

Governors' News

A Termly Newsletter for Liverpool Governors



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Liverpool Learning Partnership



Dragons Den and Maths Party

Both of these will run again in the summer term. The Dragons Den information will come out to schools in the next couple of weeks. The final is scheduled for 26 June. The Maths Party this year will be held on 07 July. Email us with your ideas and watch out for more information. If your school wants to do the Liverpool Counts Quality Mark in September, please let us know.

City Attendance Strategy launched by Mayor

Mayor Joe Anderson launched the city wide attendance strategy from a business leaders' lunch on 22 March. The strategy includes a charter for all organisations to sign as their commitment to working together to improve attendance.

Diary writing competition to be launched in Summer Term by School Improvement Liverpool and Liverpool Learning Partnership

Watch out for A Day in the Life of Liverpool...

Liverpool Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP)

LCEP newsletters have been circulated to schools, listing opportunities to engage with art and culture. If your school is enrolled in ArtsMark, don't forget to claim your £500 contribution from LLP. Contact Alice Demba for more info: ademba.llp@gmail.com

Liverpool Learning Partnership appoints new Reading Coordinator

In order to build on the excellent work of City of Readers and of Jane Davis from The Reader, and Mary Hind-Portley from SIL, we have recently appointed a full-time coordinator for the next two years. Jenny Holder will take up her post in late April. The Storybarn are offering LLP schools a 50% discount on whole day visits in early autumn: more news will be out soon!

Whole School Approaches to Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing in Liverpool

During the summer and autumn terms of 2016, LLP surveyed a wide range of education establishments throughout Liverpool as well as other stakeholders, organisations and youth services to consider whole school approaches to mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The survey also included parents and carers, pupils and students. The aim of the review was to explore and share what is working well in our schools, where improvements could be made and what a successful city-wide education-based mental health and emotional wellbeing approach would look like.

The research team worked on the premise that school should be a safe and affirming place for children, where they can develop a sense of belonging and feel able to trust and talk openly with adults about their problems.

What's working well?

- There is genuine commitment from all staff to support students' emotional wellbeing.
- Pupils/students have access to someone they can talk to if they're feeling sad, worried, anxious or have something more serious to discuss.
- Support from external agencies (CAMHS and non-CAMHS) –many schools proactively look for support available and utilise all opportunities, developing stronger partnership working.

What's not working well?

- Stigma in schools – even though pupils have access to support, it's still not a subject students/pupils feel comfortable talking about openly.
- LGBT community feel stigmatised and misunderstood by teachers and pupils/families.
- Communication between agencies delivering support to children and young people (particularly CAMHS) – schools keen to support but confidentiality combined with a lack of robust communication processes is a barrier.
- Lack of understanding around mental health (identification and intervention) particularly neurological conditions; many staff are self-taught.
- Lack of support and understanding around co-morbidity.
- Promotion of mental health and emotional wellbeing within settings.
- A lack of clarity regarding whose role it is to manage the mental health and emotional wellbeing of pupils, including the role of SENCOs.
- Communication between settings and parents/carers and lack of awareness internally around the information settings provided to parents/carers.
- Education staff feel under pressure to be 'the mental health professional'.

What's needed

- Continuous Professional Development for whole school staff - mental health training for school staff.
- More in-school or access to external counsellors and mentors.
- Greater support for wider family members – whole family approach.
- Support for school staff – particularly around their emotional wellbeing and dealing with pupil/student issues; a culture of staff and student welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms, using effective signposting, underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.
- Staff should be encouraged in all curriculum areas to consider how to build pupils' emotional health and wellbeing, and mental resilience.
- Greater communication when young people transition between settings: from primary to secondary; secondary to further education and from mainstream provision to Alternative Education Providers.
- Staff training & understanding of LGBT community – tackle stigma and discrimination. Education around LGBT needs to start in primary schools and with parents.

Recommendations

The review focussed on what is happening in education establishments throughout Liverpool. However, children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing is everyone's business, therefore these recommendations are not solely school related, they are much broader.

Whole School Approach

- Ensure all school/education settings have a mental health and emotional wellbeing policy, and that the role of non-school partners is clearly defined in the policy.
- Encourage/promote partners to have a mental health and emotional wellbeing policy which pays due regards to children and young people.
- Schools would benefit from the development of a Liverpool-based mental health and emotional wellbeing toolkit in order to aid the development of a whole school approach should be EHMWB across the city.

Family Support

- As part of the toolkit, proactively engage with families, outside agencies, and the wider community to promote consistent support for children and young people's health and wellbeing.
- The CAMHS Transformation Programme should seek to explore the opportunities to provide family-based support for EHMWB in school/education settings.
- Further research should be conducted to understand support required for families across all communities and cultures.
- CAMHS to provide ongoing promotion of the toolkit for parents.

