



Governor Training - Asking the Right Questions

Training Booklet

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Governance

Monitoring Cared for Children

Where and when would you use the questions?

Who would you expect to answer the questions?

- Does every Child in Care in our school have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), completed within the statutory timescale with clear relevant targets?
- Does our school's admissions policy give number one priority to Children in Care?
- Do our school policies reflect the needs of Children in Care?
- What actions are being taken to improve outcomes for Children in Care in our school?
- What are the measurable effects of these actions?
- How many Children in Care are there currently enrolled at the school?
- How well do Children in Care achieve compared with their peers, and against local and national expectations?

What impact would you have made as a result of asking the questions?

What evidence would you expect to see and or receive?

Governance Monitoring Exclusions

Where and when would you use the questions?

Who would you expect to answer the questions?

- What is the number of exclusions in this year – both fixed term and permanent?
- What is the trend compared with previous years?
- What are the reasons for this?
- What is the school doing to reduce the number of exclusions?
- How do our school's exclusions numbers compare to local and national averages?
- Which governors are named as members of the exclusions appeal panel and have they attended any training

What impact would you have made as a result of asking the questions?

What evidence would you expect to see and or receive?

Governance

Monitoring Achievement and Standards

Where and when would you use the questions?

Who would you expect to answer the questions?

- What does pupil data tracking tell us about progress and attainment?
- How well do pupils progress from one year to the next?
- How well does pupil tracking support progress in class and how does this feed into the picture of progress across the whole school?
- How is work assessed?
- How many pupils are reaching age-related expectations and above at the end of the year compared with the starting point at the beginning?
- How do our results compare locally, nationally and in our family of schools?
- Are our children achieving above, in-line or below national expectations and age related expectations?
- What are our strengths?
- What are our barriers to progress? What are we doing about it?
- How well are our high attaining pupils progressing?

What impact would you have made as a result of asking the questions?

What evidence would you expect to see and or receive?

Where and when would you use the questions?

Governance Monitoring Attendance

Who would you expect to answer the questions?

What is the agreed attendance target for the school?
Do we have a lead governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance?
Does the governing body scrutinise half-termly attendance data at every meeting?
What are the names of pupils who are persistently absent and what interventions are the school undertaking to tackle this?
What is the overall level of attendance?
Does the school have an Attendance Policy and when was it updated?
What is the level of persistent absence (children with attendance of 80% and below)?
How many persistently absent (PA) pupils are there?
Who are the vulnerable pupils? i.e. SEN, Children in Care (Looked after Children), Behavioural needs.
What resources are in place to support them and how frequently are they monitored?
What strategies/interventions does your school use to improve attendance?
How is the impact of these interventions measured and how often are they reviewed?
Are all staff aware of their responsibilities regarding attendance in school and is there a senior member of staff allocated to attendance?
Do we have a named governor?

What impact would you have made as a result of asking the questions?

What evidence would you expect to see and or receive?

Where and when would you use the questions?

Governance Monitoring Pupil Wellbeing

Who would you expect to answer the questions?

- What are pupils' attitudes to learning like in and out of school and how do we know?
- What is behaviour around the school and in lessons like, including the extent of low-level disruption?
- How do pupils' behave towards each other, and do they show respect for other young people and adults?
- Do pupils understand they should expect freedom from bullying, harassment and discrimination?
- How well do teachers manage the behaviour and expectations of pupils to ensure that all pupils have an equal and fair chance to thrive and learn in an atmosphere of respect and dignity?
- How do we ensure behaviour is managed the systematically and consistently?
- Do pupils feel safe and understand they can assess help to manage risk appropriately and to keep themselves safe?
- Do we have good evidence to show that leaders and managers have created a positive ethos in the school?

What impact would you have made as a result of asking the questions?

What evidence would you expect to see and or receive?

Where and when would you use the questions?

Governance Monitoring Teaching and Learning and Curriculum

Who would you expect to answer the questions?

Provision

- Does curriculum innovation fit into the school's mission statement?
- How is the subject taught in different year groups?
- What are the key issues in your subject?
- What are the main strengths in your subject?
- Can the governing body be satisfied that the subject meets the needs of all our pupils? How do you know?
- What is our vision for the curriculum and is it fit for purpose?
- How do we know all our learners are successful learners?
- How do we inform parents of their child's progress?
- How do the findings influence classroom practice?
- What percentage of teaching and learning is good or better? How can this be evidenced?
- What are we doing to address poor teaching and poor learning?
- Do all teachers have the skills to ensure all children make good or better progress?
- What strategies do we have in place to improve the quality of teaching and learning particularly where it is not consistently good?
- What evidence is there in the school that pupils work effectively with others?
- What evidence is there to show that pupils work is matched to their needs?
- How good is behaviour for learning and how do we know?
- What does good learning look like in our school and how do we know it is happening?
- Where can we evidence that pupil progress is the highest priority for teaching?
- Are we confident that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their learning? How and where is this evidenced?
- What methods do teachers use to secure good learning?
- How good is the learning environment and what impact is it having on achievement and well-being?
- What resources make the most impact on teaching and learning? How do we know?
- What support do you need to make further improvements?
- What extra curricular opportunities are there for pupils to engage with in and out of school? How do these activities enhance pupils' learning?

