

Preparing for Inspection - an aide memoire for governors

This aide memoire is to support governors in preparing for an Ofsted inspection. It includes a tool at the end to summarise your preparation ready for the inspection week.

The role of governors in inspection is covered in the third section of the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework, 2012.

Inspectors must evaluate the extent to which leaders and managers at all levels, including, where relevant, governors:

- demonstrate an ambitious vision, have high expectations for what all learners can achieve, and attain high standards of quality and performance
- improve teaching and learning through rigorous performance management and appropriate professional development

Inspectors must evaluate the extent to which leaders and managers at all levels, including, where relevant, governors:

- evaluate the quality of the provision through robust self-assessment, taking account of users' views, and use the findings to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement
- successfully plan, establish and manage the curriculum and learning programmes to meet the needs and interests of learners, employers and the local and national community
- actively promote equality and diversity, tackle bullying and discrimination, and narrow the achievement gap
- safeguard all learners

For governing bodies, inspectors will consider their effectiveness, including:

How well they:

- know the college and understand its strengths and weaknesses through appropriate involvement in self-assessment
- support and strengthen the college's leadership and contribute to shaping its strategic direction
- provide challenge and hold the Principal and other senior managers to account for improving the quality of learning and the effectiveness of performance management systems
- work efficiently, including through having a systematic approach to meeting statutory duties and approving and monitoring priorities that are focused on improving teaching, learning and assessment.

Governors playing their part during inspection

A sample of governors will be interviewed by the Ofsted Leadership and Management Inspector. It is usually left to the College to select the governors to be seen but the inspector will usually expect this to include the Chair. When being inspected bear in mind the following:

- Governors should be identified in advance to ensure that they can represent the full contribution made by the board
- Being interviewed does not mean physically attending the college, interview could be by telephone or 'Skype'
- Colleges should 'line up' governors who play key roles, such as chairing committees, linking with teaching areas, or being involved in monitoring the performance of the college
- Some governors may really add value to the work of the board by virtue of their 'day job' – flaunt it!

Questions could relate to:

Some examples of the more general questions which inspectors may ask when interviewing governors to form a view of the effectiveness of governance of a college are included below.

- Strategy, annual development plan, Self Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan and governors' understanding of progress against them
- Areas for improvement from the last inspection report and how well they have been addressed
- Statutory duties, meeting needs and views of stakeholders
- Performance management of staff, including senior post holders
- Monitoring and understanding of key learner outcomes and teaching and learning indicators
- How governors ensure that the college is responding to the Ofsted annual report, recent directives and government priorities
- How governors monitor Key performance indicators and keep up to date on a real time basis.

Examples of your impact as governors:

- Impact of strategies that have improved progress so far in the current year e.g. about attendance, retention, learners' progress
- The governor intranet that provides up to data performance data on it – they can log on and keep up to date on a real-time basis.
- The oversight of subcontracted work and its quality assurance monitoring
- Examples of what has changed for the learner as a result of actions and decisions. What has happened or changed in this College as a result of you as a governing body doing X?

Note: Much more than in previous Ofsted Inspection frameworks the questions will relate to learner outcomes, quality of teaching learning and assessment, performance management and less about finance (unless there are financial issues impacting on quality).

Typical questions:

- What experience can be found in the governing body, are there gaps in experience that would make the Board more effective? How effective is the Search Committee? How are the training needs of governors identified? What training has taken place and how do you evaluate the impact? How do members (generally) keep up-to-date? Please give examples to illustrate your points.
- Questions about the mechanics of Board operation would include; what is your view about the quality of the reports you receive? Do you have an annual schedule for reporting and activities? Do you have a clear rationale for your committee structure and does it work? How do you ensure that you and the college are fulfilling statutory duties?
- How does the board go about reviewing the college's mission, vision, values and strategic direction? How well do you think that these relate to local needs and national priorities? When the last review took place what was changed and why?
- How would you describe the relationship between governors and senior managers? More specifically is there sufficient challenge? – please give examples. Do you as a governor fulfil the required role as Critical Friend?
- What is the process for setting aspirational targets and then monitoring them? How do you ensure the college meets its duties with regard to equality and diversity and safeguarding? Do governors receive sufficient updating and more generally are there any areas of concern?
- What areas of the college provision are strong and what areas need improvement? Are the actions senior managers are currently taking likely to bring about the improvements expected? How are the GB kept informed? How do you know they are having impact? What input as a governing body do you have to the College Self-Assessment process? Are you in a position to challenge the draft SAR judgements?
- How do governors ensure that they gain sufficient understanding of what constitutes highly effective teaching learning and assessment and the role performance management systems have in securing and improving standards? In relation to teaching learning and assessment, how do you ensure that senior managers provide relevant reports so that you can ask discerning questions (without trying to become experts yourselves)?
- Generally how in touch are governors with learners' every day experience? Give examples of links to departments, student groups, events or learning activities themselves?
- What understanding do governors have of the different metrics used by the government and Ofsted to provide national and local comparators? Give examples in relation to these metrics, of areas of concerns that the identified that are now subject to scrutiny?