Staff Training

- Through the MHEWB Partnership Board, review the current workforce training on EHMWB and resilience building in line with the findings from this report. Identify the gaps and develop proposals for strengthening provision across the city.
- Ensure wider promotion of EHMWB training to school-based staff through vehicles such as Open Space, EdNet, briefings, CAMHS/Mental Health Promotion.
- Ensure MHEWB training and awareness is an integral part of Continuous Professional Development – whole school mental health training and awareness for all staff (including governors).
- Ensure there is a Mental Health First Aid trained member of staff in every school, as there is for (physical) First Aid trained staff.
- Schools should consider providing awareness and further training around LGBT.
- The multi-agency workforce development strategy (being developed by the Families Programme Strategic Workforce lead, Wendy Moss, in conjunction with the LSCB) to include training and awareness raising for practitioners and parents/carers on adolescence.

Points for Governors to consider:

- What support is in place for your headteacher and senior staff to ensure their wellbeing? Could and should this be strengthened?
- Does your school have a mental health and emotional wellbeing policy?
- How much CPD is available for the school workforce which addresses this area?
- In these days of budget constraints, how will your school prioritise support for children with MHEWB issues?
- How does your school curriculum address MHEWB? Can it be seen across subject areas or is it restricted to PSHE?
- Is there training you would value in this area?

Whole School Approaches to Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing in Liverpool can be viewed or downloaded from www.liverpoollearningpartnership.com

Online Safety

The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) has developed guidance to help governing boards support their school leaders to keep children safe online. Governors can use it to gain a basic understanding of their school's current approach to keeping children safe online and consider how to improve this approach where appropriate. The guidance is based on a series of questions for governors to ask:

1. Does the school have online safety and acceptable use policies in place? How does the school assess that they are clear, understood and respected by all children and staff?

What to look for:

- Systematic and regular review of online safety policies, at least on an annual basis.
- Evidence that online safety policies are freely and readily available (eg posters, school website, staff handbook, etc.)
- Pupils, staff, parents and carers are aware of online safety rules and expectations.

What is good or outstanding practice?

- Collaborative production and review of policies, for example, evidence of the active use of pupils' and parents views.
- Evidence of monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure understanding of, and adherence to, online safety policies.
- Linked to/part of other policies, such as safeguarding policies.

When should you be concerned?

- No or minimal online safety policies.
- Policy is generic and not relevant to school/pupil needs.
- No or irregular review of online safety policy.
- Policies exist but are not publicised to the school or are not known by staff and pupils.

2. What mechanisms does the school have in place to support pupils, staff and parents facing online safety issues?

What to look for:

- Online safety clearly recognised as a safeguarding issue within the roles and responsibilities of the school's Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL)
- Robust reporting channels which could be defined as:
 - Well-defined, clearly understood and consistent reporting channels.
 - Whole-school approach, in which reporting channels include teachers, parents and pupils.
 - Multiple reporting routes for pupils and parents which they have confidence in.
- Clearly articulated procedures for responding to different online risks (sexting, online bullying, online grooming, etc.).
- Regular review of monitoring and filtering provisions as part of safeguarding responsibilities e.g. evidence of communication between technical staff and DSLs.
- Links into other relevant policies and procedures eg complaints, allegations, etc.

What is good or outstanding practice?

- Online reporting mechanisms for students and parents.
- All staff are aware of sources of support for online safety issues, such as the Professionals Online Safety Helpline.
- Nominated members of staff with appropriate skills and responsibilities (e.g. DSL), trained and available to deal with the various risks related to online activity.
- Planned and effective peer support strategies, eg reporting mechanisms/escalation.
- Auditing of online behaviour and risks which provides base line information from the pupils about the levels and types of online issues prevalent in school.
- Regular evaluation of reporting channels and response procedures.
- Online safety information/data highlighted within the Head Teacher's report to the governing board.

When should you be concerned?

- No or inconsistent reporting channels.
- No recording processes to enable the school to identify and monitor concerns.
- Pupils and parents unaware of reporting channels.
- Reporting routes pupils and parents lack confidence in.

3. How do you ensure that all staff receive appropriate online safety training that is relevant and regularly updated?

What to look for:

- Training content which improves staff knowledge of, and expertise in, safe behaviours and appropriate use of technologies.
- Audit of the training needs of all staff.
- At least annual training (in-service or online) for all staff.
- Online safety training coordinated by recognised appropriate individual (eg DSL) or group with online safety responsibility

What is good or outstanding practice?

- DSL has a higher level of training, knowledge and expertise on online safety issues with clearly defined responsibilities related to online safety provision for the school community.
- Expertise on online safety is developed across a pool of staff to ensure transfer and sustainability of knowledge and training.
- Online safety training clearly established within the school's wider safeguarding training.
- Training content updated to reflect current research and advances in technology as well as local policy and procedures.

When should you be concerned?

- No recognised individual/group for online safety or they lack appropriate training and authority.
- DSL lacking appropriate training and authority in online safety training.
- No, little or out-of-date training for all staff.
- There are teaching and pastoral staff that have no online safety training.
- Training on online safety does not improve staff knowledge of, and expertise in, the safe and appropriate use of technologies.
- Training based on outdated resources.
- Regular training (at least annual) is not undertaken.
- Lack of clarity on who coordinates staff training.

