



Effective Governance Case Study 4

Teaching and Learning

Summary

This case study describes how governors from different colleges can come together to determine good practice for teaching and learning. It describes how the event was organised, provides a number of questions for governors on determining good practice and provides a principal's perspective describing the 10 difficult questions no principal wants to be asked.

Code of Good Governance

This case study underpins principal responsibility 4 – Teaching and Learning.

Issue to be resolved

Governors across a region wished to be more aware of the extent to which they should be involved strategically in teaching and learning and the effective mechanisms for achieving this.

Context

Governors of four geographically isolated colleges meet regularly to address specific topics of governance. They had decided on this as the topic for their January 2015 workshop and used their access to the National Leaders of Governance (NLG) programme to achieve this. This was one of a regular series of workshops. The colleges represented a range of Ofsted inspection results from 1-3 and comprised two general further education colleges and two sixth form colleges.

Methodology

A two hour evening workshop attended by 40 governors from the four colleges. Participation included chairs, chairs of quality and standards committees, principals and clerks.

The workshop was planned through extensive telephone consultation with the clerks of the four colleges, who provided information on current practices and preferences for the session's style and content.

Format:

Introductory presentation on why governors need to be involved in the governance of teaching and learning, including monitoring overall standards and achieving a balance of strategic and operational approaches and headlines of what we need to know in terms of outcomes and processes. Annex 1 is a principal's perspective on the difficult questions to ask.

This was followed by a discussion session in mixed groups, which represented all the



colleges present, to identify and share good practice, supported by a template which provided a check list of practices that might be considered (Annex 2). Areas of good practice were recorded by the clerks.

Next was a short presentation on current developments – New Ofsted Common Inspection Framework, Code of Good Governance for English Colleges, HEFCE new quality consultation.

This was followed by the second discussion session in specific college groups to form early thoughts on how they can develop their strategic governance of teaching and learning.

Clerks' notes from the discussions sessions were collated by a facilitator after the event.

Findings and Actions

The discussions identified a range of good and different practices across the colleges. These included governance structure and the role of the quality and search committees (where they exist), the extent to which governors are involved with management, the different ways in which governors are involved in Self - Assessment Reports (SAR) and quality improvement, the use of governor links, approaches to closing achievement gaps, how the quality of teaching and learning is monitored, the use of data, the use of learning walks and the use and impact of new technologies.

Results

College groups gave early consideration to their priorities. The summarised outcomes of the first discussion were disseminated to the clerks after the event.

Conclusions and next steps

The individual boards will consider what actions they might take as a result of the discussion. Early indications were an immediate focus on the new common inspection framework and the inspectors' handbooks in an outstanding college and the re-instatement of governor links in another.

References and useful material

[Ofsted CIF](#)

[Ofsted FE Inspectors Handbook](#)

[More Teaching and Learning governance resources](#)



Annex 1 - A Principal's Perspective: Toughness and trust in the board

The senior leadership team has built enormous trust with our board thanks to a set of questions under the heading -

'The 10 difficult questions no Principal wants to be asked.'

This is a tough approach to building trust and although these questions caused the senior team some discomfort, they have enhanced the board's understanding of teaching and learning no end.

1. How many students dropped out before Day 43, from which areas and why? This question moves the discussion away from a glib set of standard answers and opens up a more fruitful line of enquiry. For example, is there a correlation between late enrolments and drop-outs? Are some areas of the college more aberrant than other and does this suggest sloppy interview and induction practices? Is there a culture of pressure to achieve enrolment targets that is then corrupting the integrity of student recruitment?
2. How many 16 to 18-year-olds enrolled without maths and/or English grade C and what percentage of these are currently in maths/English classes? The speed in which students who need maths and English are identified and put in classes reveals crucial information about whole college understanding and support of the maths and English policy and the initial assessment process.
3. What are student attendance rates for maths and English classes? Whole college attendance figures do not reveal that attendance at maths/English classes is nearly always lower. This question separates the data and gives way to establishing what is being done to drive up Maths and English attendance.
4. What is the lesson observation profile for all maths and English classes? Again, whole college analysis of lesson observation grades often disguises the weaker profile in maths and English classes.
5. What is the lesson observation profile for all new teachers in their first year? Support for new teachers is often weak. By concentrating on them as a distinctive group, wider questions can be asked about the whole college approach to supporting new teachers. This includes ensuring poor performers do not drift through their probationary period.
6. How many new teachers are there and how are they supported? For the same reason as question 5.
7. How many teachers at any one time are being formally disciplined/performance managed? How long is each case taking and why? This question demands hard evidence that poorly-performing teachers are being carefully managed and light thrown on the amount of time this is taking.
8. Which 10 full-time courses have the weakest student progression statistics and what is being done about it? This moves the scrutiny away from a sole focus on



success rates and generates interest in progression rates as a measure of effectiveness. It throws up some very interesting and uncomfortable 'why are we offering this course' conversations.

9. What percentage of full time 16 to 18 students have undertaken a work placement? This is rarely looked at but is key within the new study programmes. This creates a whole college view of work experience and often reveals highly inconsistent practice.
10. How does the internal lesson observation profile compare with externally validated lesson observations? Internal lesson observation profiles are often dangerously inflated. College boards need to know that leadership teams are not fooling themselves. Scrutiny here forces external validation of lesson observations and allows valuable comparison.



Annex 2 – Teaching and Learning: A Governor’s Role

Area	College	Example
<p>Structure – governance model Do we have a committee structure with a “Curriculum & Quality” or “Quality & Standards” committee or do we handle all business in the main board (apart from the statutory Audit Committee). What, from our experience, are the relative merits of these approaches in helping us have an impact on Teaching & Learning?</p>		
<p>Data and Information What data and information do we look at regularly in the main board and committee? Do we have a dashboard? Do we know the story behind the data?</p>		
<p>Initial assessment of learners Do we know how our learners are initially assessed at the start of their programmes? How do we know they are on the right study programme for them?</p>		
<p>College Self- Assessment Report (SAR) Do we spend time understanding the college and departmental SARs. How do we ensure that SARs are realistic?</p>		
<p>College Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) Do we spend time understanding and monitoring QIP? Can we relate this to ongoing improvement with respect to Ofsted?</p>		
<p>Monitoring and Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning Do we receive Teaching and Learning Grades on a regular basis? Have we confidence in the systems used to grade staff and to support improvement, where required?</p>		
<p>Briefings from key staff What sort of briefings do we receive from key Teaching and Learning staff? Do these inform us about key issues which we can impact on?</p>		



Area	College	Example
<p>Improvement Strategies How do we familiarise ourselves with the key improvement strategies that are in place? How do we know that these strategies are being implemented effectively? Can we relate these strategies to the big picture?</p>		
<p>Progress with improving students' maths and English What do we know about the steps taken by the college to improve achievement levels for English and maths, in accordance with national policy? Are these having an impact?</p>		
<p>Identifying and closing achievement gaps for specific student groups Do we know where there are achievement gaps for particular groups of student e.g. ethnic groups or looked after children? Are we monitoring the progress being made?</p>		
<p>Equality & Diversity in Teaching & Learning How do we know that due attention is being paid to Equality and Diversity in Teaching and Learning?</p>		
<p>Use of technology How do we know that any use of technology is impacting on learning?</p>		
<p>Governor Links or Governor Champions Do we operate Governor link or Governor Champion schemes for specific subject areas or themes? What are the purposes of these schemes and how well do they achieve these purposes?</p>		
<p>Curriculum Planning What is our involvement in reviewing and deciding which areas of study the College should offer?</p>		
<p>Anything else?</p>		