Overriding messages:

- The importance of governors, leaders and managers having an unrelenting focus on improvements that enable all learners to succeed and progress with their lives.
- Key attributes of outstanding provision are inextricably linked to the actions and behaviours demonstrated by governors, leaders and managers
- The primacy of learners is central to everything.

Governance impact examples:

- An active Search Committee ensuring the right balance of governors (skills, gender, ethnicity, etc)
- An appropriate programme of governor training and development
- Each curriculum area having an active 'link governor' who understands their role and purpose
- Tracking performance closely against targets – including teaching, learning and assessment
- Governors thoroughly understanding & validating the college self-assessment report – including a review of their own effectiveness
- Governors asking the right questions based on the right information

Outcome – effective challenge to both the financial and the academic performance of the college.

Outstanding colleges share some of the following characteristics:

- Forward-looking governors and senior management teams sharing a clear vision and direction with a genuinely 'collaborative approach'
- Strong governance and accountability - governors are skilled and ask discerning questions
- Governance, leadership and management are seen by staff as very decisive, prompt and effective in taking action
- Engagement with staff is genuine and leads to sustainable changes rather than short-term quick fixes which are imposed

What Ofsted say about governance in outstanding colleges.

'The college's strategic priorities are sensible, clearly focused and provide a good template against which progress can be evaluated. Governors receive comprehensive reports from senior managers on key aspects of the college's performance, and are increasingly adept at interpreting these reports to ask searching questions of college leaders. Governors recognise their responsibility for monitoring all aspects of learners' experience, and are improving their understanding by touring teaching areas while lessons are taking place.' **Swindon College 2013**

'Governors are very well informed and provide excellent support to senior leaders. They ask the right questions to ensure managers are sufficiently held to account and their skills and experience are very well matched to the developing needs of the college. Governors meticulously monitor outcomes for learners and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the college.' **Walsall College 2013**

'Governors know the college well, are very involved in its life and very well informed about the learners. They support leaders constructively and challenge when appropriate. They ensure leaders and managers continue to strive for excellence and success for learners based firmly on excellent teaching and assessment. Governors involve their learner representatives effectively, and both listen to, and act on, the views of learners.' **Weston College 2013**

'Governors provide excellent support and challenge to senior leaders. They possess an exceptional wealth of relevant expertise and comprehensively represent the interests of the region and local community. Governors take a leading role in setting and reviewing the strategy, financial priorities and improvement objectives. They hold leaders to account and ensure that the college has the capacity to continue to improve.' **Exeter College 2014**

A tool to help Boards prepare for Ofsted.

Building your understanding of Teaching, Learning and Assessment at your College.

Key strengths of the college	Key areas for improvement
<i>The following are areas of questions likely to be asked by an inspector.</i>	
Tell me about the improvement since the last inspection and the quality improvement agenda.	
What activity is happening to raise standards? How do you know it is working and having impact?	
How does the board keep focused on key themes?	
Which of the many actions taken do you think	

are the most important and why?	
How do you know about teaching, learning and assessment performance and practice?	
How do you know about teaching and learning at the college? How do you get an insight into the 'classroom'?	
Challenging	
How challenging are you of the college managers? Give an example of something you have challenged. What was done in response and were you happy with it?	This is a really excellent section – key to whole impact.
Strategy and teaching and learning	
Does the college have a teaching and learning strategy?	
What are the strategic priorities for teaching and learning?	
What is being done to deliver these?	
How do you know?	
Teachers performance	
How are teachers and managers being developed to raise standards, quality and teaching and learning outcomes?	
Learners Views	
Do you receive reports on learners' views?	

What do these tell you?	
Self Assessment Report awareness/validation.	
<p>How are you involved in the college self assessment report?</p> <p>Does the governing body closely monitor progress on the resulting Quality Improvement Plan?</p>	

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