4. Describe how your school educates children and young people to build knowledge, skills and confidence when it comes to online safety? How do you assess its effectiveness?

What to look for:

- A planned online safety education programme which:
 - Is taught across all age groups, and progresses as pupils grow and develop.
 - Is regular as opposed to a one-off online safety session.
 - Incorporates relevant national initiatives and opportunities such as Safer Internet Day and Anti-bullying week.
- Use of appropriate and up-to-date resources.
- Resources from external providers may be used appropriately to support and compliment internal programmes.
- Accessible to pupils at different ages and abilities, such as pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), or those with English as an additional language.
- Pupils are able to recall, explain and actively use online safety education.
- Teachers have access to appropriate training, to ensure teaching on online safety is undertaken by trained staff.

What is good or outstanding practice?

- Online safety is embedded throughout the school curriculum. This means that the knowledge, skills and confidence of pupils, on issues related to online safety, are planned into all relevant school lessons such as PSHE education, as well as Sex and Relationships education and computing.
- Regular review of online safety sessions to ensure their relevance.

When should you be concerned?

- Ad-hoc/one-off sessions on online safety, such as sessions only delivered through assemblies.
- Content used is inaccurate, irrelevant, out of date and/or inappropriate for the age of the child.
- Sole reliance on external providers to provide online safety education to learners.
- No means to evaluate the effectiveness of education tools, and assess pupils' learning in this area.

5. How does the school educate parents and the whole school community with online safety?

What to look for:

- Regular communication, awareness-raising and engagement on online safety issues via the school's communications outlets, such as the school website and newsletters
- Regular opportunities for engagement with parents on online safety issues.

What is good or outstanding practice?

- Interactive engagement with parents, with the aim of building skills and confidence in dealing with online risks, as well as general awareness on online safety issues.
- Regular and relevant online safety resources and sessions offered to parents. Relevant resources will tackle key online risks and behaviours displayed by pupils at different ages in the school.
- Evidence of pupils educating parents.

When should you be concerned?

- No or minimal awareness-raising on online safety issues.
- No online safety engagement with parents.
- Recurrent problem behaviours amongst pupils (such as younger pupils playing games aimed towards older adolescents and adults).

Online safety in schools and colleges: Questions from the Governing Board can be downloaded from www.gov.uk

A Competency Framework for Governance

Published by the Department for Education (DfE) in January, the Competency Framework is designed to help governing boards assess what knowledge, skills and behaviour are needed to govern the school, or group of schools, most effectively. It is meant to help with things like board performance reviews, identifying training needs, succession planning and induction. It may also help prepare interview questions for potential governors or chairs.

The framework is applicable to all boards in proportion to the scale and complexity of the organisation they are governing. Boards will need to consider which knowledge and skill areas outlined in the framework are most important for their context. They will also need to determine the extent to which it applies to any committees they have appointed, including within multi-academy trusts to any local governing bodies, depending on the range of functions delegated to them.

The framework does not aim to apply specifically to the Members of academy trusts. Members are not directly involved in governance, which is the responsibility of the board of trustees. However, as they appoint trustees and oversee the success of the board of trustees they have appointed, members will want to understand the skills, behaviours and knowledge trustees need to be effective.

The framework begins with the principles and personal attributes which, alongside the commitment of time and energy to the role, underpin effective governance. Following on from this, the knowledge and skills required for effective governance are organised into those which are essential for everyone on the board; those which are required of the chair and those which at least someone on the board should have. In this way, the knowledge and skills required for chairs build on and complement the skills for everyone.

Some of the ways in which boards may want to use the framework include:

- informing how they carry out a skills audit
- in individual performance review discussions, identifying training needs and/or developing a training and development programme
- putting together a role specification and determining interview questions for recruiting to the board and/or in selecting or recruiting a chair
- planning induction for people new to the board
- supporting a review of the board's effectiveness and identifying strengths and areas for development
- demonstrating the key characteristics and expectations of their role to others, ensuring the expected behaviours are included in the board's code of conduct.

The framework is made up of 16 competencies underpinned by a foundation of important principles and personal attributes. The competencies are grouped under the headings of the six features of effective governance as set out in the Governance Handbook: strategic leadership; accountability; people; structures; compliance and evaluation.

1. Strategic leadership

Why it's important: Effective boards provide confident, strategic leadership to their organisations; they lead by example and 'set the tone from the top'. These competencies relate to the core function of boards to set vision, ethos and strategic direction.

1a. Setting direction

The knowledge and skills required for effectiveness in setting the strategic direction of the organisation, planning and prioritising, monitoring progress and managing change.

1b. Culture, values and ethos

The knowledge and skills required to set the culture, values and ethos of the organisation successfully; demonstrate these in the conduct and operation of the board; embed them through the whole organisation; and monitor the impact on outcomes for children and young people and on the reputation of the organisation in the wider community.

