

MILLTHORPE SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Quality of Governance: Challenge and Support

Background

The School's Ofsted inspection of 26th-27th January 2011 had improved the grading of the school from satisfactory to good. However, the report noted that "the effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled and statutory responsibilities met" was only graded as satisfactory. As a result, the Governors reformed the structure of governance, beginning on 6th October 2010 with the election of a new Chair and setting up a new committee structure. There would be an Executive Committee comprising the Chair, Vice-Chairs and Chairs of four committees, covering finance, staffing, the curriculum and school and community. The finance and staffing committees were later merged (27 July 2011). Governors were expected to be members of two committees. The new structure was intended to allow governors to be more involved in details of school operations and free up full governor meetings for substantive issues. The new structure was reviewed after the first year of operation and amendments made included the introduction of a new governor induction pack and buddying system (FGB 22 September 2011). Governors have undertaken self-evaluation as part of the process of improving governance.

Can we provide written evidence of this self-evaluation? Should this be on the website? (Eileen)

At the time, the school was under the executive headship of the Headteacher of Fulford School, following long-term sick leave of the school's own headteacher. An Associate Head from Fulford carried out the day-to-day duties of the post. A new Headteacher was appointed on 16th February 2011, and took over the school on 1st April 2011. Governors were mindful of providing enhanced support for the senior leadership team during the transition and association with Fulford School. The Chair of Governors has held regular fortnightly meetings with the Headteacher, and senior management attend the Committees allowing governors to have a direct relationship with them.

Progress

Two big changes in governor practice since 2011 have been the setting up of an effective link governor scheme, and ensuring more governors attend school events. This ensures governors are more familiar with day-to-day issues in the school and that governors are present in the minds of senior staff outside the usual round of meetings. The RAG rating items in the School Improvement Plan allow governors to quickly assess areas of weakness and strength, which are picked up on in the meetings of the committees. Selected presentations to school governors allow an in depth examination of aspects of school practice, for example, assessment for learning (FGB 8 December 2011) or the new pastoral structure (FGB 5 December 2012).

The Executive Committee is one the main ways in which the Governors can interrogate the Headteacher, receive detailed reports and discuss key issues such as school exam results, the vision and ethos of the school and the management of the school. It also receives reports from each of the other committees and so acts in a coordinating role, including setting the agenda for full governors' meetings. The Executive monitors the effectiveness of governance, sometimes with specific discussion as an agenda item (Exec 22 November 2012).

Governors have attended key meetings, such as the initial meeting with parents to set up a parents' support organisation. A local authority review in 2010 (need to check this date, may be 2012) judged governance as still satisfactory but improving, and that engaging with parents had been identified as a target for future governance. Governors also take part in some aspects of life in the school, like helping to interview for school pupil leaders and have attended school students' council. The Chair of the Finance and Staffing Committee agreed that he would meet more frequently with the Headteacher at key points within the Financial year, to help address and offer advice on any issues to help redress the fact that only the Headteacher and the Bursar had financial expertise among the senior leadership team (Exec 24 November 2011). The Chair of School and Community Committee undertook an initial site asset visit to assess the condition of the school premises on 28 April 2011 (report from Chair) before the system of allocating a link governor to this issue had been implemented. This began the process of developing a site management plan.

Issues discussed by Governors

Various major issues have been discussed by governors since October 2010. This is a summary of some of them.

Changing the timings of the school day

This was done in response to negative comment in the last Ofsted inspection, and was aimed at ensuring adequate teaching time. It could have proven controversial with parents, discussion among governors helped the SLT to move forward with this.

Discussed and ratified FGB 31 May 2011

New staffing structure to help to tackle budget deficit and effectiveness of teaching staff

Governors were keen to see evidence that staff were being fully consulted and involved in the decisions.

Discussed Exec 13 June 2011, F&S 11 October 2011, F&S 29 November 2011, FGB 8 December 2011, F&S 29

February 2012, F&S 14 March 2012, F&S 1 May 2012

Policy review schedule

A schedule for reviewing school policies was drawn up by the Headteacher and two of the governors, and responsibility for each policy was shared among the Governors' committees.

Discussed Exec 24 November 2011, FGB 8 December 2011

Academy status

Whether to apply for this was discussed at length and a small group of Governors were set up as a task and finish group to research the issue.

Discussed Exec 6 March 2012, FGB 29 March 2012 with reports from each committee, setting up of a task and finish group, Exec 28 June 2012, agreement to defer application FGB 5 December 2012

We need the task and finish report up on the website and referenced here

Link governor system

A long-standing but controversial system of linking governors with the curriculum subject areas needed to be reformed. Long discussions took place resulting in a new of directly linking governors to the School Improvement Plan and therefore be a more effective ways of enabling governors to challenge and support senior staff.

Discussed FB 29 March 2012, Exec 28 June 2012, input from audit of governor skills, agreed FGB 10 July 2012 (with a protocol for governor visits to make sure they take place regularly, are recorded and written up), Exec 22 November 2012

Link Governor Protocol 10 July 2012

We need the audits of governor skills up on the website and referenced here (Bob)

Installing CCTV in the toilets

This was a highly sensitive issue and controversial. Governors discussed this thoroughly and gave support to the SLT to introduce CCTV to tackle a specific problem with behaviour at the school, but with full explanation to parents about the reasons.

