

# Effective Governance for Good and Outstanding Schools

## 20 key questions a governing body should ask itself

Strong governance is essential for good and outstanding schools. The key role of governing bodies is to support and challenge headteachers in order to ensure pupils receive the best possible education.

Governing bodies also need support and challenge. We therefore set out to encourage governors to challenge themselves as the best governing bodies already do.

The National Governors' Association have prepared 20 questions for governing bodies to ask themselves.

These questions should enable every governing body to challenge its own practice and, if the answers derive from a genuine discussion based on the evidence available, decide when and how improvements can be made.

They 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.

### Right skills: Do we have the right skills on the governing body?

1. Have we completed a skills audit of our governing body?
2. Do we appoint governors on the basis of their skills, and do we know how to find people with the necessary skills?

### Effectiveness: Are we as effective as we could be?

3. Do we understand our roles and responsibilities?
4. Do we have a professional clerk and run meetings efficiently?
5. What is our training and development budget and does every governor receive the support they need to carry out their role effectively?
6. Do we know about good practice from across the country?
7. Is the size, composition and committee structure of our governing body conducive to effective working?
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?

### **Strategy: Does the school have a clear vision?**

9. Have we developed long-term aims for the school with clear priorities in an ambitious school development plan which is regularly monitored and reviewed?
10. Does our strategic planning cycle drive the governing body's activities and agenda setting?

### **Accountability of the executive: Do we hold the school leaders to account?**

11. Do we understand the school's performance data well enough to properly hold school leaders to account?
12. How effective is our performance management of the Headteacher?
13. Are our financial management systems robust and do we ensure best value for money?

### **Engagement: Are we properly engaged with our school community, the wider school sector and the outside world?**

14. How do we listen to and understand our pupils, parents and staff?
15. How do we report to our parents and local community regularly?
16. What benefit do we draw from collaboration with other schools and other sectors, locally and nationally?

### **Role of chair: Does our chair show strong and effective leadership?**

17. Do we carry out a regular 360 review of the chair's performance?
18. Do we engage in good succession planning?
19. Are the chair and committee chairs re-elected each year?

### **Impact: Are we having an impact on outcomes for pupils?**

20. How much has the school improved over the last three years, and what has the governing body's contribution been to this?