

The role of the Local Governing Body in securing school improvement through effective and accountable governance, challenge and support.

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# Trustees and Governors

In a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) the Trust remains ultimately responsible for standards and finance, however it would be impossible for trustees to oversee everything in all schools and so key roles are delegated to local governing bodies, which function, day-to-day, largely in the same way as those of maintained schools.

Local governing bodies in the Elliot Foundation Academy Trust are comprised of:

The Principal

Two elected parent governors

One elected staff governor

One community governor

Six, Trust-appointed, foundation governors.

# THE THREE CORE FUNCTIONS OF THE GOVERNING BODY:

setting the strategic direction  
creating robust accountability  
ensuring financial probity

"The aim of the Governor team at our school is to work with the staff in helping the children achieve their full potential in a happy, caring environment. We do this in four main ways:

- Monitoring the performance and progress of our children.
- Working with the staff to help them teach and care for our children.
- Deciding on how the resources of the school are best used.
- Planning ahead so that the performance of our children and our school continues to improve."

Mike Kelly  
Chair of Governors, Billesley Primary School (Elliot Foundation)

# DELIVERING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT THROUGH EFFECTIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE

- Effective governance is an intrinsic part of good leadership.
- Good governance is not universal.

Ofsted and improving governance, October 2013

# Accountability and responsibility

Accountable means having to carry out certain duties and explain or justify what has been done.

The local governing body is accountable to the Trust.

Responsibility does not have that element of having to explain and justify, for example class teacher is responsible for providing good education for her/his class and would only be called to account if they failed.

The local governing body is responsible for the day-to-day governance of the academy, for monitoring and evaluating progress and attainment, and for supporting and challenging the leadership of the academy to ensure high-quality teaching, good behaviour and financial probity.

The National Governors' Association says there are eight elements of effective governance:

- The right people round the table
- Understanding the role and responsibilities
- Good chairing
- Professional clerking
- Good relationships based on trust
- Knowing the school – the data, the staff, the parents, the children, the community
- Committed to asking challenging questions
- Confident to have courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Education Governance and Leadership invites us to ask ourselves twenty questions.

# DELIVERING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT THROUGH GOVERNORS AND PRINCIPALS WORKING TOGETHER

Governors should govern in a way that encourages the Principal to  
lead all staff and pupils

and

The Principal should lead in a way that enables the governing body  
to govern

## THE GOVERNORS' ROLE – STRATEGIC

- ensuring that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined
- ensuring that the Headteacher performs his or her responsibilities for the educational performance of the school
- ensuring the sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources

Governance regulations 2013

## THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE - OPERATIONAL

The Principal's responsibilities include

- the educational performance of the school
- the internal organisation, management and control of the school

The Academies Financial Handbook states that the Principal is the Accounting Officer, who is personally responsible to the governing body (or in this case, the Trust) for:

- ensuring regularity and propriety;
- prudent and economical administration;
- avoidance of waste and extravagance;
- efficient and effective use of available resources; and
- the day to day organisation, staffing and management of the academy.

# DELIVERING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT THROUGH SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE

Effective governors:

Know the right questions to ask;

Expect to receive a response;

Are able to understand the response and dig deeper if need be;

Expect the response to be supported by evidence;

Ensure all discussions, actions and outcomes clearly minuted

The starting point for school improvement is to know what most urgently needs improving.

*How do we know what needs improving and what does not?*

The short route - Ask the Principal

The long route –

- Read the self-evaluation document and academy development plan
- Ask the school's SIP (or equivalent)
- Look at data about the school that tells you about pupil performance, including RAISE-online, Ofsted data dashboard, FFT – look for trends, groups, gaps
- Read any recent Ofsted report
- Visit the school – observe, ask questions, talk to pupils, parents and staff

Once the school's strengths and weaknesses are established, the governors and Principal agree on priorities, targets and timescales, to form the basis of the Academy Development Plan. Governors must:

- monitor the implementation of the plan
- evaluate its outcomes

Definitions:

Monitoring: checking that actions have been taken through frequent and systematic collection of data

Evaluating: measuring the effect of actions on the school's performance through systematic and objective assessment

*How do we monitor and evaluate progress against the ADP?*

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# Monitoring and evaluation should:

- Take place within an agreed framework – visits should have clear guidelines and clear expectations; the content of reports should be agreed with governors and the information in them should be current and at an appropriate level of detail
- Be linked to the ADP, key priorities and/or the Ofsted framework
- Be evidence based
- Be evaluative
- Triangulate information from multiple sources
- Inform school priorities and feed back in to the academy improvement cycle

When several sources say the same thing it is a basis for action

When several sources give conflicting messages, it's a cause for investigation

# Ofsted and governance



‘without strong and effective governance,  
our schools simply won’t be as good as they can be’  
Sir Michael Wilshaw, HMCI

When Ofsted judged them separately, 'Leadership and management' was consistently judged more favourably than governance.

The focus on governance is now much greater and around one in four schools/academies inspected receives recommendations regarding governance.

# Ofsted Criteria for governance judgement

## **Outstanding (1)**

All leaders and managers, including the governing body, are highly ambitious for the school and lead by example. They base their actions on a deep and accurate understanding of the school's performance and of staff and pupils' skills and attributes

## **Good (2)**

Key leaders and managers, including the governing body, consistently communicate high expectations and ambition.

## **Satisfactory (3)**

The headteacher and most other key leaders, including the governing body, provide a concerted approach to school improvement. Essential systems are embedded sufficiently to enable the school to continue improving and do not depend solely on only one or two senior leaders

## **Inadequate (4)**

Capacity for further improvement is limited because current leaders and managers have been ineffective in securing essential improvements since the last inspection.

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