1c. Decision-making

Boards which operate effectively as strategic decision-makers are able to provide the foundation for creativity, innovation and improvement in the organisation. Effective decision-making is about moving from free and frank discussion to specific, measurable actions.

1d. Collaborative working with stakeholders and partners

Effective boards are well-informed about, and respond to, the views and needs of key stakeholders, particularly parents and carers. They enable productive relationships, creating a sense of trust and shared ownership of the organisation's strategy, vision and operational performance.

1e. Risk management

Effective boards play a key role in setting and managing risk appetite and tolerance. They are able to ensure that risks are aligned with strategic priorities and improvement plans and intervention strategies provide a robust framework for risk management. These competencies enable those on the board to identify, evaluate and prioritise organisational risks and ensure appropriate action is taken to mitigate against them.

2. Accountability for educational standards and financial performance

Why it's important: These are the competencies that the board needs in order to deliver its core functions of holding executive leaders accountable for the educational and financial performance of the organisation.

2a. Educational improvement

These competencies enable the board to know that the information that they are receiving about the educational performance of children and young people is accurate, to challenge appropriately where necessary and to hold leaders accountable for improving outcomes for all young people. Holding leaders accountable is about establishing clear expectations, ensuring clear lines of responsibility, putting in place systems for monitoring appropriately, ensuring evaluation and taking action in response to that evaluation.

2b. Rigorous analysis of data

Board members are required to develop specific knowledge to allow the monitoring of school performance and improvement. It will also assist them in holding leaders accountable.

2c. Financial frameworks and accountability

These are the skills, knowledge and behaviours which enable the board to ensure that the organisation is in a strong and sustainable financial position to achieve its strategic goals. It is about ensuring the sustained financial health and efficiency of the whole organisation.

2d. Financial management and monitoring

The competencies required will ensure that the board is able to make sufficiently informed and effective decisions on the use of resources and allocation of funds to improve outcomes for children and young people. It will also ensure that public money is utilised efficiently and in the best interest of the organisation.

2e. Staffing and performance management

The knowledge and behaviours required by the board to oversee executive leaders in their responsibility to ensure that the organisation has the right staff who are managed and incentivised to perform to the best of their abilities.

2f. External accountability

This section is about managing the organisation's relationship with those who have a formal or informal role in holding it accountable. It enables the board to use their skills and knowledge confidently and effectively to be accountable for the delivery of the organisation's strategic plan, their own decision-making and their oversight of executive leaders.

3. People

Why it's important: People that govern need to form positive working relationships with their colleagues to function well as part of a team. They need to be able to relate to staff, pupils/students, parents, carers and the local community and connect to the wider education system in order to enable effective delivery of the organisations strategic priorities.

3a. Building an effective team

These are the skills and behaviours necessary to ensure effective relationships and dynamics around the table. They help to foster a learning culture where constructive challenge is welcomed; thinking is diverse; a variety of experiences and perspectives are welcomed; and continuous improvement is the norm

4. Structures

Why it's important: Understanding and designing the structures through which governance takes place is vital to avoid unclear and overlapping responsibilities that can lead to dysfunctional or ineffective governance arrangements.

5. Compliance

Why it's important: To ensure all those involved in governance understand the legal frameworks and context in which the organisation operates and all of the requirements with which it must comply.

6. Evaluation

Why it's important: Monitoring the board's effectiveness is a key element of good governance. The board needs to assess its effectiveness and efficiency and ensure ongoing compliance with its statutory and legal duties under review. Individuals should reflect on their own contribution helping to create a stronger and more motivated board.

6a. Managing self-review and development

The skills and behaviours that help individuals on the board to reflect on how they personally demonstrate the agreed values and culture of the organisation and what impact their individual contribution to making to effective governance.

6b. Managing and developing the board's effectiveness

It is essential for the board to reflect on its own effectiveness including the effectiveness of its processes and structures. This will assist in building relationships and improving accountability, and will enable the board to ensure that there is a clear distinction between strategic and operational leadership. It will also assist in setting the tone and culture of the board.

Principles and Personal Attributes

The framework acknowledges that the principles and personal attributes that individuals bring to the board are as important as their skills and knowledge. These qualities enable board members to use their skills and knowledge to function well as part of a team and make an active contribution to effective governance. All those elected or appointed to boards should fulfil their duties in line with the seven principles of public life (the Nolan principles). They should also be mindful of their responsibilities under equality legislation, recognising and encouraging diversity and inclusion. They should understand the impact of effective governance on the quality of education and on outcomes for all children and young people. In addition, all those involved in governance should be:

Committed: devoting the required time and energy to the role and ambitious to achieve best possible outcomes for young people. Prepared to give time, skills and knowledge to developing themselves and others in order to create highly effective governance.

Confident: of an independent mind, able to lead and contribute to courageous conversations, to express their opinion and to play an active role on the board.

Curious: possessing an enquiring mind and an analytical approach and understanding the value of meaningful questioning.

