

Review of Governing Board Effectiveness Update: 01/09/20

Background

In May 2019, Andrea, Jill and I went through together the National Governors Association (NGA) 20 Questions which governing boards should ask themselves in order to assess our effectiveness as a governing body. We hadn't conducted a self-review for several years. The list of questions is just one of the self-assessment tools available but is pretty comprehensive.

I summarised the main points and suggested actions for the Strategic Planning Meeting in September 2019. Our plans to discuss these at a full governing board meeting but were overtaken by events (Ofsted, Covid 19). Since then, Nicola, Jill and Broydon have left, Tim has joined and we are also hoping that two more new governors (Diane and Maaria) will join shortly.

I have updated the answers to the questions to try and reflect the latest position. Almost half the governing board will be new and we are going to have to work in a different way in light of Covid 19 (less face to face, more online and virtual). I suggest, therefore, that rather than share the 20 questions document at this stage with all governors, we instead agree on some key areas for the year ahead. As far as possible, these should be activities for the governors to undertake or activities which are already planned rather than adding to SLT or staff workload.

Actions

I've attached the 20 questions document as an annex so you can read the detail if you wish. My suggested priorities for action are:

- Review Meadow View's strategy ensuring it looks three to five years ahead.
- Review how we get to know the school and monitor implementation of the strategy, Pupil Premium, Safeguarding, SEND etc when it may not be possible to visit the school.
- Review how we meaningfully engage with pupils, staff and parents when it may not be possible to come into school.
- Ensure our questions are focussed (particularly when looking at performance data) in light of Ofsted feedback.
- Involve new/different governors in looking at performance data and finance as part of succession planning.
- Conduct 360 degree review of Chair (I need this for the NGA Leading Governance programme).

Trisha White
Chair

20 Questions Every Governing Body Should Ask Itself: 01/09/20

Governing Board Effectiveness

Right Skills: Do we have the right skills on the governing board?

- 1. Have we completed a skills audit which informs the governor specification we use as the basis of governor appointment and interview?**

Partly. Three governors have left the board for various reasons in the past year. We have recruited one new governor and hope to appoint another in September. However we will have two parent governor vacancies.

Action: Confirm new governor appointments in September. Conduct parent governor recruitment as soon as we can. Complete and analyse skills audit annually, identifying how to develop skills and experience as necessary.

Effectiveness: Are we as effective as we could be?

- 2. How well do we understand our roles and responsibilities, including what it means to be strategic?**

Each governor has specific responsibilities but these are new for some governors. Strategic Planning meetings at the start of each term.

Actions: Review responsibilities at start of term and signpost to sources of training.

Make use of local information eg birth rates/population changes to help inform decision-making.

- 3. Do we have a professional clerk who provides legal advice and oversees the governing board's induction and development needs?**

Yes. An excellent clerk. Training and Development Governor oversees development needs.

Action: Find out if the clerk would like to develop his role further.

- 4. Is the size, composition and committee structure of our governing board conducive to effective working?**

Yes. Review structure 2018 and moved from committee structure to monthly governor meetings. Reviewed how this was working and agreed it resulted in

less duplication of discussions and papers. Governors gradually developing their knowledge of different areas.

Action: Keep structure under review following conversion to Academy.

5. How do we make good use of practice across the country?

Information from RoSIS training courses and newsletters, School Bus updates. Feedback from Headteacher about events attended.

Action: Continue to learn from JMAT. Anywhere else? Examples?

Role of the chair: Does our Chair show strong and effective leadership?

6. Do we carry out a regular 360 degree review of the chair's performance and elect chair each year?

New Chair appointed October 2019.

Action: Carry out 360 degree review.

7. Do we engage in good succession planning so that no governor serves for longer than two terms of office and the chair is replaced at least every six years?

Yes. Terms of office reviewed at termly Strategic Planning meetings. Previous chair stood down in October 2019 having completed six years.

8. Does the chair carry out an annual review of each governor's contribution to the board's performance?

Chair has held one to one discussions with governors during 2019/20. Not formal annual reviews.

Action: Discuss if this is something we want to do and how it would work.

Vision, ethos and strategy

Strategy: Does the school have a clear vision and strategic priorities

9. Does our vision look forward three to five years, and does it include what the children who have left the school will have achieved?

Have a vision which is set out in the Developing Excellence Plan. “100 Things to do before you leave Meadow View”.

Action: Do we need a strategy looking forward three to five years etc? Does JMAT have a long-term strategy? Do we get any information from Winterhill about the progress of children from MVP?

10. Have we agreed a strategy for achieving our vision with key performance indicators against which we can regularly monitor and review the strategy?

Do we do this via the DEP? Any actions?

11. How effectively does our strategic planning cycle drive the governing board’s activities and agenda setting?

Works very well.

Action: Review when we convert to Academy.

Engagement: Are we properly engaged with our school community, the wider school section and the outside world?

12. How well do we listen to, understand and respond to our pupils, parents and staff? Staff governor raised colleagues’ concerns and questions at governors’ meeting about conversion. Governors have met some staff on school visits etc. We currently have two parent governor vacancies. Chair and Vice Chair have met parents at Parent Council and Community Café. Vice Chair has attended School Council.

Action: How do we engage meaningfully with pupils, parents and staff without visiting school?

13. How do we make regular reports on the work of the governing board to our parents and local community?

Governor Awards evening once a year but not in 2020. Any other examples? Do we want to do more here? What could we do? Termly newsletter?

14. What benefit does the school draw from collaboration with other schools and other sectors, locally and nationally?

We are really benefiting from working closely with JMAT.

Effective accountability

Accountability of the executive: Do we hold the school leaders to account?

15. How well do we understand the school's performance data (including in-year progress tracking data) so we can properly hold school leaders to account?

Chair and Vice Chair meet with Headteacher twice a year to look at attainment and progress data for all years (only happened once in 2019/20 due to lockdown). Information provided for SEN, EAL and PP children. Governors attend training courses about performance data. Discussions about performance data and governors questions recorded in board minutes.

Action: In light of Ofsted feedback, need to ensure discussions and questions are focussed. Involve another governor in performance data as part of succession planning.

16. Do governors regularly visit the school to get to know it and monitor implementation of the school strategy?

Governors have conducted learning walks (but not recently due to lockdown) Have had tours of school when visiting Headteacher for other reasons and get overall impression of children being engaged and committed staff.

Action: Look at how we get to know school and monitor implementation of the school strategy if we can't visit school.

Accountability of the executive: Do we hold the school leaders to account?

17. How well does our policy review schedule work and how do we ensure compliance?

Our policy review schedule wasn't completed in 2019/20 because of partial school closure and coronavirus pandemic. Governors ask questions about specific policies which are recorded in board minutes.

Action: Agree realistic schedule for 2020/21.

18. Do we know how effective performance management of all staff is within the school?

Headteacher conducts performance management of all teachers and reports to Pay Committee. Information is anonymised. Pay committee conducts HT appraisal with support from external adviser who also manages appraisal of other JMAT Heads. Governors are not involved with performance management of other staff.

Action: Need to agree arrangements for 2020/21.

19. Are our financial management systems robust so we can ensure best value for money?

Yes. School has a deficit in 2020/21 which is unusual, due to a falling roll. School lettings and SLT doing work elsewhere for the local authority bring in additional money. School Business Manager works very effectively with other schools and suppliers to secure best value for money.

Action: Conduct benchmarking.

How much has the school improved over the last three years, and what has the governing board's contribution been to this?

Action: Ofsted report January 2020. Focus in 2020/21 is recovery and continuity. Priority to focus on that rather than looking over past three years?