

Effective Clerking

Presented by
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Introduction

“A professional clerk who understands governance and their role within it is a valuable asset to a governing board and plays an important part in contributing to the effectiveness of the board as a whole”.

- I will share my experience gained over 15 years as a Clerk to Governors to give an insight into how a Clerk is a pivotal role as part of the GB.



Objectives

This session will aim to give clerks a clear understanding of:

1. The core functions and key responsibilities of all governing boards
2. The clerk's role within the governance framework; and
3. How you can support your board to be compliant and effective in the execution of their governance duties.



The core functions and key responsibilities of all governing boards

- *The purpose of governance is to provide confident and strong strategic leadership which leads to robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational performance.*
- All Governing Boards, no matter what type of school or how many schools they govern, have three core functions:
 1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
 2. Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff and
 3. Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.



The Key Features of Effective Governance

Effective Governance is based on six key features:

- 1. Strategic Leadership** – that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy
- 2. Accountability** – that drives up educational standards and financial performance
- 3. People** – with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity
- 4. Structures** – that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- 5. Compliance** – with statutory and contractual requirements
- 6. Evaluation** – to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance



The Clerk's Role within the Governance

Clerk's Competencies

- Understanding governance
- Administration
- Advice and guidance
- People and relationships



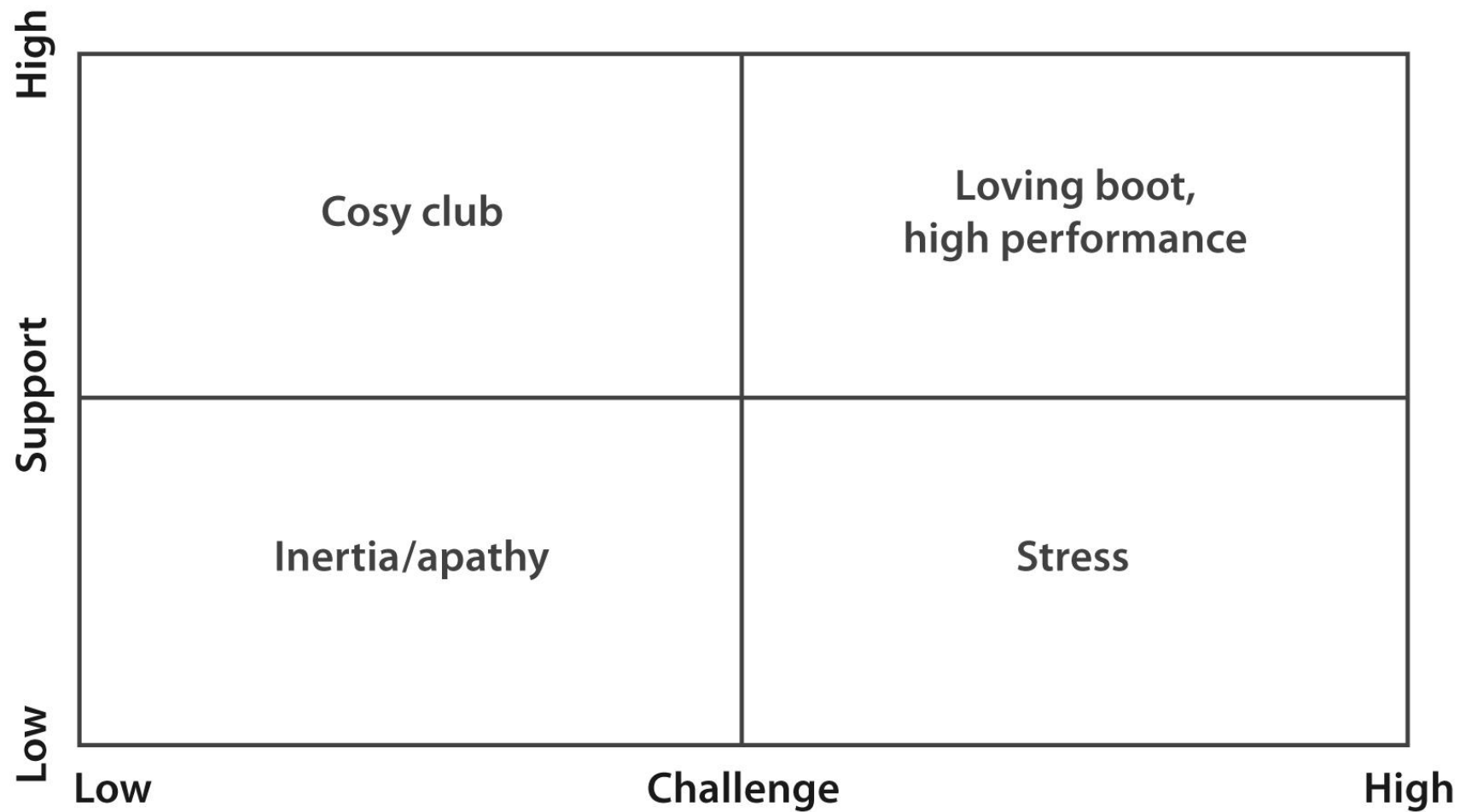
How you can support your board to be compliant and effective in the execution of their governance duties

