional clerking
5. Good relationships based on trust
6. Knowing the school – the data, the staff, the parents, the children, the community
7. Committed to asking challenging questions
8. Confident to have courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people

Challenges for governors

A whole range, including:

- Setting the vision & engaging with the strategic;
- Monitoring quality of teaching & outcomes for all children: what does data tell us & measuring what we value;
- Money: Revenue, capital, efficiencies;
- Long term future;
- Hiring & performance managing headteachers;
- External support and the need to collaborate;
- Finding the time for responsibilities; and
- Finding new ways of working.

The right people around the table

- Review size & constitution
 - Reconstitution for LA maintained schools in 2014/15
- Skills audits – NGA model with matrix
- Take time to recruit – approach local employers
- NGA has role description for governors & Code of Conduct
- State expectations e.g. on training & CPD
- Interview prospective governors (where possible)
- Terms of office

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Challenge 1

Setting vision, ethos & strategic direction

The ethos describes the values of the school

The vision describes the sort of school you want to be in three to five years time, and what pupils will have learnt/developed:

knowledge, skills & personal qualities

The GB determines a strategy for achieving this by:

- Agreeing the school's development priorities
- For each priority setting targets (or KPIs) for the short and longer term
- Structuring most of the GB business towards monitoring progress against these, including the head's report
- At the end of the year, formally reviewing and evaluating the strategy & progress towards the vision

Development of the strategy should be done in partnership & consultation, including staff, & then owned by all

Strategic responsibilities - Risk Management

- The vision - where do we want to be in 1-3 years time?
 - Still here!
 - Providing high quality nursery education
- Need to plan for ongoing provision – but take into account possible threats.
- SWOT analysis
 - Strengths, weaknesses opportunities threats
- Do you have a plan in place to counter closure/changes to structure proposals?
 - Clear about the quality you offer compared to other forms of provision
 - Parents
 - Local partners
 - Elected representatives
- Federation is different to amalgamation/closure

Review GB performance

- Review GB structure and practice
 - e.g two committee structure; streamline agendas
- Review GB effectiveness:
 - external reviews, '20 questions', GovernorMark, Target Tracker's GSET, updating *Stronger Governance* material
 - requires honesty: no defensiveness
- Innovation from other sector: performance reviews for governors

NGA can help with this: Clare Collins, Lead Consultant:

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NGA is a membership organisation

- representing governors and Trustees in all state funded schools in England
- our aim to improve the effectiveness of governing bodies by providing expert and tailored information and advice, and challenge when appropriate

Standard Governing Body membership is £72

GOLD Governing Body membership is £260

and includes an advice line

