



TEACHING
SCHOOL
ALLIANCE

Getting Governance Right



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Welcome

A Warm Welcome to this edition of the **Kyra Journal**

Welcome to the first edition of the Kyra Journal of 2018, which I am proud to say is exclusively dedicated to school governance. An effective governing body is of central importance to the success of all schools, and the positive impact that outstanding governance can have on a school, and its staff and pupils, cannot be underestimated.

School governors make up the largest volunteer body in the UK. They offer a wide variety of different skills and attributes, but have one common aim, to maximise the educational opportunities of children and to help to provide the means for them to reach their full potential.

Making sure that the passion and talents of school governors are utilised effectively is of utmost importance. School governors provide strategic leadership and accountability; they appoint the Head Teacher, hold the main responsibility for finance in schools, set the vision for the school, support the head in making key decisions, and challenge and hold leadership to account. It is little wonder then, that school governance is increasingly in the spot light, and that the drive to ensure strong governance is gaining more and more momentum.

Self reviews and external reviews of governance are becoming an established way of reflecting on, and improving, the performance of governing bodies, and in this journal we've included examples of two governing bodies who have taken part in reviews of governance. We look at what the reviews entailed and how they have contributed to even better governance.

We've also included an interview with Kyra's very own Juliet Brookes, who is also a Vice-Chair of a governing body and shares with us her experiences of being a school governor, and hints and tips on succeeding in the role. We've also looked beyond the education sector, to gain advice and insight from Vanni Treves CBE, an expert in corporate governance and former chair of the National College, as well as looking closer to home, and reflecting on the latest developments in governance training and support in Lincolnshire.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the journal and find it useful and informative.

Best Wishes,

Marie-Claire



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KYRA
Journal

Juliet Brookes



Juliet Brookes has been Vice-Chair of Governors at Sturton by Stow primary school for over 3 years.

She brings to the position a wealth of experience in education research and policy from her role as a senior manager at the National College of School Leadership, and more recently, her current role as Research and Development Lead at Kyra. She is a Local Leader of Governance (LLG) and helps to deliver NGA training on behalf of LTT (Lincolnshire Teaching Schools Together). In recent years she has also completed an MSc in social research and her thesis had a school governance focus.

Tell us about your journey towards becoming a governor, and what motivated you.

There are several reasons I decided to become a governor, the first being that I felt I had something to offer. My work means I have up-to-date knowledge and understanding of educational issues and policies, and I have skills which I believed would be beneficial, which I have developed through being a senior manager, such as project management and strategic thinking. Becoming a governor was also an opportunity to keep my work life real, and to be actively involved in a school on a practical, hands on level. Finally, I felt I had time and energy to give to the role, and saw it as an opportunity to make a positive difference and 'give something back'.

I decided to submit a profile on the Inspiring Governance website (www.inspiringgovernance.org), and was emailed

not long after by the head teacher of Sturton by Stow school. The head was looking for someone who lived outside of the community, who could offer an objective, external perspective (I live half an hour away). She invited me to meet with her and the chair of governors; this gave the opportunity for me to introduce myself, for them to ask questions to make sure I was right for the role, and also an opportunity for me to ask questions to find out if this was the school for me. I attended my first governance meeting around 6 weeks later.

Tell us about your role in the governing body at Sturton by Stow over the past three years

I was asked to lead governor training to begin with. I completed a skills audit and encouraged governors to attend relevant training. I attended a training event myself on effective governance, which focussed on how to effectively set agendas and run meetings in order to be most efficient and productive. I shared this information, and set a proposal based on it to the governing body, to have a structured plan of meetings in advance of each school year, and introduced agendas which clearly showed decision and assurance items.

I now monitor literacy; I make sure that there are literacy focussed school visits, that the right questions are asked of the head teacher and that data is closely monitored; I then produce monitoring reports. I am also Vice-Chair, which means working closely with the Chair of governors to make sure that the governing body is as effective as it possibly can be. In addition, I am on the Head Teacher performance management panel along with the Chair and an external member from the University of Lincoln. Now as a Local Leader of Governance, and through training and supporting other governors and governing bodies across Lincolnshire, I have a good idea of the 'bigger' picture of governance, and can bring back ideas and examples of positive practice to the governing body of Sturton by Stow.

What were the weaknesses of the governing body when you arrived, and what improvements have been made?

We had three relatively new governors on a governing body made up of eight people.



As a new group, it took time for everybody to get used to working together, to find their place, and to use their skills to contribute most effectively. However, things have really fallen into place since, and we have a very good balance of skills, experience, knowledge and a good level of professional development.