Challenging: providing appropriate challenges to the status quo, not taking information or data at face value and always driving improvement.

Collaborative: prepared to listen to and work in partnership with others and understanding the importance of building strong working relationships within the board and with executive leaders, staff, parents and carers, pupils/students, the local community and employers.

Critical: understanding the value of critical friendship which enables both challenge and support, and self-reflective, pursuing learning and development opportunities to improve their own and whole board effectiveness.

Creative: able to challenge conventional wisdom and be open-minded about new approaches to problem-solving; recognising the value of innovation and creative thinking to organisational development and success.

Improving Governance

When inspectors judge the leadership and management of a school to be less than good, a common underlying weakness is the failure of governors to hold school leaders accountable. That is why it is so important to understand the principles and practices that contribute to good and outstanding governance, and the challenges that governors face.

It was with this in mind that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) commissioned an in-depth survey to find out what makes good governance in 2016. The report focuses on governance in 24 recently improved schools serving disadvantaged communities because these schools have the most to gain from strong, professional and determined governance. However, the lessons learnt are likely to be applicable elsewhere. The report also draws on information received from thousands of school governors, clerks and leaders in response to a call for evidence.

There were common challenges across the 24 schools before improvements were made. In 16 of the schools at the time of their previous inspections, governors did not have enough focus on raising standards and school improvement. They did not make effective use of information about pupils' performance. Many governors were unable to account for the impact of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils.

However, these schools show that it is possible for weak governance to improve quickly. Neither the types of school nor the structure of governance were the reasons for the original weaknesses in governance. There were three critical factors that made improvements possible.

The first critical factor was that the schools became aware of the weaknesses in their governance arrangements. Two thirds of the surveyed schools had not engaged in any self-evaluation of governance before being found to be less than good. Inspectors recommended an urgent external review of governance in most schools judged as requires improvement or inadequate. These reviews may have been unnecessary if governing boards had regularly carried out some form of self-evaluation.

The second critical factor was that they were able to develop professional knowledge, understanding and insight within the governing board. In some cases, this meant changing the composition of the board. In other cases, it meant accessing external professional expertise. A governor of a primary school visited in the survey explained to the Inspector: “When we had our first inspection, we didn't know that we didn't know. We were not ready to support and challenge because we did not know what to do or how to do it.”

Governors frequently stated however that they were finding it difficult to appoint people who have the required expertise for the role and who were willing to take on the responsibility and be accountable. Around three quarters of respondents to the call for evidence reported that recruitment and retention of governors were significant challenges.

The third critical factor in improvement was establishing clarity about governors' roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability. At the time of the inspection that judged them to be less than good, some of the 24 schools were part of multi-academy trusts and were unclear about lines of accountability. In each case, swift action following their inspection to clarify lines of accountability helped them on their way to improvement.

Key Findings

Many governors lack the expertise needed in an increasingly complex education system to hold school leaders accountable. Over 2,000 respondents identified this as the biggest challenge faced by governing boards. Governors and headteachers from 21 of the 24 survey schools said that, at the time of the school's initial inspection, the governing body lacked the confidence, knowledge and skill required to hold school leaders to account.

Governors need better access to highly skilled people who have the educational expertise to help them meet the increased demands of their role. The 24 schools surveyed received external advice and support for governance because of the weaknesses identified during their initial inspection. Three quarters also used the services of a professional clerk. In the majority of cases, this greatly helped their recovery, freeing up time for them to operate strategically. However, over 1,600 responses to the call for evidence recognised the need for professional support but found it difficult to find.

Recruitment and retention of governors is a serious challenge, particularly in some of the poorest areas of the country. Over 2,000 responses to the call for evidence stated that recruitment and retention of governors was a significant challenge. 19 of the 24 schools in this survey experienced difficulty recruiting governors who had the necessary expertise for the role. The challenge in finding governors with the necessary knowledge and skills was often greater for those schools that were in areas where unemployment was high and qualifications low.

Clarity about lines of accountability, roles and responsibilities is an essential part of effective governance. Following their previous Ofsted inspections, all 24 schools took immediate action to clarify lines of accountability and governors' roles and responsibilities. All of these schools felt that this was the first, essential step in their improvements. Over 1,700 responses to the call for evidence found that there was a lack of clarity about lines of accountability. Three quarters of the 2,632 respondents felt that governors need more clarity about the expectations of the strategic leadership role.

Weak governance, including in some of the poorest areas of the country, is at risk of going undetected until the school is inspected by Ofsted. A lack of effective internal or external reviews of governance can mean that weaknesses in governance remain unnoticed over long periods of time. Two thirds of the schools surveyed had not engaged in any self-evaluation of governance and had not identified any weaknesses until an Ofsted inspection judged the school to be less than good.

Paying the chairs of governing bodies can act as a means to achieving a professional and open relationship between governors and school leaders. Governors in 9 of the 24 survey schools felt that improved professional expertise had led to more open, honest discussions with the headteacher. Weak governing bodies relied on the openness of the headteacher. As they improved, there was a shift towards a more professional partnership of equals. In some areas of the country, local authorities reported achieving this shift by paying chairs of governing bodies.

