

Governor Support Service

Taking the Chair

Wednesday 10th February 2021



Sian Mathias

Leadership and governance consultant

- Chaired two maintained schools governing boards
- Worked as head of governor services in a successful LA school improvement team
- Worked on numerous task groups supporting schools causing concern
- Chair of the Trust Board of a new multi-academy trust (MAT)
- Working with MATS and Local Authorities (LA's) across London as an independent trainer and consultant

The Aims of the Session



1. The regulations and the power of the Chair



2. The 4 key aspects of the role:

- Building the team,
- Working with the head,
- School improvement
- Leading the business.



3. Running effective meetings



4. Where to find support

Key Governance Documents



Governance handbook

**Academy trusts and maintained
schools**

October 2020



A Competency Framework for Governance

**The knowledge, skills and behaviours
needed for effective governance in
maintained schools, academies and
multi-academy trusts**

January 2017

Competency Framework



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 performance management of the staff; and
3. Overseeing the **financial performance** of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

Governance Handbook, October 2020

Law and regulations (Maintained schools)

The School Governance (Roles Procedures and Allowances) Regulations 2013

Delegation of functions to the chair or vice-chair in cases of urgency

8.—(1) Where paragraph (2) applies, the chair may exercise—

- (a) any function of the governing body which can be delegated to an individual; and
- (b) any function that under regulation 19(2) cannot otherwise be delegated to an individual.

(2) The circumstances are that the chair is of the opinion that a delay in exercising the function would be likely to be seriously detrimental to the interests of—

- (a) the school;
- (b) any pupil(1) at the school, or their parent; or
- (c) a person who works at the school.

(3) In paragraph (2), "delay" means delay until the earliest date on which it would be reasonably practicable for a meeting of the governing body, or of a committee to which the function in question has been delegated, to be held.

(4) Where it appears to the vice-chair that—

- (a) the circumstances mentioned in paragraph (2) apply, and
- (b) the chair (whether by reason of vacancy in the office or otherwise) would be unable to exercise the function in question before the detriment referred to in that paragraph is suffered,

the reference in paragraph (1) to the chair is to be read as if it were a reference to the vice-chair.

Limitations on the power to act – Reg 19

A governing body may **not** delegate to an individual its powers and duties relating to:

- The discontinuation of a maintained school
- The approval of the budget
- The suspension of governors
- Exclusion (except in a case of urgency)

The role – from the Governance Handbook

- Ensuring the **effective functioning** of the board
- Setting the **highest expectations** for **professional standards** of governance.
- Providing **clear leadership and direction**, keeping it focused on its core functions.
- Promoting **teamwork** and team development and **training**
- To have **honest conversations** where a governor appears to lack commitment or is ineffective in the role
- Use their **casting vote**

Excellent Chairs

- Have a relentless focus on school improvement and always put pupils first
- Develop a sound, professional working relationship with the head teacher
- Develop good relationships with their governors, ensure everyone is involved and that governor's skills are properly harnessed
- Effectively manage the business of the governing board including delegating roles and responsibilities
- Are enthusiastic and positive about the role

4 key aspects of the role

1. Building the team
2. Linking with the Headteacher
3. School Improvement
4. Leading the business (including Chairing meetings)

*Leading governors: The Role of Chair of Governors in Schools and Academies.
National College of Teaching and Leadership*

1. Building the team – Checklist 1

- Codes of conduct
- Skills audits
- Schemes of delegation
- Delegating tasks
- Role of the Vice Chair
- Induction, training and development
- Succession planning
- Self evaluation and review - 360°
- Communication
- Targeted recruitment

2. Working with the headteacher

Governance is **strategic and management is operational**. This distinction between governance and management needs to be clearly understood by all, so that governors and trustees are not asked to, and do not try to, involve themselves in day-to-day management.

