



'20 Questions' for Effective Governance

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Background

- What does effective governance look like?
- New Chair and enhanced expectations
- Critical reflection of what Governing Body doing well and what need to improve; non-threatening, engaging and easy to use
- High percentage of new governors

“Strong Governance essential for good schools”



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Twenty Questions ~ 2nd Edition 2015

Key questions every governing board should ask itself

Strong governance is essential for good schools. In too many schools, governing boards are not effective or confident enough. One of a governing board's three key functions is to support and challenge headteachers, holding them to account so that pupils get the best possible education. But governing boards also need support and challenge. Three years ago we set out to encourage governors to challenge themselves as the best governing boards already did.

This first edition of 20 questions for governing bodies was developed by the National Governors' Association (NGA) and the Key for School Governors but we consulted widely at the May 2012 meeting of the APPG and published at the APPG's summer 2012 reception.

Since then they have been used extensively by many governing boards across England when reviewing their governance practice, and it was timely to review them in the light of that experience.

Once again the questions are **NOT** attempting to:

- cover every aspect of effective governance,
- give the answers – these can only be obtained from reflecting honestly and fully on current practice in comparison with others,
- replace the good guidance for governing bodies provided by a range of organisations.

A number of organisations including NGA and the Key have developed material to help governing boards evaluate their performance using these questions and take action following the review to improve governance practice.

1. Right people round the table
2. Role and responsibilities of GB
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 success looks like

“As a new chair of governors with limited experience of governance I had little or **no concept as to what effective governance (success) looked like**. The outgoing chair had started to raise the expectations of governance and I was keen to ensure that the **valuable volunteer time given was used to the best effect**. There is a **plethora of information available** and I was starting to drown in guidance when I came across the 20 Questions Framework. **Easy to understand, on a page, and addressing all aspects of governance**, this seemed like an ideal framework to use and I have not been disappointed.”

Chair of Governors

Twenty key questions

Review

Question	Green	Amber	Red	Comments
Right skills: Do we have the right skills on the governing body?				
1. Have we completed a skills audit of our governing body?	5	3	0	
2. Do we appoint governors on the basis of their skills, and do we know how to find people with the necessary skills?	3	5	1	
Effectiveness: Are we as effective as we could be?				
3. Do we understand our roles and responsibilities?	5	3	0	
4. Do we have a professional clerk and run meetings efficiently?	8	0	0	

Question	Green	Amber	Red	Comments
5. Do we have a training and development budget and does every governor receive the support they need to carry out their role effectively?	5	3	0	
6. Do we know about good practice from across the country?	1	3	4	
7. Is the size, composition and committee structure of our governing body conducive to effective working?	5	2	0	
8. Does every member of the governing body make a regular contribution and do we carry out an annual review of the governing body's performance?	3	5	0	

Key highlights

- Legitimising interventions
- Governor engagement; open dialogue about governance
- Governance Improvement Plan
- Focus on impact on outcomes for our students

What the Governors thought

“... it presented the opportunity for us as governors to **actually move about the meeting and talk to each other** about what we thought we knew about governance. Up until that point, I hadn't actually had a chance to really chat with those I didn't know and it **really broke the ice...**”

“In order to **work effectively and efficiently as a governor team** we need to know our areas of weakness and strengths ... quicker process of completing the assessment and evaluation is **instantly recognisable through using coloured stickers...** As a team I don't think we meet regular enough to make any significant change but the assessment works as a great memory aid to re-focus back on areas which we need to.”

In Summary

- Highly recommend the use of this 20 Questions Framework as a tool to collectively review GB effectiveness evoking discussion about what works, and what could be improved and how
- GB performance and development is integral to the success of the School and should not be seen as separate to it
- Second edition '20 Questions' emphasises strategic nature of Governance role

How could you use this?

- Conduct your own self-assessment using the 2nd edition 20 Questions framework
- Work in collaboration with other Governing Bodies to use the 20 Questions as a peer review framework
- Share the comparison between the 1st and 2nd edition 20 Questions to emphasise the strategic nature and enhanced expectations of the governor role