We have improved how we do our monitoring visits; they are now more effectively organised and planned, each with a specific individual focus and with clear aims. We now do skills audits on an annual basis and also individual self-reflection questionnaires of strengths, skills, and areas to improve, which inform our training plan. There are currently no skill gaps in the governing body and we are really mindful of skills, and who could pick up in certain areas if any unforeseeable gaps did occur. We are also becoming more mindful of how everyone in the governing body can make sure that they keep their knowledge and understanding of the educational landscape up-to-date.

How does the governing body make a difference?

By making sure that there is a balance between working alongside school leadership in a friendly and respectful way, while still being able to ask the difficult questions which fully challenge. Ultimately, it is our duty and responsibility to the pupils, as governors, to make sure that we continually challenge leadership for full accountability and adequate evidence. A vital part of this is preparing for meetings in advance by carefully reading through relevant reports and data, and formulating the critical questions prior to each meeting.

We also set the vision for the school, and this is re-visited every year. We develop strategy around this by deciding where we want the school to be in 5 years' time, and how we are going to get there. We ask the hard questions to ensure high standards. We are ambitious and strive to do everything we can to enable the school to be as successful as possible. We are also a visible presence and sounding board, attending school events and talking and listening to parents and pupils.

What are the biggest challenges of being a governor, and what are the biggest challenges which governing bodies face overall?

Personally, I think the biggest challenge of being a governor is finding your place within the governing body when you first begin; it can take time to get to know the role and how best to use your skills. After that, it's about being clear where the boundaries are; what you can influence and what you can't; what is your responsibility, and what isn't. For example, the curriculum is not the governors' responsibility. Sometimes it can be hard not to want to get involved in everything, especially when you are passionate about the school! I also know that some people find the level of time and commitment a challenge; being a governor is not simply a matter of

attending 6 to 12 meetings a year, it goes far beyond that. You have to do preparation, paperwork, training, reading, write reports, attend events and do regular school visits. It is an extensive role and an important responsibility, and you have to be willing to put in the time and commitment accordingly.

For governing bodies as a whole, there is inequity in the school system which can have a huge impact on the effectiveness of governance due to financial constraints. Smaller schools with smaller budgets do not always have the funds to train governors, which can leave them lacking the skills to do their job effectively. Rural and coastal schools often struggle to recruit governors with business skills and expertise, as there are often fewer business organisations in these areas to call upon. Another challenge is the pace of change in educational policy; it can be hard for lay governors to stay on top of these changes, though there are ways to do this, such as subscribing to weekly bulletins on education news.

What are the key characteristics of strong governing bodies?

Collaboration is key. All governors need to be working together and with the leadership team towards the same goals, and supporting each other. Also, in an effective governing body, everybody knows what their role is, and understands their responsibility to effectively challenge the senior leadership team while still being supportive and respectful. They will challenge each other as governors too, keep developing themselves in terms of skills and knowledge, and look outwards to learn from the expertise of others, and from other successful governing bodies. A strong governing body will also regularly reflect, both at an individual level, and on its effectiveness as a whole, in order to continually develop and improve. Finally, a strong and effective governing body must be made up of people with the desire to make a real difference to the lives of children, their education and their opportunities, and always put the pupils first.

Follow Juliet Brookes on Twitter @Jayemby

Take a look at the following video too: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xmfLxVfIEo>



Impact and Improvement

Strong school governance is vital to the success of all schools, and according to the National Governance Association, it is more important than it has ever been, with governing bodies having more responsibility and being held accountable for the performance of their schools more rigorously than ever before.

Over the past few years, Ofsted has put an increasing emphasis on the effectiveness of governance when inspecting schools and academies, with the performance of the governing body now forming a crucial component of Ofsted's overall judgement. Perhaps it is as a result of this that governing bodies are increasingly taking part in external or self reviews in order to reflect on their effectiveness and to maximise their efficacy. It is important that every governing board reviews its performance as a whole, and the NGA recommend that this exercise is carried out internally annually. In this article we will be looking at two examples of governing bodies that have taken part in reviews of governance, one external review and one self review, and looking at what difference the reviews have made to their governing bodies.

Allison Jackson, chair of governors at the Welbourn Primary School, a small, rural primary school in Lincolnshire, was inspired to initiate an external review of governance as a result of several factors. "The school was going through a period of transition, this included changes in the governing body (with people leaving and new governors taking their place), and the adoption of a temporary executive head model, so it seemed like a good time to reflect. The Ofsted judgement of 'requires improvement' was also an added incentive to make sure that we used the external review to ensure the governing body



Above: Allison Jackson, chair of governors at the Welbourn Primary School

became as effective as possible in order to best support school improvement". For Allison, support was close at hand as the Kyra Teaching Alliance, who were already commissioned to do a review of teaching and learning at Welbourn, put her in touch with Sean Westaway, a National Leader of Governance with a particular interest in small rural schools. Sean then agreed to lead the external review.