Governors from within the community make an essential contribution, particularly in areas of deprivation where there may be specific barriers to learning that need to be understood and tackled effectively and sensitively. Over half of the 2,600 respondents identified a commitment and knowledge of the local community as an essential aspect of good governance.

Recommendations

Governing boards of all schools should:

- ensure clarity of roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability for governance, particularly where multi-level governance makes accountability complex
- publish information about governance on the school website in line with statutory requirements or the academy funding agreement to ensure transparency and clarity of roles and responsibilities
- ensure that they have a robust review method in place to assure themselves that the board is effective
- secure professional support and governor training as needed to ensure effective governance.

Multi-academy trusts should:

- review schemes of delegation annually and ensure that clear lines of accountability, back to trust board level, are understood and effective
- publish each academy's annually reviewed scheme of delegation on the website of the multi-academy trust and ensure that local governing boards, where they exist, fully understand their roles and responsibilities
- ensure that local governing boards use support from experts across the trust and beyond to closely monitor the performance of schools where they have delegated responsibility for doing so.

Ofsted will:

- report more robustly on the extent to which governors are committed to their own professional development in order to secure sustained improvements in governance practices.

Improving governance: governance arrangements in complex and challenging circumstances can be downloaded from www.gov.uk

School workforce planning

Schools should review their staff structures regularly as part of their annual school improvement, curriculum and financial planning. These reviews should start from first principles to investigate whether the deployment of staff is as effective and efficient as possible.

A staffing review is about ensuring that the school is always investing in the right mix of staff, and in high quality professional development, to deliver excellent pupil outcomes. Staffing costs make up 70% to 80% of an average school's expenditure. All schools should ensure that their staff structures maximise the impact of this spending, and that they make efficiencies where possible in other areas (for example, on procurement and back office spending).

Key questions to consider:

Is the mix of staffing roles right to achieve the school's objectives?

- What is the best balance between teachers and support staff? Could teaching assistants (TAs) and other classroom based support staff be used in more targeted ways, such as working in teams across year groups?
- Could non-classroom based support staff be deployed more effectively and efficiently? Can some roles be merged, or can support staff be shared with other schools? Do they have the right skills and status?
- Is the balance right between classroom teachers and the leadership team? How may this need to change over the next 3 to 5 years? Are the roles of middle leaders clearly defined?
- Does the mix of subject specialist teachers, particularly in secondary schools, match curriculum requirements? Can existing staff be trained to meet shortages in other subjects at the right level? Can staff be shared across schools or settings?

Are teaching staff being deployed in the most effective and efficient way?

- What staffing resource is required to deliver the curriculum effectively and efficiently? What are the curriculum priorities? Could curriculum-based financial planning tools be used to assess options for staff structures? Do class sizes and pupil teacher ratios allow for the most efficient use of staffing resource?
- Can teachers' time be more focused on the classroom? How does teachers' and leaders' contact time compare with other schools? Are teachers supported to concentrate on the tasks that make the biggest impact on pupil outcomes?
- Could more be made of flexible working opportunities, including for teachers and leaders where appropriate? Is the school drawing on the widest pool of talent by making suitable arrangements for part time staff, job shares and flexible working where feasible?
- Can the costs of supply teachers be reduced? Could collaboration with other schools help to negotiate lower agency fees for supply teachers, without reducing supply teacher pay? Could flexible working arrangements enable greater forward planning or improve attendance, and reduce the need for external supply teachers? Does the school have an effective policy for managing staff absence?

Are the right appraisal policies in place?

- Do all staff have objectives which contribute to improving the education of pupils at that school? Is teachers' performance assessed against objectives and the relevant standards? Do middle and senior leaders have stretching objectives which contribute to the implementation of the school's improvement plan?
- Are all pay progression decisions made on the basis of performance? Pay policies can recognise and reward teachers' performance and incentivise continuous development.
- Are part time staff and supply teachers treated fairly? The school's appraisal policy must ensure that part time and supply staff are assessed fairly, with expectations commensurate to their individual roles.

Taken from School Workforce Planning Guidance available from www.gov.uk

LGF 2017 March Conference



This was the third conference delivered by the Liverpool Governors' Forum during the last 18 months; two within this current academic year. An overview of the topics for this particular conference covered:

(1) Managing Reduced Budgets: Presented by Ged Murphy, Educational Consultant and former Headteacher.

This session gave a generic overview of governance and highlighted some key areas governors needed to look at and understand before they are able to make sound financial decisions. It was emphasised that there was no 'easy fix' to managing finances with reduced budgets, particularly when the aim was to try and identify potential efficiencies and cost savings.

It was most important for Board of Governors in the first instance to make sure they were fully compliant with Department for Education (DfE) requirements. This would give them a basis on which to make sound decisions.

