



Effective Governance: Case Study

Getting ready for an Area Review

Summary

This case study explains the role of two National Leaders of Governance (NLG) when considering potential strategic change and the links to effective governance as a result of an Area Review and Ofsted inspection. Specifically the tasks relate to mentoring of the Chair of the board and assisting in the selection of a future partner.

Code of Good Governance

This case study underpins principal responsibility 1 – Strategy and Leadership.

Issue to be resolved

1. Strategy and Leadership – Is the Chair the right person to lead the board and the college into an Area Review and an Ofsted inspection?
2. Are the Principal and SMT appropriate for the tasks in hand?
3. As the college moves into Area Review which potential partner has the values and vision most aligned with that of the college?

Context

A relatively small college flanked by two assertive and competitive colleges. The small college has overlap in terms of attendance postcodes with one of the larger colleges, which is less assertive, and willing to have discussions with the smaller college. It was felt that the other large college might take over and asset-strip the small college if it was allowed.

Methodology

The clerk contacted the AoC Governance Unit and asked for one NLG to mentor the Chair and another NLG to provide support in the form of acting as adviser to their potential partner selection panel. Initial visits defined the needs of the college, and built their confidence that the NLGs were able to assist them. The visits clarified their requests into situational, strategic and structural elements involving the Chair of



Governors, the board, and the SMT. These visits helped clarify which plans were appropriate for Ofsted and for the Area Review, and the timelines for execution.

The NLG helping with partner selection visited the college twice, talked with the selection panel, and observed two presentations from other organisations on how they felt they could work with the college in the future. The NLG agreed with the panel not to score the presentations but would ask the presenters supplementary questions during the Question and Answer session following each presentation. The NLG was able to ask a number of questions to clarify what the presenters were suggesting, to the benefit of the college panel.

Findings and Actions

Taking each issue in turn the NLGs worked with the chair over what steps they should take for each issue. It was important at this stage that the actions were owned and managed by the college.

The Chair had built a good, varied and largely supportive board. It was agreed that if the Chair left now, the whole college would be destabilised. Similarly, although the outcomes for an Ofsted visit did not look promising, getting a new Principal at this time would not be beneficial to either learners or staff.

The college agreed to put together a set of potential outcomes from the Area Review which addressed the needs of learners in the locality. Options included merger with the more supportive larger college, or standing alone.

Results and next steps

One NLG mentored the college Chair of Governors, who was new to the position in 2014/15. The college said that the NLG provided a sounding board, and confidential ear for the Chair during that time and they decided to continue the relationship into 2015/16. The NLG continued to review the feedback from the board on the Chair's performance, giving the college an independent and external oversight of their self-assessment process.



The other NLG assisted the college in 2016 as a sub group of the board met with chairs and principals of local colleges to begin talks about working together (ahead of Area Reviews). The college stated that the NLG gave insightful advice on how to fairly evaluate the meetings they were having, and added an independent voice to their deliberations. The NLG gave the sub-group, and therefore the board, confidence in the college's assessments of which local colleges had similar values to theirs and so would be organisations they would look to exploring future partnership arrangements with.

The college were clear that both NLGs over the past two years had added confidence and assurance to the Board's decisions and processes, as well as independent validation of the Board's actions. The college said they thought their Ofsted result would now be more realistic, and owned by all members of staff and governors. The Chair was happy to stay in place, and guide the college through both Ofsted and Area Review. The Chair agreed to have talks with the more amenable of the larger colleges with a view to potential merger in the future. The Chair would like to see the mentoring NLG again after both the Area Review and the Ofsted visit.