



# The Elliot Foundation National Governors Day

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## The State of School Governing in England in 2014

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# **The State of School Governing in England in 2014**

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## **The University of Bath Governing and Governance in Education (GAGE) Research Programme**

- A national survey in 2008
- Six projects since 2008 including:
  - The Hidden Givers Project 2009–2011
  - The Chair of the School Governing Body (2010-2012)
  - Headteacher Performance Management (2012-2014)
  - The state of school governing 2014 (Apr/May 2014)

# The State of School Governing in England in 2014

## School governing in England is functioning well and moving in the right direction

- Training is more prevalent – was 58%, now 81%
- Induction is more widespread – 52%, now 92%
- 'HT challenge' has increased – was 72%, now 88%
- The focus on 'finance' and 'pupil attainment' is strong – 99% and 96% respectively but . . . . .
- Specification and understanding of roles and responsibilities is strong – 83%





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## **Governor recruitment:**

- 66% said recruiting governors is difficult – and in all governor categories. It's more difficult in:
  - Special (76%) than mainstream schools (63%)
  - Primary (65%) than secondary (43%)
  - Disadvantaged (83%) than advantaged (62%)
  - Urban/city/town settings (66%) than rural (59%)
  - RI/Satisfactory schools (78%) than Outstanding (58%)
  - Non-academies (64%) than academies (59%)



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## **Recruiting governors can be difficult which can impact negatively on GB effectiveness**

- It's difficult to recruit in all categories of governor.
- 40% of respondents said their governing body would be more effective if they could recruit better governors. The figure was higher where good governors were needed most.
- Governing bodies in schools where recruitment is harder put less effort into recruiting.

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## The qualities of effective governors

- A readiness to ask challenging questions and to be assertive – 98%
- A willingness to take collective responsibility for the conduct of the school – 98%
- A commitment to the school (and to the success of other schools and high quality education for all young people) – 98%
- The ability to work in a group – 98%



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## **Governors' expertise is substantial :**

- Typically 'work-related' leadership/management capabilities
- There is an opportunity cost to being a governor
- 'Family/ 'Work-friendly' GB working is important

## **Governing can develop expertise :**

- Schools are complex institutions
- The responsibility can enable significant development.



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## **Governing bodies and the core responsibilities assigned to them**

- Governing bodies strongly prioritise their school's educational and financial performance
- All governing bodies give less priority to longer term strategic issues – 75%
- The lack of strategic focus is arguably a matter of particular concern





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## The way governing bodies function

- Meetings have a well-structured agenda (98%)
- There is a positive atmosphere (98%)
- Attendance is usually very good (90%)
- The GB has formal terms of reference (90%)
- Governors receive the right information (86%)
- Governors feel able to speak their minds (82%)
- The GB has an effective chair (82%)



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## The role of the chair

- Now recognised as significant in relation to governing body functioning
- An important educational leadership and management responsibility
- How can it be made more do-able?

## The role of the clerk

- Is a step-change needed in how the role is viewed?





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## **School governors typically make a substantial and very positive contribution**

- Governing practices are typically 'high level' and significant.
- As volunteers, governors are responsible for a large slice of the schools budget of £46billion/year.
- Governors spend a considerable amount of time on their governing work – which is worth about £1billion a year.



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## The nature of school governing

School governing is typically:

- challenging and can be very challenging in some settings and circumstances
- becoming more challenging (and especially in those settings where it is challenging already)
- enjoyable and rewarding.