Discussed and approved Exec 28 June 2012, FGB 10 July 2012

Strengthening the SLT

A team of four SLT was recognised as not enough for a school the size of Millthorpe. Governors fully supported the proposal to recruit an additional Assistant Head, made affordable through control of the budget deficit and staffing restructuring

Discussed F&S 13 February 2012, Exec 22 November 2012, FGB (approved) 5 December 2012

Disappointing GCSE English results 2011/12

In spite of significant progress in laying the foundations for an effective teaching and learning system since 2011, Millthorpe was affected by the regrading of grade boundaries in GCSE English as well as less than expected progress elsewhere in the curriculum and had a set of poor results. Governors recognised this as an unfortunate aberration that would not be repeated. The executive further strengthened the role of link governors.

Discussed Exec 11 September 2012, FGB 20 September 2012, Q&C 24 October 2012

Supporting the creation of a PTA to improve links with parents

Governors greatly welcomed this initiative and attended the initial meeting of parents, also extending an offer to link with the School and Community Committee.

Discussed S&C 19 October 2011, S&C 25 January 2012

School asset management

The physical condition of the school is not ideal, rather old and had been ill maintained. Governors made sure that an initial asset audit was undertaken by governors and members of the SLT to produce an initial report on the status of the buildings and grounds. Governors were fully supportive of efforts by newly appointed staff to improve maintenance and condition of the school. More than one governor visit to examine the buildings and grounds has taken pace.

Discussed F&S 1 May 2012

Report, initial site visit report 28 April 2011

Governors have undertaken the following training

Governors have individually attended training events or undertaken online training

Bob Sydes, Chairs of Governors Dec 10

Cllr D Merrett, community engagement course Jul 11

Christine Oliver & Bill Schofield understanding Ofsted, Nov 11

Richard Newton, initial governor training Jun 12

Richard Newton induction with CB and TB Jul 12

Cllr Merrett and Nicki Mitchell, Ofsted – Inspection of Leadership and Management training Jul 12
Richard Newton data training Nov 12
Don Henson Sharing best practice for Chairs of Committees Nov 12
Sarah Barbacane & Christine Oliver Online safety Nov 12
Bob Sydes Ofsted framework online training Nov 12
Helen Thomas, the role of the governing body, Jan to March 2013

Helen Thomas, general introduction to governance Feb 13
Helen Thomas, getting governance to good March 13
Helen Thomas, understanding and using school performance data (Raise online) April 13

Helen Thomas, leading the governing body, April to July 2013

Tim Moat, Governor induction with BS & TB Jun 13
Cllr D Merrett, promoting positive behaviour Jul 13
Richard Newton, LA inspection training, Jul 13
Helen Thomas, the new Pay Policy July 13
various governors, Ofsted preparation Jul 13

Bespoke training at the school has been held as follows:
Ofsted framework by Maxine Squire Oct 12

Link Governor and other visits and reports

Don Henson, walk round of premises with TB and others, Oct 12
Nicki Mitchell, KS4 tracking and intervention, Nov 12, Jan 13
Richard Newton, directors of achievement with SB Dec 12
Sarah Barbacane, SP1 Dec 12
Nicki Mitchell, Year 11 interventions with TG 13 x3
Bill Schofield, monitoring and lesson observations with TG Jan 13
Helen Thomas, induction with TB Jan 13
Don Henson, attending School Council Feb 13
Christine Oliver, homeworks with GD, Feb & Jul 13
Don Henson, data protection, information management and e-safety with AC Jan 13, Apr 13
Helen Thomas, supply teaching with AC Mar 13
Don Henson and Helen Thomas, interviews for new Assistant Headteachers Apr 13
Eileen Robertson, accessibility in school with AC Jun 13
Tim Moat, communications with Jon Deamer, Jun 13
Bob Sydes, Middle Leaders, July 2013
Tim Moat, school archive, Jul 13 (to help produce a display board for the school)
Cllr D Merrett, complaints with Leslie Buckley
Cllr D Merrett, sex and relationships education with Sarah Watts (twice)
Richard Newton, extended schools with Mary Griffiths
Richard Newton, lettings policy with Alex Collins
Helen Thomas, exams policy Jul 13

Not all reports sent are yet on the website.

ANNEXE 1

A list of the Committee minutes we hold.

Full Governors

2010 6th October
7th December
2011 16th February
31st March
23rd May
12th July
22nd September
8th December
2012 29th March
10th July
20th September
5th December
2013 14th March

Executive

2011 13th June
6th September
24th November
2012 6th March
28th June
11th September
22nd November
2013 10th January
26th February
9th May
25th June

Finance & Staffing

2011 11th October
29th November
2012 29th February
14th March
1st May
28th November
2013 13th February
2nd May
18th June

Quality & Curriculum

2011 25th January (self-clerked)
1st March (self-clerked)
17th May (self-clerked)
20th October
2012 9th February
12th June
24th October
2013 6th February
12th June

School & Community

2011 9th March (self-clerked)
20th June (self-clerked)
19th October
2012 25th January
25th April
17th October
2013 21st January
22nd May