Governors and trustees are there to govern, not to carry out other work within a school on a pro-bono basis. School leaders must not be **micro-managed**. The governing board should concentrate on matters related to strategy and school improvement, delegating to school leaders those tasks which are operational (for example, drafting policies, making judgements about teaching quality, and recruiting and deploying staff below senior leadership level).

What governing boards can expect from their school leaders and what school leaders can expect from their governing boards (NGA, ASCL and NAHT) November 2019 – 5th Edition





10. Governance and accountability

Headteachers:

- understand and welcome the role of effective governance, upholding their obligation to give account and accept responsibility
- establish and sustain professional working relationship with those responsible for governance
- ensure that staff know and understand their professional responsibilities and are held to account
- ensure the school effectively and efficiently operates within the required regulatory frameworks and meets all statutory duties

Your relationship with the Head

- A bridge between school leadership and governance
- Business like with agreed meeting times and agendas
- Based on trust and respect for the respective roles and personalities
- Confidential
- Time limited role
- Challenge and performance management
- Support and encouragement
- Strong, visible relationship

What is your relationship like?

Headteachers' views on great Chairs

“Headship can be an isolating job and my Chair provides me with emotional and mental support.”

“My Chair is willing to speak up for me.”

“My Chair provides catharsis and much needed support – we have a complementary skill set which is very important.”

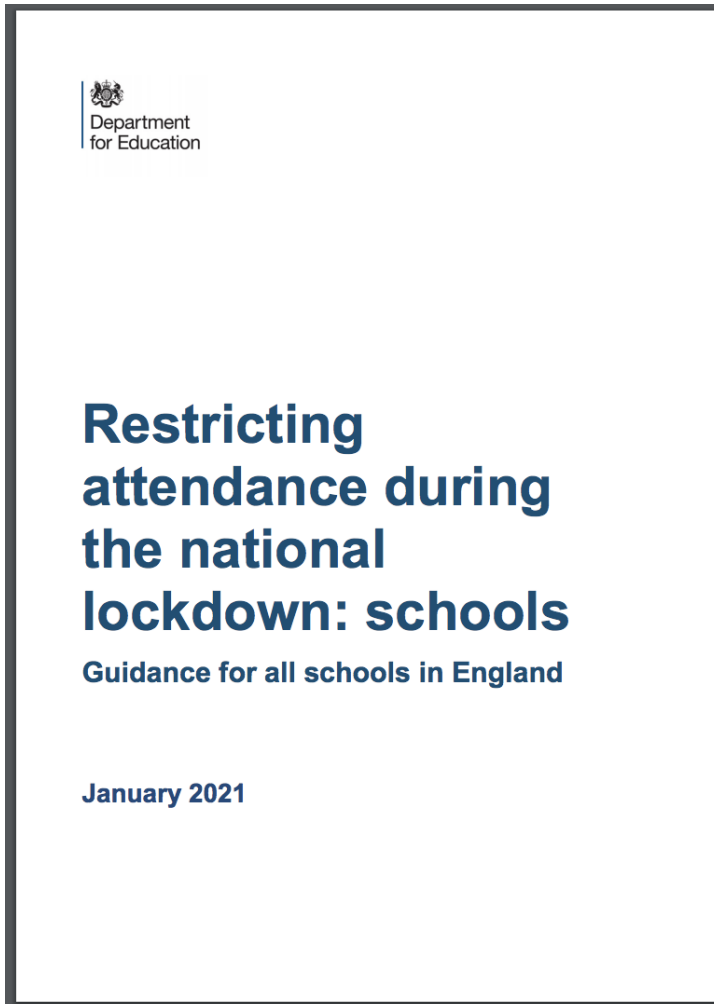
Wandsworth Heads comments in a survey

The current context – Covid 19

Challenges:

- School lockdown 2 – most schools partially closed
- Senior leaders have often worked without a break since the end of March 2020
- Dealing with high levels of staff, parent and pupil anxiety
- Staff organising remote learning for pupils at home
- Higher levels of staff and pupil sickness
- Having to manage and adapt to regularly changing national guidance
- Setting up testing in schools?