To complement the session, delegates were provided with an Activities & Information Booklet, which included a knowledge and skills checklist together with links to a number of key educational resources, which would provide meaningful support. Feedback summary: The majority of delegates felt this session was too diverse and lost total focus on its main theme. Nevertheless, a small number of delegates felt they had a satisfactory learning experience and the information provided was informative and would be useful to them in their roles as governors.

(2) Whole school approach to Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing: Presented by Elaine Rees and Sonia Cross, Liverpool Learning Partnership.



It was explained that concern had been expressed nationally by Headteachers for the mental and emotional health of children in their care. This was recognised by a number of partners and the review was commissioned by the Liverpool Learning Partnership, funded jointly by Liverpool City Council's Families Programme and Liverpool NHS CCG. A considerable amount of good work is already being carried out by

individual schools. However, the aim of the review was to explore and share, what is working well in our schools, where could improvements be made and what would a successful city-wide education-based mental health and emotional wellbeing approach look like. This important piece of work has only recently been completed and it was, therefore, an excellent opportunity to feedback the findings to delegates attending the LGF conference.

Some recommendations have been set out in the report and these were highlighted at the conference, which includes a Wellbeing Policy for all Liverpool schools to adapt through to a tool kit to aid the development of a whole school approach across the city. Liverpool has nationally taken a positive lead in its approach to addressing and understanding MHWB issues.

The March issue of the LLP Newsletter and the MHWB report referred to during the presentation have subsequently been emailed to all the delegates as promised. The documents are also available on the LGF website and we strongly recommend all governors read them.

Feedback summary: *This session was considered by delegates to be an excellent and important piece of work, which was well presented by the two speakers. There was recognition that governors will have an important role to play in taking this agenda forward. There was also a keen interest in being kept informed with this city wide project as it progresses.*

(3) Improving children’s Health and Wellbeing through Yoga: Presented by Avril O’Brian, Governor at St Pauls & St Timothy Catholic Infant School and LGF committee member.

This session started with a relaxation breathing exercise. Yoga is an inclusive and non-competitive sport and Avril went on to explain how Yoga had personally helped her overcome a hereditary complaint.

Yoga began over 2000 years ago and is practised all over the world. It is popular among footballers, dancers, singers and many others. It works hand-in-hand with breathing exercises.

It is recognised that the benefits of Yoga range from improving behaviour, supportive break from a stressful day, through to improvements in academic performance. It is therefore growing in popularity with schools incorporating Yoga into the school day or after school clubs.

The session concluded with a final breathing exercise, which Avril guided the delegates through.

Feedback summary: *Without doubt a most interesting and informative session to help round off the conference. It is clear there is now a much greater understanding and awareness of the benefits of Yoga by the delegates and something which schools should give serious consideration to include in their range of daily routines.*

The conference was closed by Kathy Desmond, LGF Chair who thanked the speakers and attendees for making it an interesting, informative and enjoyable conference. A light lunch was then provided, which enabled attendees to network and discuss ideas which had been highlighted during the conference.

From the feedback forms, it was clear the attendees enjoyed a range of positive learning experiences from the 3 sessions delivered. A couple of governor quotes which included the following:

- "I really enjoyed the conference on Saturday morning, thank you all for putting on a great event."
- "A most interesting and informative conference with time well spent. Thank you."
- "I thought the event was excellent, well done and thank you to everyone who helped with its organisation."

Finally, we would like to thank all the members who supported and attend the March conference. It was a pleasure to arrange the event for such a committed and enthusiastic group.

Governors gained considerable benefit from the conference and took away with them some new knowledge and thought provoking ideas to discuss with their respective boards. We could not, of course, have achieved this without the important input from our speakers and we would like to record our thanks and appreciation to them for their contribution and for giving up their time on a Saturday morning.

David Blythe
Chair of Governors, Hope School
Hon Secretary, LGF

Courses for Summer Term

Thur 26 Apr
6pm–8pm

Ref: G17/19

Cost: Free

Termly Meeting for Chairs

This meeting is open to Chairs, or representatives, of all Governing Bodies. Councillor Nick Small, Assistant Mayor of Liverpool & Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills and Colette O'Brien, Director of Children's Services will be present at the meeting.

There will be a presentation of the Director's Items for the term followed by opportunities for discussion and questions.

Wed 14 Jun
10am–12pm

Ref: G17/31

Cost: Free

Termly Meeting for Clerks

Our termly meeting for clerks to governing boards and/or committees includes briefings and discussion on current issues as well as an opportunity to share good practice and raise queries.

Presenter: Terry Brown, Senior Assistant Governor Services

Thurs 11 May
10am–12pm

Ref: G17/20

6pm–8pm

Ref: G17/21

Ofsted Inspections

This course will cover:

- The framework for inspections
- The inspection process
- How is Governance inspected?
- What will the Inspector ask me?

