

Effective Governance: Best practice with Governors' Virtual Office

The recent Ofsted Report on Effective Governance stated:

'Governors are most effective when they are fully involved in the school's self-evaluation and use the knowledge gained to challenge the school, understand its strengths and weaknesses and contribute to shaping its strategic direction.'

'Weak governance is likely to fail to ensure statutory requirements are met, for example those related to safeguarding. In addition, where governance is weak the involvement of governors in monitoring the quality of provision is not well enough defined or sufficiently rigorous and challenging.'

The Ofsted report goes on to identify the following factors as being critical to effective governance:

1. Positive relationships
2. Governors are well informed and knowledgeable
3. Governors are able to take and support hard decisions
4. Driven by a core of key governors such as the chair and chairs of committees
5. Visit their schools regularly
6. Time is used efficiently by governors
7. The role of the clerk to the governors is pivotal
8. A detailed timeline of activities
9. Governors consider their own training needs
10. Organise their workload.

Best Practice with GVO to Support Effective Governance

Governors' Virtual Office (GVO) enables governors to work and collaborate effectively between meetings on much routine work thus freeing up valuable time in face to face meetings for focus on strategic issues.

The table overleaf looks at the Ofsted criteria and identifies how to use GVO where relevant.

Please feel free to contact us to discuss applicability for your governing body or to discuss our tailored 'Effectiveness' workshops.

To contact us please ring Michael Thorpe on 0844 800 6421 or write at michael.thorpe@schoolleadershipsystems.com

To visit our web site for more information on the Governors' Virtual Office please go to www.schoolleadershipsystems.com/

To arrange an on line demonstration of Governors' Virtual Office , please follow this link www.schoolleadershipsystems.com/offer/request-an-online-demonstration.php

<p>1. Positive relationships between governors and school leaders are based on trust, openness and transparency, and</p> <p>2. Governors are well informed and knowledgeable.</p>	<p>Use the GVO to provide open access to all agendas and minutes and use the Comment or Discussion function to enable governors to contribute to the agenda setting process. Use the Discussion zone for holding conversations between meetings in which all can participate. Use the library to store all relevant documentation and correspondence so that all governors, including those newly joined, can be fully informed and knowledgeable.</p>
<p>3. Governors are able to take and support hard decisions.</p>	<p>Use the Discussion zone to gather and debate points of view ahead of meetings so that face to face time can be used to make decisions based on an informed consensus and in the knowledge that everyone has had the opportunity to contribute to the debate. Use the Library to hold relevant information to contribute to the quality and relevance of debate in both the Discussion zone and the meetings.</p>
<p>4. Driven by a core of key governors such as the chair and chairs of committees.</p>	<p>These key governors should use the GVO as a tool in driving the work of the governing body. Use the Calendar to ensure that the dates of the meetings throughout the academic year are available to governors; ensure that all the relevant material is stored in the libraries; use the Comment or Discussion facilities to develop agendas; see that meeting packs are available in good time and contain the appropriate information; use the Tasks function to ensure that responsibilities are understood, progress is reported, and actions completed on schedule. Use the News function to keep governors apprised of developments between meetings.</p>
<p>6. Time is used efficiently by governors.</p>	<p>Use well organized libraries to keep governors properly informed at all times and <u>ahead</u> of meetings; use the Discussion zone and Comment facilities to discuss and exchange views between meetings; use the Tasks function to keep governors apprised of progress on actions between meetings; use the News feature to keep governors up to date between meetings. This should result in a reduction in the time spent in meetings updating governors and an increase in the time available for governors to focus on strategic issues.</p>
<p>7. The role of the clerk to the governors is pivotal.</p>	<p>GVO is a powerful enabler for the Clerk. S/he should ensure that meeting packs are available in good time, that libraries are maintained in an orderly fashion and the calendar displays the dates of the meetings for the full academic year. The Tasks function should be used to record action points and to monitor progress so that timely advice can be given to chairs if needed.</p>
<p>10. Organise their workload.</p>	<p>The Chair should put together a yearly Programme of Work for their governing bodies to enable them to manage their workload both for their committees and main governing body meetings. This will do two things; inform chairs of committee what items should go onto the agenda and at what time of the school year it should go on.</p>