The review began with a contextual discussion with Allison establishing where the governing body was at, what they were currently working on, and what areas they felt needed further development. Sean then met with each of the governors individually to obtain their views on how the governing body was performing and how it was supporting school development, and also to discuss their individual contribution to governance and the specific expertise and skills that they bring. Allison tells us, "each governor filled in questionnaires regarding their skills, including skills analysis and a skills matrix, and also a questionnaire on their understanding of governance." Sean utilised the competency framework for governance, published by the DfE, to help to assess the governing body's competencies and training needs.

Sean also investigated the current efficiency of the governing body by reading through the minutes of previous governance meetings to see how robust the minutes were, and also to review the quality and challenge of the questioning within the meetings. He also attended meetings to observe their structure and organisation, and to see the questioning of school leadership in action. Following this, Sean produced a report which outlined the context of the school and the governing body, the key aspects of governance which needed to improve, and an action plan to help support the governing body in improving and making positive changes.



The external review helped to highlight specific areas which needed improvement; these included the strength and detail of minutes, and the amount of challenge and accountability presented through questioning. The review also underlined a vital need to consider the financial development of the school, and to consider the vision and long-term strategic plan for school improvement.

In light of the report, Sean supported the governing body to instigate change in several ways. One of the first ways was to address the lack of challenge in questioning by attending governing body meetings himself, and modelling best practice of effective questioning, as well as discussing with the governing body what effective challenge should look like, and how to embed challenging questioning into governance meetings. He supported the governing body to use small groups more effectively to focus on certain areas; for example, Sean worked with a small group of governors to discuss working on a 3 – 5 year strategy for school improvement, and what that might look like, including vision, values and strategic priorities. Sean also supported Allison as chair; she tells us “he provided a wealth of knowledge for me as a new and inexperienced Chair, and helped to provide me with the skills needed to get the most out of the governing body and our meetings”.

The review also revealed where training was necessary within the governing body, for example, in the area of risk management, and the governing body followed this up by seeking coaching to amend specific skill gaps. All governors engaged in some kind of training, including a training session led by Sean on the new code of conduct for governors. The Clerk attended a ‘Clerk’s development programme’ to guide them in taking robust and effective minutes, and other training within the governing body has included widespread engagement with online courses, such as training through the Virtual College. According to Allison, the external review has encouraged all governors to become more proactive in developing their skills and their understanding of governance, as well as fostering an increased desire to look outwards, to learn both from experts in the field, and from the success of other governing bodies.

Allison reflects on the difference that the external review has made to the governing body of Welbourn Primary School, “we were a fragmented governing body before Sean arrived, and with his help we have become more unified and more focussed upon our goals. We now have a framework to help us to operate strategically, and are committed to detailed succession planning. We are becoming a much stronger governing body, capable of giving the kind of support which will improve leadership and teaching and learning that the school greatly needs. If you are part of a governing body which is considering taking part in an external review, I would highly recommend it; not only does it help to give renewed focus, but it has also given us the tools to become a much more efficient, effective and successful governing body, which will hopefully result in a more successful school, and ultimately, in improved outcomes for pupils, which is what it is all about.”

Governance reviews do not have to be external and any governing body can do a self review of its performance in order to reflect, instigate positive change, and improve. One way in which governing bodies can structure self review is through the National Governance Association’s ‘20 questions’, and this is exactly what the governing body of the Federation of Frithville and New York Primary Schools have recently done, led by chair Sue Brackenbury. The ‘20 questions’ are, as the name suggests, made up of twenty key questions for a governing body to ask itself; the questions have been formulated to encourage governing bodies to reflect on their practice, and challenge themselves to progress and improve. The questions address the three key aspects of effective governance; governing board effectiveness; vision, ethos and strategy; and effective accountability.

For the governing body of Frithville and New York primary schools, the journey of self review began with the formation of a small working group of three governors (including the Headteacher) and the Clerk meeting on three separate occasions to go through the 20 questions. Each of the 20 questions was discussed, and notes were taken by the Clerk, either recording evidence of how a particular area was being effectively met, or with an action plan on how a particular area might be improved.

Sue Brackenbury, the Chair of governors, tells us, "once the responses to the 20 questions were complete, we sent the documentation out to each of the governors to inform them of the areas we felt were effective, areas in which we needed to improve, and the suggested action plan to effect the improvements." The governing body also completed an up-to-date and comprehensive skills audit alongside the 20 questions, to help to identify any training needs.