Guidance now in a single document



- *Attendance*
- *Testing*
- *Workforce*
- *Remote Education*
- *Accountability expectations*

Meetings with the Head

- What are our priorities as set out in the school improvement plan?
- Which of these priorities needs to be discussed now, if any?
- Have any other issues arisen, either internally (headteacher, staff, pupils, governors, parents) or externally (local authority, other schools, central government)? Do these need to be discussed?
- How can I support my headteacher in the above?
- In what areas do I need to provide scrutiny, and how am I going to do this?
- Are there issues that need to be added to our agendas?

What are the particular challenges with maintaining this link during the pandemic?

3. School Improvement



Department
for Education

Boards must be ambitious for all children and young people and infused with a passion for education and a **commitment to continuous school improvement** that enables the best possible outcomes. Governance must be grounded in reality as defined by both high-quality objective data and a full understanding of the views and needs of pupils/students, staff, parents, carers and local communities.

Governance Handbook 2020

3. Improving your school

Through knowledge and understanding of your school

- What are the three key development areas for your school? School Development Plan/School Improvement Plan
- What is the quality of teaching like overall?
- How effectively does the curriculum meet the needs of pupils? (New)
- What are the principles behind our curriculum choices?
- How effectively are the school's financial resources used?
- How do we hold the school to account for pupil outcomes?
- What has been the impact of recent changes to local services and changing school structures?