Five ways you can self-evaluate:

1. Conduct a skills audit, analyse the gaps and proactively seek to fill them.
2. Consider questionnaires to stakeholders for a 360 degree review of the governing board's performance – HT/SLT; Other members of staff; Parents and Pupils
3. Have an annual 360 degree review for Chair of Governors
4. Suggest an annual evaluation of individual governors in a 'Chat with the Chair'
5. Engage an external trainer/SIP to work with governors on their performance



What kind of a GB are we?



5 ways to step up your governance

1. Make everyone accountable via a Code of Conduct
2. Set up a 'shadow structure' on your board
3. Loosely align board and staff CPD
4. Get expert eyes on your data
5. Set fewer objectives to ensure tangible progress



8 ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

1. The right people round the table
2. Understanding the role and 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.



What you can do in your role as Clerk

It's all in the planning and preparation ...

Before a meeting ...

- Meet on a termly basis with the headteacher and chair of governors to plan the term's work.
- Plan and organise the work of the governing board using a meeting planner.
- Develop a rolling policy review schedule so that that you know which policies are assigned to which committees and when they are due for review.
- Encourage headteachers to send their termly report out early and for governors to read and submit questions in advance which the headteacher can answer ahead of the meeting.
- These can then be attached as Q&As to the minutes and provide evidence of support and challenge.



Before a meeting



- Governors could take it in turns to collate an executive summary of committee minutes and link governor reports which is sent out in advance of a GB meeting (full non confidential committee minutes are also made available to governors).
- This also helps to streamline the agendas and allows the GB to work smart.



Tips to run an effective meeting ...

- At the start of meetings, elect a timekeeper and a meeting reviewer (a member of the GB by rotation) who could use a tick list and comment box throughout the duration of the meeting to grade different aspects of the meeting, such as:-
 - ✓ Receiving supporting papers in a timely fashion – GB to agree what that looks like.
 - ✓ The management of the meeting and whether there has been wide participation from attendees
 - ✓ Whether actions are clear.
- Feedback is given at the end of the meeting.



Tips to run an effective meeting ...



- Support and challenge to the SLT are, of course, central to what governors do, - help them by identifying, encouraging and booking them on pertinent training where they can learn what questions they should be asking.
- Reinforce this by self-reflection at the end of each governing board meeting. Ask yourselves “what have we done in our meeting to impact on the children of our school?”

Between meetings ...

- Reinforce governor accountability and improved communication in between meetings by using feedback documents such as a training cascade form so that governors can evaluate the courses that they have been on and report back on what they have learned and what needs to be implemented as a result.
- Have focused governor link governor feedback report forms for them to complete once they have undertaken a visit, documenting the focus and impact of the visit.



Going Further ...

- There are many more things you can do to help your governing body, though these may not be open to all clerks. Over the years I have delivered briefings and training courses for new clerks and for governors about valuing and getting the most of their clerks. Having also clerked a number of hearings over time I have co-facilitated training sessions for governors and clerks on how to conduct a hearing.
- It also helps if you have experience of working with schools in capacities other than clerking, providing these help to develop your understanding of the education processes while not conflicting with the role as clerk.
- For one of my schools, I have the insight of minuting admin team meetings, staff meetings, pupil focus meetings and Post 16 exit questionnaire meetings.



Resources

The Clerks' Collective

- Confidential Sounding Board
- Peer to Peer Support
- Networking opportunities
- Meet half termly, currently via Zoom



Any Questions?