Some of the areas highlighted for improvement in the self review included the need for governors to be fully prepared for meetings to allow them to formulate challenging questions; also to keep themselves and each other up-to-date with the latest developments in education. It was also identified that a clear time span for agreed actions together with timely follow-up would help to avoid any time lag which had in the past hampered progress (these points to be noted in the minutes of meetings). Armed with this knowledge, a workshop was arranged by Sue where the outcomes of the 20 questions, including proposed actions, were discussed by the governing body and either agreed to or amended.

Contributions made at the workshop were amalgamated into a review document and circulated in preparation for a second workshop, at which a final action plan for the governing body was produced. Sue tells us "at this workshop we finalised what our action plan was to be, which governors would be responsible for each area of improvement, and the timescales. The outcomes of the review have been incorporated into our Federation Improvement Plan (FIP) and have resulted in clear responsibilities for governors, including monitoring activities for each governor to perform, clearly identified within the monitoring cycle."

The governing body also decided to adopt a coaching model, which has ensured a strong element of informal learning and training within their work, and is helping all governors to develop their skills further in areas where they may not be as knowledgeable. The coaching model essentially links together an experienced and less experienced governor attached to major roles, for example safeguarding, SEND, finance and school performance. Most governors will act as the 'experienced' governor in one area, and the 'inexperienced governor' in another, so that all governors are continually learning from each other. This approach also builds in an element of succession planning, and helps to protect against skills gaps which could potentially develop if a governor leaves. To support this, the governing body is in the process of refining its induction programme for new governors, to make sure that any new governors gain a really secure understanding of governance, and a clear knowledge of what their role and contribution will be.

Sue tells us that overall the self review of governance at the federation has been 'very worthwhile'. Sufficient challenge

of leadership is ensured in governance meetings, with questions formulated in advance and clearly recorded in the minutes, in bold, so that the challenge is easy to identify. "At each meeting of the full governing body, we review our action plan as a matter of course. In this way we ensure that all actions take place in a planned and effective manner and if any new initiative occurs, we can build our response into the monitoring cycle very quickly and easily."

"The self review has also led to other benefits, one really important change being to the performance management process across the federation, the timetabling of which has been altered so that performance management of teaching and support staff follows on from the Headteacher's performance management which is carried out in September. This ensures that everyone is working to federation priorities and objectives."

Sue highly recommends the use of self review to other governing bodies, after finding it an effective way to engage her governing body in their own development. "The fact that we took part in a self review has meant that the governing body has taken ownership of its own development, and this has encouraged a willing and committed response to improvement. Each governor has had a role in helping us to change from within, and become more effective in supporting the federation overall".



Relevant Resources

20 Key Questions for a Governing Board to Ask Itself (2012)

Governance Competency Framework (2017)

The Governance Handbook (2015)

NGA Skills audit + Skills Matrix (2017)

NGA's Model Code of Conduct (2017)

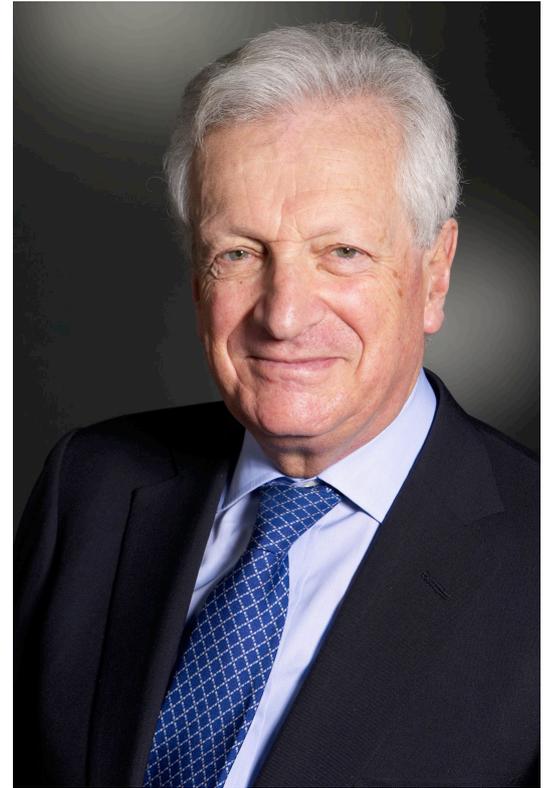
All resources available at www.nga.org.uk

Vanni Treves CBE

As governing boards in schools and academy trusts increasingly take on more responsibility, it is important that they look outwards - beyond education and to other sectors - for their learning and for insight. Both the corporate world and other parts of the public sector provide many lessons for our governors, and one person well placed to share some of these is 'serial Chairman' Vanni Treves CBE. Here, Michael Pain and Vanni Treves discuss some of those lessons and how they apply to the governance of schools and academy trusts.

