

Guidance note: Monitoring the College Executive Team.

This Guidance Note is aimed largely at first-term Governors.

Introduction

The college executive team is responsible to the governing body for the management of the college so how effectively the governing body monitors the senior team is an important factor in the success of a college. The role of Governors in monitoring the senior team is both fundamental and important. Governors need to be able to articulate **how** they do this and **evidence** that they do it (certainly for Ofsted).

- Governors govern and managers manage. Governors need to understand where the line sits.
- The recognition of this separation of roles is important for both governors and managers to observe.
- Governors are required to oversee the management of the college on behalf of the community, learners and external stakeholders but must not allow themselves to be drawn into the actual managing and running of the college.
- Put simply, the focus of governors is strategic and monitoring the achievement of the agreed strategic targets and the focus of managers is operational, delivering the agreed strategic aims and targets of the college.

As one chair of governors, when asked what good governance looked like, said:

‘Our role as governors is not to do but to make it possible for others to do their jobs, but we have to ask questions and have the information to make the right challenges when needed’

Governors make it possible for others to do their jobs by ensuring clarity in their decisions and policies, for example, clearly stating the college’s strategic aims, its mission values and ethos, the key performance indicators to measure success, setting agreed targets for the college, monitoring achievements and benchmarking them against other providers, risk management and the reputation of the college.

If this strategic and performance framework is clear then governors can manage and monitor the college executive team against this.

The key relationship in this is of course that between the Chair of the governing body and the Principal/Chief Executive. It is the Principal who is responsible for delivering the Board’s decisions and policies and the Principal is responsible for managing the executive team. In practice the Chair and other governors will have close contact with other senior posts as well as the Principal but governors should not be managing the team. The Principal has line management responsibilities for the college executive team.

The Clerk also has an important role in working with both the Chair and the Principal to ensure that the governing body complies with its legal and financial obligations and fulfils the requirements of effective governance.

Elements of good practice

Professional relationships between the governing body and the college executive team and between the Chair, Principal and Clerk are at the heart of effective management of the executive team.

As well as clear strategies, policies and targets the governing body will also need to formulate a statement of delegated powers so the executive team know their delegated powers for example in terms of financial expenditure.

Timely monitoring is important, and looking at **progress towards targets**. Governors set the targets, monitored progress towards the targets, challenge underperformance, praise performance, but fundamentally understand the impact of it all. Many colleges have dashboards that rate the targets Red, Amber, Green to show progress. It is just as important for Govs to know why the Green areas are Green as it is to know why the Red areas are Red.

As a governor you might like to start with the job descriptions of the Principal and the senior team to identify the key areas of management responsibility. Without attempting here to list all of these management responsibilities, the governing body will want to monitor the management of areas such as:

- Strategic planning and positioning of the college for future development
- Key performance indicators and annual targets
- Financial planning and budget management
- Audit and risk management
- Quality improvement policy, Self assessment processes and resulting action plans
- Learning teaching and assessment
- Learners' perceptions and experience
- Curriculum offer
- Capital investment including estates
- HR policies and staff performance and development
- Equality and diversity
- Safeguarding
- Health and Safety
- External partnership
- Employers

The governing body, the Principal, Clerk and other senior posts need to agree how these management matters are reported to the board and its committees to ensure that governors can monitor the effective management of each of these and other significant matters. As indicated above the governing body does not line manage members of the executive team but does need sufficient information to be able to hold the team to account for their performance.

The role of governance in managing the Principal/Chief Executive

Whilst the chair will appraise the Principal the governing body as whole has a responsibility for the overall performance of the college and the questions below suggest issues that need to be decided by the board:

- How and by whom are targets set for the principal/CEO?
- How are the Principal/CEO's targets monitored and appraised and by whom?
- What role do learners, staff and other stakeholders have in the performance management of the Principal/CEO?
- What are the consequences of under or over performance of the Principal/CEO?
- How does the board oversee outcomes of the Principal/CEO's performance management?
- What skills, knowledge and understanding are required to carry out the effective performance review of the Principal/CEO?

It is important that the governing body themselves, role model good performance monitoring.
(See governor appraisal and chairs appraisal guidance notes)

Actions for governing bodies

In seeking best practice for monitoring the college exec team you may want to seek answers to questions such as:

- Does the governing body set clear key performance indicators and annual targets?
- Does the governing body agree a robust strategic plan for the college to deliver?
- Does the governing body have clear policies in critical performance areas?
- Has the governing body formulated a statement of delegated powers?
- Does the governing body receive reports on performance that are accurate, timely, clear, brief and lead to robust debate?
- Has the governing body and college executive team developed a relationship of openness, trust and transparency which enables a balance support and challenge of management performance?
- Are there processes in place to enable reviews of college performance? How are governors involved in self assessment and action planning for improvement?

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