What impact would you have made as a result of asking the questions?

What evidence would you expect to see and or receive?

Where and when would you use the questions?

Governance

Monitoring Safeguarding

Who would you expect to answer the questions?

- Do our parents understand the safeguarding agenda?
- What measures do we take to help parents to understand the safeguarding agenda?
- Do we have the appropriate up to date policies in place? Are these kept in accessible place for all staff?
- When was the policy last reviewed? (this should be done annually)
- Do we have a single central record for our own employees and volunteers?
- Whose responsibility is it to keep these up to date?
- How do we know that all staff understand the correct procedures for child protection incidents?
- How does the school ensure that all pupils know what they should do if involved in a child protection incident?
- Have the appropriate number of staff and governors attended an accredited safer recruitment course?
- Are all new staff trained in child protection issues as part of their induction process?
- Do all the staff have access to Level 1 Basic Awareness training every 3 years? Who maintains records of all training?
- Who is the designated staff member for safeguarding / child protection in school?
- When did the designated staff member last attend safeguarding training?
- Is our Single Central Record (SCR) kept up to date and who is responsible for this?
- Do governors know where the SCR is located?
- What training have the rest of the school staff had, and is it up-to-date?
- Has the Headteacher and at least one governor completed the Safer Recruitment training?
- Is there a named governor with responsibility for safeguarding? Have they, and any other governors, attended safeguarding training?
- Is the Single Central Record kept up to date, and held securely in one place in school?
- Are any other organisations using the school premises, and have they appropriately vetted their staff?
- Does the governing body know that the site is safe and secure?

What impact would you have made as a result of asking the questions?

What evidence would you expect to see and or receive?

Where and when would you use the questions?

Governance Monitoring SEND

Who would you expect to answer the questions?

- How is the school implementing reforms to SEND provision?
- What opportunities do the reforms offer the school?
- How will we review the implementation of the reforms?
- How many children are there in school with SEND?
- How are parents and carers informed that their child has SEND?
- How are parents and carers involved in reviews of Education Health Care Plans (EHP)?
- How do outcomes for children with SEND compare with those of children in school with no SEND?
- Are pupils doing better in certain subjects eg is there greater progress in reading than in writing? Why is this? What is being done about it?
- How much is spent on improving outcomes for children with SEND and does this provide value for money? How could this be improved?
- How is the effectiveness of this spending monitored?
- Is SEND an integral part of the School Improvement Plan?
- What is the need for provision in the forthcoming academic year and how does this differ from the current year?
- What is the planned investment in CPD for the SENDCO and all school staff on SEND reforms?
- Which member of staff is the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCO)?
- Do we have a specialist in school to train and support staff? What impact does this have?

What impact would you have made as a result of asking the questions?

What evidence would you expect to see and or receive?

Governance

Monitoring Pupil Premium

Where and when would you use the questions?

Who would you expect to answer the questions?

- How effective is the school's pupil premium policy in supporting the target groups?
- How confident are you that the pupil premium grant is spent appropriately on the intended target groups?
- Is the pupil premium funding kept separate from general school resources so it can be specifically and identifiably used as intended?
- How is the allocation of the pupil premium decided? What is the pupil premium used for
- How is the progress of different groups of pupils monitored so that the school can identify any underperforming groups?
- Are there groups of pupils whose attainment falls behind others? How does the attainment of pupil premium pupils as a group compare with others?
- What would you say are the main challenges in the use of the pupil premium, and how is the school working to overcome them? What benefits can you see from the allocation of the pupil premium?
- Is there anything that the governing body should be aware of that could help the school gain the maximum advantage from the pupil premium?

What impact would you have made as a result of asking the questions?

What evidence would you expect to see and or receive?

Where and when would you use the questions?

Governance

Monitoring Parental Engagement

Who would you expect to answer the questions?

- What strategies do we do have in place to engage with our parents?
- How effective is our engagement and how can this be evidenced?
- Do we keep a record of how we engage with parents?
- Are there any issues within our local community that concern or affect our parents?
- What links do we have to any other local providers?
- How can our parents access information regarding parental support?
- Do we regularly consult with parents? – If so how and when? How does this information help with our School Development Plan?
- What impact do our strategies have for our parents?
- What ways do we go about communicating with our parents? – What about those parents who may not read well or do not have close contact with the school?
- How do we provide parents with ideas about how to help their children's learning?
- How many parents access 'Parent View' what does the site tell us? Do we need to address any concerns? Share any good news?

What impact would you have made as a result of asking the questions?

What evidence would you expect to see and or receive?

Governance

Monitoring L + M

Where and when would you use the questions?

Who would you expect to answer the questions?