Vanni Treves is no stranger to education, not least having successfully served as Chair of the National College for School Leadership for nearly a decade between 2004 and 2013. And, whilst his experience is largely drawn from beyond the schools' system in organisations such as Channel 4 and Equitable Life amongst others, he has long been a participant in the important dynamic that exists in so many organisations between the Chair of the board and its executive leader (in our sector, of course, this is either the headteacher, executive headteacher, or trust CEO).

"There are many parallels," says Vanni, "the first one being that the quality of your governing board has an enormous bearing on the life and work - and therefore - success of the organisation. At the heart of this is the enormously important relationship between the Chair and the executive leader. Every organisation's success rests on it, and it is something that must be given the investment of time, thought and effort that it deserves." Indeed, in education, there is a clear expectation that all school leaders should be able to demonstrate the skills and understanding needed to develop effective relationships with the governing board - and first and foremost, the Chair.



"The first thing to be very clear on" says Vanni, "is that it is the board that has responsibility for setting the vision and direction for the organisation." It is interesting that Vanni says this, because in education, we all too often hear head teachers and - increasingly - MAT CEOs speak of 'my vision', but this is a misnomer; the vision must be set by the Board (with support and involvement from the headteacher and leadership team) - it must be 'our vision'. Vanni agrees that this understanding is at the foundation of a successful relationship between Board and executive: "The executive should understand what his/her Board is there to do and wants to do and the ways in which it wants to do it, and then make it happen - all of course within the bounds of what is possible!" With such a fundamentally important task, we can see why it is so important that our schools recruit and retain experienced and skilled governors and trustees who have the right values and commitment for making a difference. Setting any organisation's vision and priorities is a major and influential undertaking to say the least.

However, the parallels do not end there. In the corporate world, as in the education world, the Board has three or four major responsibilities – all of which must be understood and got right for the relationship to work. “The Board are there for to do a number of things” says Vanni. “They are there to set major priorities for the organisation; they are there to hold the executive leader to account; they are there to monitor and seek improvement of outcomes and ensure financial efficiency and compliance; and they have an important role in establishing an effective committee structure.” Indeed, Vanni’s description closely resembles the core functions of governors of schools, which the current Department for Education governance handbook described as follows:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582868/Governance_Handbook_-_January_2017.pdf)

Indeed, we would add – like Vanni – further aspects, including ensuring that governance is well structured and efficiently run, and also that it is self-improving. Indeed, this is very much reflected in the governance handbook which places a key emphasis on getting the right people, structures and self-evaluation in place. For governing bodies this means that self and external review and talent audits are undertaken where necessary (see elsewhere in this journal). Compliance is also crucially important. This, of course, applies to governing bodies, but also – quite significantly - to trustees running multi-academy trusts, who must fulfil their duties under charity and company law and best practice, as well as in their funding agreement to the Secretary of State.

So what does an effective relationship between Board and executive look like in practice? “Clear and shared expectations are the starting point” says Vanni. “Setting the priorities takes time. It requires clarity of thought and reflection on the part of the governing Board, so that means creating the right conditions for this. I would recommend that governing Boards spend at least one session a year away from their normal meeting environment to revisit and reflect on the vision and priorities and to make sure that they are as relevant and as purposeful as possible. Boards should find the space to consider the wider context including the opportunities and challenges that their organisations face, as well as looking at key trends, data, intelligence and how all of this impacts on their core purpose – perhaps with some

external input or provocation. That way they will be better equipped to provide clear direction in response. That’s especially crucial in an ever-changing education sector. Where this is done well and the direction is clearly communicated, it is much easier for the executive to know exactly which course they should be following and what the Board expects them to deliver.”

Alongside this, accountability is fundamental. “It is the Board’s responsibility to hold the executive, and through him/her, other leaders to account – make sure they are doing the job as well as the Board wishes them to do it and support them to get better if they are not doing the job as well as they should be.” Vanni’s view is that Boards, whilst not ‘meddling’ or involving themselves in the operations of the organisation, should have a close eye on progress and be willing to provide the necessary support or challenge to leaders. “Most leaders will need to reflect on their work and the progress they are making, and the Board should give them the space to reflect and to articulate what should happen next.”