Presenter: Dave Cadwallader, School Governance Lead

Tues 16 May
10am–12pm
Ref: G17/22

6pm–8pm
Ref: G17/23

Pupil Premium

This course will cover:

- The responsibilities of governors
- Ofsted expectations and requirements
- Questions for governors to ask
- How successful schools are using the Pupil Premium

Presenters: Terry Brown and Dave Cadwallader, School Governor Services

Fri 19 May
9am–4pm
Ref: G17/24

Cost: Free with Governor Training Service Agreement 1 or £200 + vat if no service agreement

Safer Recruitment

The School Staffing Regulations require governing bodies of maintained schools to ensure that at least one person on any appointment panel has undertaken safer recruitment training. Participants on this course will be awarded a Certificate of Accreditation upon successful completion of a short assessment paper on the day.

This course will:

- Provide an understanding and awareness of offender behaviour
- Identify key features of staff recruitment that help deter or prevent the appointment of unsuitable people
- Consider policies and practices that minimise opportunities for abuse or ensure its prompt reporting
- Help participants begin to review recruitment policies and practices with a view to making them safer

Presenter: Phil Cooper, Senior School Improvement Officer, Safeguarding and SEN

Thur 25 May
6pm–8pm
Ref: G17/25

Fri 26 May
10am–12pm
Ref: G17/26

Pupil Exclusions

The course will cover:

- Regulations and statutory procedures
- The role of the Governing Body
- Governing Body panel hearings
- The role of the Independent Review Panel

Presenter: Terry Brown, School Governor Services

The course is offered over two sessions:

Part 1:

**Mon 05 Jun
10am–12pm
Ref: G17/27**

or **Mon 05 Jun
6pm–8pm
Ref: G17/28**

Part 2:

**Mon 12 Jun
10am–12pm
Ref: G17/29**

or **Mon 12 Jun
6pm–8pm
Ref: G17/30**

The Role of the School Governor

An induction course for new governors (or a refresher course for experienced governors). This course is an important element of a governor's induction and it is recommended that all new governors attend. It covers the essential aspects of a governing board's responsibilities and provides an opportunity for participants to discuss how best to approach their role as a governor.

The course is informal, non-threatening (you won't be put on the spot!) and provides a forum for you to ask questions about your new role.

This course will cover:

- The core functions of governing bodies
- The legal framework for meetings
- What is strategic? What is operational?
- How governing bodies 'challenge' school leaders and hold them to account
- Monitoring and evaluating progress
- Complaints against the school

Presenter: Dave Cadwallader, School Governance Lead

**Mon 19 Jun
10am–12pm
Ref: G17/32**

**Mon 19 Jun
6:30pm–
8:30pm
Ref: G17/32**

Making Sense of Autism

The session will enhance understanding and awareness of autism and the way it affects pupils in school.

Participants will be able to:

- Identify the four key areas of difference that need to be taken into account
- Know the importance of understanding the individual pupil and their profile of strengths and areas for development
- Identify the key areas to help pupils on the autism spectrum build positive relationships with staff, peers, families and people in their community
- Develop an awareness of the sensory and communication differences that pupils may experience

Presenter: Rachel Read, Specialist Advisory Teacher, Special Educational Needs Inclusion Support Service

Tues 27 Jun
10am–12pm

Ref: G17/34

Tues 27 Jun
6pm–8pm

Ref: G17/35

Financial Benchmarking

The briefing will cover:

- Identifying historic trends and relationships over time
- Focusing on areas that are out of line with average
- Known changes and links to the current budget plan
- Identifying possible future areas for improvement
- Questions for governors to ask

Presenter: Dave Collins, Principal Finance Officer

Wed 05 Jul
10am–12pm

Ref: G17/36

Wed 05 July
6pm–8pm

Ref: G17/37

The Beginners Guide to Academy Governance

This course is aimed at governors of maintained schools looking to develop their knowledge of governance in an Academy setting.

This session will look at:

- Routes to becoming an Academy
- The role of the Regional Schools Commissioner
- Members / Directors / Trustees – who does what?
- Models of Governance in a Multi Academy Trust
- Models of Leadership

Presenter: Dave Cadwallader, School Governance Lead

Booking information

For more information or to book a place on a course call Jean Worrall on 0151 233 3944 or email jean.worrall@si.liverpool.gov.uk. You will receive written confirmation of your booking by email or post.

Our courses are available to all schools, whatever their status (maintained, academy, free, independent, UTC) and from any local authority.

Cost

Unless otherwise stated all sessions are FREE with Governor Training Service Agreement or £100 excl vat per session if no Service Agreement. Longer sessions are priced individually. As a courtesy, please liaise with your school before booking onto a course if this will incur a fee. If you are unable to attend a course on which you have booked please tell us as soon as possible otherwise a fee, if applicable, will be charged.

Venue

The venue for all sessions is Toxteth Annexe Conference Centre, Aigburth Road, Liverpool, L17 7BN (please note that Aigburth Road is a dual carriageway). Free car parking is available within the grounds of the building. Bus routes 82 and 60 run regular services along Aigburth Road whilst St Michael's train station is located 600 metres away on Southbrook Road, L17 7BQ.

School Improvement Liverpool

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