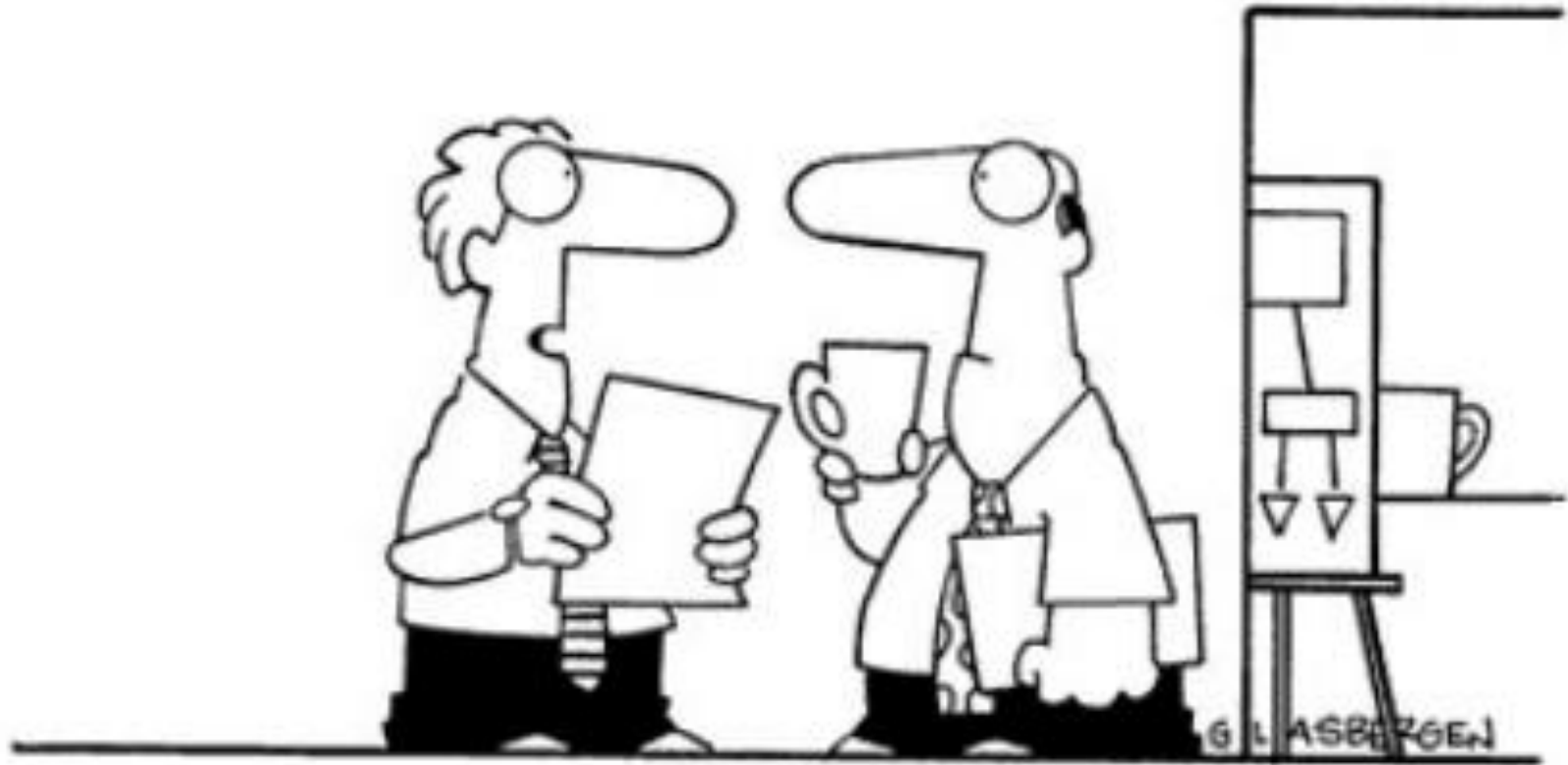
See checklist 3 School Improvement

4. Leading the business

- Meetings
- Managing agendas
- Heads reports
- Chairing skills
- Professional clerking

The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) Regulations 2013

The School Governance Constitution Regulations - statutory guidance



“Scientists say that coffee and donuts release chemicals into the brain that create the illusion that meetings are a productive way to get things done.”

Meetings

Meetings bring time to a crawl leaving everyone mentally and emotionally exhausted and more than a little bit frustrated.

PREPARATION
POSITIVITY AND
CHAIRING SKILLS

Effective meetings are interesting, high-energy events where team members work together to make decisions or solve problems.

Chairing meetings

- Prepare
- Start and finish on time
- Share the ground rules?
- Use a timed agenda
- Encourage open discussion and everyone's participation
- Summarise the main points
- Push for a clear decision including actions by whom and by when
- Restrict any other business

Chairing Virtually

The challenges:

- Getting to grips with the technology
- Ensuring everyone makes a contribution

What are the positives and the downsides?

Meetings Etiquette – the ground rules

- Read the papers before the meeting
- Speak through the Chair
- Don't interrupt when someone is speaking
- Keep comments succinct and to the point (the item on the agenda)
- No side conversations or comments
- Respect other people's views – disagree without being disagreeable

Variety - the art of Chairing

- Invite guest speakers, school staff to present
- Celebrate achievement
- Ask a governor to prepare an item to present
- Watch a DfE / Ofsted short video that's relevant to the meeting agenda
- Change locations
- Have a “single item agenda” meeting
- Have a mid meeting break and then switch Chairs

The Competency Framework

Strategic leadership

- Setting direction
- Culture values and ethos
- Decision making
- Collaborative working
- Risk management

Accountability

- Educational improvement
- Rigorous analysis of data
- Financial frameworks
- Financial management and monitoring
- Staffing and performance management
- External accountability

People

- Building an effective team

Structures

- Roles and responsibilities

Compliance

- Statutory and contractual requirements

Evaluation

- Managing self review and development
- Managing and developing the board's effectiveness

Evaluation and review

- Ofsted
- 20 questions
- Independent governance review
- NGA effective governance
- Chair 360 diagnostic review
- Competency framework

Your training and support

Governance leadership development programme - DfE

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-governors-professional-development#governance-leadership-development-programme>

Linking with other Chairs

Working with your senior team of governors

Questions?





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