High standard of appraisal is an important element of providing a careful blend of support and challenge to the executive leader. “Being a CEO or executive leader can be a lonely business and it is the job of the Board to help the CEO do as good a job as they can. A well done appraisal that ties into the organisational vision and priorities, and that sufficiently ‘stretches’ the executive whilst also putting in place the necessary professional development and support alongside it, is a really crucial means of keeping the leader and organisation on track. Boards can also ensure that the executive leader is receiving mentoring, as well as constructive feedback and challenge through 360 degree reviews – helping them to be more reflective on how their leadership is contributing to the organisation’s culture and progress.”

Vanni also describes some fundamentals that he feels must be got right in terms of the relationship between the Board and the executive, if it is going to work efficiently and add real value to the organisation.

“It’s particularly important that there are clear demarcation lines between the Chair and the executive’ says Vanni. “In many cases it can be impossible to prescribe or determine this formally for all cases because it is impossible to anticipate every situation and circumstance. However, it is important that executives and the Board maintain communication so that there is no ‘stepping on toes’.” Again, some of this depends on high quality induction – for both the Chair and executives – so that there is a clear understanding of the separation of roles and responsibilities from the outset.

Formal communication lines – in particular, board papers - are also vitally important to the functioning of the Board and the success of the relationship between it and the executive. Vanni is clear that these should be put together by the executive, with a summary of the key contents of



all the board papers forming a document at the front. "The executive's report is the most important document – it should readily highlight key issues of concern to the executive, in a 'what's good', 'what's bad' and 'what I'm working on' format, so that this is clear and upfront." Vanni believes that a lot of trouble should be taken with the composition of board papers, so that the Chair and trustees can properly discharge their responsibilities, knowing they have the information they need in a clear format. Informal communication lines are also important, and should be encouraged, but the executive should always keep the Chair informed of his / her dealings with other Board members / governors.

The fundamentals certainly reflect the expectations of school leaders. The National Governance Association's extremely useful document 'what should be expected' highlights many of these issues from a governing body / Headteacher perspective. Among the expectations that governing Boards should have of the executive leader, are its recommendations that schools leaders demonstrate an understanding of governance, including acknowledging the role of the school or trust's accountable body; and devote reasonable time to ensuring that professional relationships are established with governors and trustees. I ask Vanni what he considers to be the most frequent causes of trouble between a Board and its executive. "Surprises. It is important that any concerns or risks should be communicated as soon as possible. The last thing a Board wants is to be reactive because it hasn't received the necessary information early enough. It undermines the good governance of the organisation and, of course, the relationship between the Board and the executive leader." Other frequently cited issues range from disagreements on strategy – where the Board and the executive don't agree on the overall strategy for the organisation – through to poor Board/Chairman/executive chemistry – if these relationships are not sound, it will be obvious to other members of the Board and other staff so action will need to be taken by those concerned to resolve any issues. If they can't be resolved then either the executive or the Chair could be asked to leave, and Vanni suggested it would almost always be the executive that

stays, if they are strong, performing well and have the support of the wider Board. Likewise, a weak Board can be a major source of problems – it is very demotivating for the executive leader if Board members lack commitment, don't attend meetings, haven't read the papers and don't collaborate. Vanni said he couldn't emphasise enough the importance of taking the time to ensure schools and trusts recruit the best Boards possible for their organisations.

Vanni ends with this, "where you see successful organisations, you will almost always see a strong relationship between the Chair and Executive that is defined by the necessary investment of time, effort and good quality of communication. The board and the executive have a responsibility to one another, and respecting that and acting upon it is essential to everyone's success. In schools it is – ultimately – the children and young people who will benefit, and that is why everyone, not least governing board members turns up to do the job they do. That's extremely rewarding."

Biography

Vanni Treves is a lawyer by training, having served as a partner at MacFarlanes for over 30 years, for 12 of them as Senior Partner. He was formerly Chair of Channel 4, Equitable Life, London Business School and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) amongst many other organisations. He is currently non-executive Chairman of Korn Ferry. Vanni has been Chair of a preparatory school in London and is an honorary fellow of London Business School, where he lectures on corporate governance. He was awarded a CBE in the 2011 New Years Honours list for services to education.

What's currently happening in Lincolnshire?

Andy Chisholm is the director of Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance and leads the governance strand of Lincolnshire Teaching Schools Together. He is currently playing a central role in mobilising the improvement of governance throughout Lincolnshire through the 'Strengthening Governance Programme'.



Andy tells us: "I noticed a momentum growing for governors to actively improve their skills set. In response, we commissioned the design, development and implementation of training sessions and CPD on governance, which were NGA endorsed. At that time, there were also other providers in Lincolnshire offering their own support and CPD for governance, including Lincolnshire County Council and the Diocese of Lincoln. It made sense to collaborate our efforts, and also involve National Leaders of Governance. At the same as this development, a collaborative approach between all parties was undertaken to identify, recruit and train a cadre of new Local Leaders of Governance from across county to support further schools.