Leadership and Management

- What type of leadership do we have in our school? Is it 'distributed' ... or centred around a small number of staff?
- How well do we know the strengths of our staff in school?
- How does the school show that achievements are recognised for all pupils AND all staff?
- Is there a culture of achievement and high standards within the school? Where and how is this shown?
- How do our managers manage? Autocratic or democratic styles?
- Is our staff training programme linked to curriculum development priorities?
- Is there sufficient funding to ensure appropriate training can be undertaken?
- How can the impact of training be demonstrated?
- What impact has Appraisal had this year on pupil outcomes and staff development?

What impact would you have made as a result of asking the questions?

What evidence would you expect to see and or receive?

Governance

Monitoring Closing the Gap

Where and when would you use the questions?

Who would you expect to answer the questions?

- Is the school identifying its vulnerable groups and pupils?
- Who are they and which group is most vulnerable?
- Is tracking of progress in place and how do you monitor this?
- How does the progress of your vulnerable groups compare to local and national?
- What is being done to improve/accelerate progress made by the vulnerable groups?
- How does the school evidence pupil progress?
- Who does the person responsible for assessment and monitoring report to?
- How is the evidence used to raise standards further?
- How does the school work with parents and carers to help them to support their children's learning?
- How does the school celebrate achievement of all pupils including vulnerable groups
- Whilst Closing the Gap is a specific aspect over a period of time, the quality of provision for pupils with SEN or who are CIC (Children in Care) will be on going and these questions could asked during an annual cycle of review.

What impact would you have made as a result of asking the questions?

What evidence would you expect to see and or receive?

Governance Monitoring Finance

Where and when would you use the questions?

Who would you expect to answer the questions?

- Is there a projected surplus or deficit this year and the next two years?
- What are the plans to meet the deficit or use the surplus?
- How much of the total budget is spent on improving outcomes for Looked After Children?
- How much is spent on improving outcomes for children with special educational needs (SEN)?
- What proportion of the total budget is spent on staffing costs? (It is recommended to be around 80%).
- How much funding has been delegated in the current budget under the headings: AEN (Additional Educational Needs), SEN and Personalised Learning? How is this funding being used in school? (It is expected to be used to support pupils with additional needs).
- What changes have been made to the budget, and can the Headteacher explain any virements between cost centres. This should be asked during every budget monitoring.
- Does the planned budget match the priorities in the School Improvement Plan?
- Are any changes to the staffing structure anticipated which would change the financial cost?
- If there is a projected shortfall in future years? What plans are in place to address this?
- If there is a surplus balance, what plans are there to make use of it?

What impact would you have made as a result of asking the questions?

What evidence would you expect to see and or receive?

Monitoring Questions for All Governors

The key questions for governors to ask include:

- **How well are we doing overall in XXX?**

Where possible you are trying to get the picture of how the school is performing against ☐ previous performance/practice - ideally over a 3 year period (*is it getting better,*

static or declining, how quickly is it improving, is it fast enough to ensure a “good”

judgement at the next Ofsted inspection?)

☐ a range of benchmark outcomes including comparison to

- the national outcomes/practice
- similar schools
- the top (25%) of similar schools
- school targets and estimates.

- **How consistent is that performance across all our XXX?**

- Individual groups of pupils
- Year Groups
- Key Stages

- **How do we know, what is our evidence base?**

- RAISEonline,
- FFT
- External verification including Leadership Partners
- Internal school data - it is important that you know how the school ensures that the information that is presented is as reliable as possible. e.g governors are often provided with information about lesson observations but do you know for example, how often are teachers

observed, are they observed with different age/ability groups, are all teachers observed, who observes them, what training is given to observers, how are assessments moderated externally? Once again the design of these quality assurance processes are for Headteacher to determine, but you will want to be assured that it is robust and would stand up to challenge by, for example the LA or Ofsted.

- **What are we doing to improve weak and underperformance and encourage the spread of good practice?**

- As a governor this is one of the most important elements of your role. Headteachers and other school leaders should be able to explain how they intend to improve underperformance in any of the areas listed above. Critical here is whether the improvement strategy is achieving the pace of change required to secure a “good” judgement by the next inspection. Discussion should include the different options that the leadership team has considered to secure the necessary improvement, including where necessary more radical approaches.

- **How will we review and evaluate our strengths, weaknesses and pace of improvement?**

- **The critical aspect here is to focus on the IMPACT of the improvement work against the success criteria in the school action plan/Ofsted framework. It is not enough to be working hard at improving, we all need to see that the action is improving the outcomes against the success criteria. A key question includes, “have we secured the necessary improvements and if not what do we need to do differently?”**

- **What are our next steps?**

- Are we on track? Do we need to do more of the strategies shown in the plan or change our direction/strategies for new ones? Again here the key is the pace and consistency/impact of improvement.

Finally, please remember good governance is based on a positive partnership between school leaders and governors, with each understanding the role of the other. Having established the questions that governors can legitimately ask of school leaders, it is equally important to consider how best to ask those questions in order to sustain the open, positive and mutually supportive relationship that are found in our best schools.

