



Association of Colleges West Midlands

Promoting. Representing. Supporting.

Developing an Effective Board

AoC West Midlands Governance Seminar

Carol Jones, NLG

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What's covered

- **Introduction and background**
- **Part 1 – The effective Board**
 - What a governing body is and what it is there to do
 - What does an effective governing body look like?
 - Expectations of governors and Boards
- **Part 2 – Managing performance**
 - Appraising the Board, the Chair, individual Governors and the Clerk
 - The process of governance self assessment
 - Appraising the Principal
 - Summary and next steps



Objectives – to know, understand or evaluate

- What is meant by an effective Governing Body/Board
- The key attributes of an effective Governing Body
- The effectiveness of your own Governing Body
- How the Governing Body provides effective leadership
- The responsibility of the Governing Body to assess its own performance – and how this can be achieved
- The process for appraising the performance of the Principal
- Performance management and the effective Governing Body

Starts with Governors

- Strategic – setting the direction
- Independence of thought and action
- Charitable trustee with a fiduciary duty
- Ensuring solvency, safeguarding assets, effective and efficient use of resources
- Approving the annual budget
- Setting the employment framework for all staff
- Responsibility for the conditions of service, appointment, appraisal and dismissal of the Principal/CEO/Accounting Officer, any other senior post-holders and Clerk
- Ambassadorial role
- Term of office

What a GB is and what it is there to do

- Colleges are led by independent boards of governors with a clerk
- The GB sets the mission, strategic direction and educational character
- The GB oversees quality and financial performance
- The GB challenges the executive on delivery and holds the Principal/CEO to account
- All colleges have an Instrument and Articles of Government, which sets out how the college is governed – arrangement and practices
- There is a Code of Good Governance for English Colleges
- Colleges have greater freedom to shape appropriate governance but not all use it

Part 1 Activity

- We know what a GB is, but what makes it **effective**?
- What does **effective governance** look like in your college?
- **Share 3 or 4 examples of an effective GB and impact.**

What makes a GB effective?

- Dealing with the right things, asking powerful questions
- Challenge and support – tackling difficult issues – a leadership team who know their college well
- Focus on medium term college strategy and planning for longer term sustainability
- Transparency – custodian of public funding and assets
- Accountable and responsive to learners, communities, employers, stakeholders, funding bodies, inspectorate ...
- Setting KPIs to monitor progress, pace, trends and benchmarking
- Financial expertise and understanding across the Board
- Well informed, trained, supported governors able to demonstrate their impact. Succession planning for whole GB.

What does effective governance look like?

- Ofsted say – Inspectors will consider whether governors:
- know their college and understand its strengths and weaknesses
- support and strengthen the college leadership and contribute to shaping its strategic direction
- Provide challenge and hold senior leaders and managers to account for improving the quality of learning and the effectiveness of performance management systems
- Judgements from Ofsted reports related to governance - handout

What does effective governance look like?

- The FE Commissioners view – some examples from intervention:
- Clear mission, vision, set of values and strategy, well communicated
- Leadership team benchmarks the college against others and seeks out best practice – outward facing (rather than inward looking)
- Strong financial expertise on the GB
- Visibility of the leadership team
- Challenge – GB prepared to have difficult conversations and deal with problems – not allowing a problem to become a crisis
- Governors taking ownership of the college – succession planning

Part 2 Activity (A)

- When and how was the GB structure and governance processes (including Clerk role) last reviewed in your college and what was the outcome?

Appraising the Board

- Most colleges review and evaluate governance as part of the annual college self-assessment review (SAR) process
- Some colleges develop a governance improvement plan as a result of the SAR (may include succession planning). Other colleges will do this after an Ofsted inspection or an FE Commissioner intervention
- How the GB is involved in the appraisal of the Clerk (Governance Professional)
- This is the most dynamic period of change since the incorporation of the sector in 1992, with huge implications for how colleges are governed

Part 2 Activity (B)

- How is your Chair (or you, if you are a Chair) appraised/reviewed and what has the outcome been?
- Who appraises/reviews the performance of Governors and how are outcomes reported to the Board?

Review and assessment of the Chair

- This can take various forms, including self-assessment by the Chair and feedback from each board member – collated by the Clerk – or – peer review using the expertise of a Chair from another board – or an external consultant It is not appropriate for the Principal to conduct a Chair's appraisal.
- Outcomes from the Chair's appraisal can feed into the overall governance review – any training or development needs can be part of the governance improvement plan.
- Consider: support and training needs of the Chair (and those of Chairs of Committees)

Review and assessment of governors

- The objective of the appraisal is to enable governors to evaluate their performance, to build on strengths and address any areas for development.
- The purpose of appraisals is to manage performance, identify training needs, ensure skills and experience are being utilised on the board and contribute to effective succession planning for governors.
- The process can be via self-assessment questionnaire, one to one reviews with the Chair, peer review with a fellow governor or an external facilitator.
- Best practice would be governors agreeing the method, all governors taking part in a timely manner and the GB agreeing how outcomes will be shared and used.

Appraisal and assessment of the Principal

- The college executive team are responsible to the GB for the management of the college
- The role of governors in monitoring the senior team is important and governors are expected to be able to say how they do this and evidence that they do it (Ofsted).
- Key relationship is between the Chair and the Principal/CEO
- The Principal is responsible for delivering the Board's decisions and for managing the executive team.
- The Chair will appraise the Principal and the GB contributes to setting the targets for the Principal and other executives

Last activity....

- What **one** thing could your GB do to improve its effectiveness?
- What **one** thing could you do, to improve your effectiveness as a governor?

Next steps

- Summary
- Questions?
- Feedback and evaluation