We got together on several occasions to explore what, together, we could offer in terms of governance training. It was a complicated process, which involved give and take on all sides, but ultimately, we all had the same goal, which was to improve the quality and effectiveness of governance throughout the county in order to do our bit to help to secure excellent standards in Lincolnshire schools. With that goal in mind, we worked together, and also closely with the National Governance Association (NGA), to finally establish a comprehensive governor training package to support the improvement of governance across Lincolnshire.

The programme we have put together for governor CPD, training and support provides governing bodies with the tools and techniques to strengthen governance and to meet the high expectations of governance as currently outlined by Ofsted. We look at the key aspects of strong governance, and provide sessions to help governors and trustees gain up to date knowledge and understanding of exactly the things that a governing body needs to be doing to ensure effective governance. We provide training sessions aimed at entire governing bodies, as well as support training for Chair's and Clerks to assist schools with succession planning. Additionally, Lincolnshire County Council deliver Governor Partnership meetings three times a year, in the autumn, spring and summer terms, designed to provide key strategic updates on standards, national and regional agenda, Lincolnshire Learning Partnership updates and access to support and provision within the county. The partnership meetings offer a fantastic opportunity for collaborative development, and all governors and trustees from across the county are welcome to attend these meetings at no cost.

Other ways in which we are supporting governing bodies include through consultancy, offering bespoke support to schools on a wide-variety of issues, and also through external reviews of governance which help governing bodies identify priorities for improvement, and provide support on which steps to take.

Feedback has been really positive so far on the valuable difference this programme of governance support is making throughout Lincolnshire and how it is meeting the needs of the schools who have utilised the support on offer so far. Over time we hope to build upon the support we are offering even further, including providing training for Chairs and Clerks, and the future of the programme's development is looking very exciting indeed."

For more information on the Strengthening Governance Programme visit: www.lincolnshiretsa.co.uk

School Governance

Governance survey results

The National Governance Association (NGA) has published (22 September) the results of its joint survey of governance with the TES, in which more than 5,300 school governors and trustees shared their views and experiences. The key findings from the survey are summarised below (source: NGA):

- Funding pressures are the main concern of governors and trustees – 72% do not believe that they can be managed without any adverse impact on the quality of education.
- 30% of governors and trustees said their school had already reduced the number of teaching staff because of funding constraints, while 33% said they anticipated doing so in the next two years.
- 17% agreed that the removal of national curriculum levels had been a positive change whilst 41% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 36% of governors and trustees said they have now developed their own progress measure.
- There is a slight fall in the proportion of governing boards struggling to appoint across all levels.
- 95% agreed that high quality induction training should be mandatory, and 40% said their responsibilities were not manageable in 10 – 20 days.
- 4 in 5 governors and trustees are currently or were previously in managerial or professional occupations, suggesting they have significant skills and experience to offer schools.
- 55% of respondents state that they find it difficult to recruit to their governing board.

Further details can be found: <https://www.nga.org.uk/News/NGA-News/Key-findings-of-NGA-TES-annual-school-governance-s.aspx>

School governance

The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) has published (13 September) a report 'Who governs our schools? Trends, tensions and opportunities', by one of RSA's Fellows, Tony Breslin. The report explores six key themes: participation and citizenship; induction and training; policymaking; role of stakeholders; autonomy; and inter-sector collaboration; and makes a number of recommendations regarding the future of school governance. Some of the key points from the report are summarised below (source: RSA):

- We need a better understanding of governance across the teaching profession and amongst others who work in and with schools, especially amongst school leaders and those who aspire to such roles.
- It is common for changes to school governance arrangements to emerge as the unintended consequences of change elsewhere in the system. How we govern our schools should be an education policy priority, not an afterthought.
- Building on the locally contextualised knowledge of parents, staff, students and members of the local community is not a block on good governance; it is often the route to it – and it may have significant benefits in terms of personal and community development for the individuals and neighbourhoods concerned.
- We need to understand the impact of the shift towards formal school partnerships, both at local and system level, especially in terms of the recruitment and retention of headteachers, senior leaders and governors.
- We need to share lessons about what is and isn't good governance across and between sectors; those involved in school governance may have lessons to learn about governance from elsewhere in the public sector, the voluntary and community sector and the business world, but they also have much to offer, not least in terms of a universal commitment to values-driven leadership that places transparency and community service at its core.

How to improve academy trust governance

Schools Week has published (11 September) an article by Forum Education's Chief Executive, Michael Pain, which considers the fundamental challenge for the multi-academy trust system regarding the quality of governance. Michael says that while some MATs are developing strong trust boards, many others find it difficult to recruit and retain people of the necessary calibre. Michael highlights three key recommendations from Forum's recent roundtable report on MAT governance:

- There needs to be more openness across the system about academy trust Members, as it is they who appoint trustees and keep an eye on the board's performance. The roundtable report recommends that trust websites should include a statement from each member on what motivates them in the role and the skills and experience they bring. It also recommends that the Department for Education (DfE) undertake a full audit of members and establish a charter for them to sign, setting out their duties to the trusts and the children they serve.
- The report recommends that the DfE consider introducing an incentive scheme requiring organisations of a certain size to support a proportion of staff to become MAT trustees.
- The report also recommends improvements to trustee training, which should include an overview of procurement law, how to reduce, address and manage conflicts of interest, and executive pay. Trustees should access training every two years in order to keep up to date with the latest guidance and legislative requirements.

Further information can be found: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/how-to-improve-academy-trust-governance/>

Model code of conduct for school governing boards

The National Governance Association (NGA) has published (1 September) an updated model code of conduct for school governing boards, which aims to be used and easily tailored in any school governance setting. The code sets out the expectations on and commitment required from school governors, trustees and academy committee members in order for the governing board to properly carry out its work within the school/s and the community. The code covers: roles and responsibilities; commitment; relationships; confidentiality; conflicts of interest; the Seven Principles of Public Life.

Further information can be found: <https://www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Legislation,policies-and-procedures/Model-Policies/Code-of-Practice.aspx>

Constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools

The Department for Education (DfE) has published (29 August) updated statutory guidance on the constitution of governing bodies of all local-authority-maintained schools. The guidance has been updated to include information about new powers to remove elected governors, which will apply from 1 September 2017. The guidance states that the governing body may remove an elected parent or staff governor, in the same way as they can remove co-opted governors – by majority decision of the governing body. However, it also states "Governing bodies are expected only to exercise the power to remove an elected governor in exceptional circumstances where the actions or behaviour of the elected governor warrants removal rather than suspension. The power should not be used simply to remove dissenting or challenging voices." The guidance also reiterates that any person removed as an elected governor from the governing body during their term of office will be disqualified from serving or continuing to serve as a school governor, in any school, for five years from the date of their removal. The guidance emphasises, therefore, that the power to remove an elected governor should only be used in exceptional circumstances.

Further information can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/constitution-of-governing-bodies-of-maintained-schools>

Diary Dates



Make a note of these events in your diary today!

All events can be booked at:

<https://event.bookitbee.com/kyra-teaching-school-alliance>

Kyra Governor Forums (Members Only)

Governor Forums give school leaders the opportunity to be involved in the development of aspects of Kyra work to engage in activities across the wider alliance and to contribute to discussion around local and national issues. Each Governor Forum will take place in a different Kyra Member school and will include a tour of the host school

28th February 2018 6.15pm – 8.00pm Ancaster CE Primary School
6th March 2018 6.15-8.00pm – Venue to be confirmed – Kyra East
7th June 2018 6.15-8.00pm – Venue to be confirmed – Kyra Central
14th June 2018 6.15 – 8.00pm – Venue to be confirmed Kyra East

New to Governance – Introduction session for new Governors

£25 + Vat per delegate or 1 credit for Kyra School Members

These sessions are designed for newly appointed governors and will be led by National Leader of Governance; Sean Westaway. Content will include the core functions of governance, the Governance Handbook, Competency framework and the key roles and responsibilities of governors. The session will also signpost additional sources of governor training and support

16th January 6.00-7.30pm – Spilsby Primary Academy
23rd January 6.00-7.30pm – Lincoln Carlton Academy

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KYRA
Journal



Asking the Right Questions

£90 + Vat per delegate (Lunch included)
26th March 2018 - 10.30-2.30 – Lincoln Carlton Academy

Are you confident in evaluating outcomes from teaching, learning and assessment?

Are you asking the right questions?

Due to popular demand, we are delighted to welcome back Mark Wilson to guide school leaders and governors through evaluating evidence, accountability, and quality assurance.

We would encourage school leaders to attend with a governor.

The focus will be on:

- Evaluating classroom evidence, linking this to your current assessment information, and comparing to external sources of assessment data such as your school's Inspection Dashboard.
- The implications of driving school improvement at all levels of leadership, including governance
- What evidence base is your school building to justify to governors, for example, the accuracy of your school's self-evaluation?
- How to make the most of the inspection dashboard, triangulating learning, planning, data and daily practice.

For further information and other upcoming training, meetings and events, please visit: <https://event.bookitbee.com/kyra-teaching-school-alliance>



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