

## Governor Update – Autumn 20 (2)

# How can a governing board best support the work of their school at this time?

Governing Boards across the Diocese are currently having to strike a delicate balance between wanting to support the well-being of school leaders and staff whilst also wanting to be sure that they are carrying out their functions as a board effectively.



As a reminder our current advice is that boards should:

- continue to hold meetings virtually.
- stick to those matters of statutory compliance.
- use the delegated role of the chair where necessary.
- ensure all decisions are minuted.
- make the most of the expertise of professional clerks.

In our last update ([click here if you missed it](#)) we provided advice to boards that usual monitoring activities should not be taking place at this time due to the pressures already faced by school staff. Since that time we have been asked to give advice on how boards might use their time effectively.

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Strong, effective governance brings a huge benefit to schools and so we are advising that during this time governing boards may want to reflect afresh on the work of the board and how it can develop further. It was Abraham Lincoln who supposedly said, ‘if I had six hours to chop down a tree, I would spend four hours sharpening the axe.’ The work of governing boards is usually so intense that there isn’t time to ‘sharpen the axe’ and so there is wisdom in using this time to reflect on and review your work and that of the school. This could improve the effectiveness of the board, supporting school leaders and ensuring that, as school business gets back to normal, your board is in the best place to make a difference.

***‘Monitoring the boards effectiveness is a key element of good governance. The board needs to assess its effectiveness and efficiency and ensure ongoing compliance with its statutory and legal duties under review. Individuals should also reflect on their own contribution helping to create a stronger and more motivated board.’***



Below is a list of questions boards may want to ask at this time.

These are questions which can, *and should*, be explored with minimum input from school leaders.

### **How well do the governing board support the health and wellbeing of school leaders, and how do you know?**

This is an unprecedented time for heads who feel a mixed sense of frustration, confusion, joy and especially isolation. Governing boards have a clear statutory responsibility for the work-life balance and wider flourishing of the senior executive leader(s). [This evaluation tool](#) focuses on the wellbeing of school leaders, their self-care and how this is modelled throughout the school/trust.

This has also been an unprecedented time for governors, many of whom have given significant amounts of additional time. You may want ask, *how does the board support the wellbeing of board members and manage relationships?*

### **How has the schools response to COVID been a reflection of the school's vision?**

Now, more than any time, our schools have been working in a way which is seeing their vision lived out. As part of their monitoring role, the board could consider this question and try to capture, in a single, bullet pointed A4 document, the many ways the vision has been lived out during recent times. Especially in relation to the work of the school to support the disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. This would provide useful evidence for future SIAMS/Ofsted visits and get a job done for school leaders.

### **How good are the Board at self-evaluating their work?**

Governors need to monitor the work of the school but they also need to monitor themselves. [This evaluation tool](#) supports the board in questioning how well they look at themselves. You may want to reflect on training, induction and the 360 degree analysis of the Chair. It is also a good time to ensure your skills audits are up to date and reflect on training needs. The named adviser for the school can arrange bespoke training for the board as part of our Enhanced Service Plan (ESP) package.

### **How up to date are governors with the latest documentation?**

This October, the Government have updated a raft of documentation and this would be a good time for everyone to review this. Links to the documents are below.

[Governance handbook and competency framework](#)

[Local-authority-maintained schools: governance](#)

[Governance structures and roles](#)

[Academy trusts: governance](#)

[Letter from Baroness Berridge to academy trust members](#)



## How effective are governance arrangements?

This is a perfect time to review documents such as annual operational plans, standing orders, terms of reference, etc. It is also a good time to ask questions which Boards would not normally have time for, such as: Are our agendas effective? Do our minutes capture enough challenge? How can we make meetings more efficient? Are all board members fulfilling their role effectively?

## How easily accessible and well organised are governor files in case external eyes need to be on them?

Often the Clerk will organise and keep the papers from Board meetings but how often do you look at the files. Are they easily understood by external eyes? Have you considered a system of cross referencing minutes, reports and governor visits to highlight particular points of good governance? Have you bookmarked examples of fulfilling your statutory functions?

## How have you adjusted our practice during COVID and are there changes you would want to retain or develop further?

We have all seen many changes to our personal and working lives since March, not all have been negative. You may want to reflect on the changes to the way the board has worked which you may want to continue or build upon in future.

**Remember that through the Enhanced Service Plan our named advisers can provide a range of support for your board including governance reviews, bespoke training and development working for Heads and Chairs.**

Forthcoming training which is suitable for governors:

<p><b>Live Online Training</b></p> <p><b>Developing Children's Spirituality</b></p> <p>Mon 19th October 9.30 am - 12.30 pm</p> <p>Suitable for School Leaders and Governors</p> <p>Click here <span>Just £55</span> For details and booking</p> <p><small>Cost for non-members of the ESP is £30</small></p>	<p><b>Live Online Training</b></p> <p><b>Curriculum: Recovery, Well-being and Rebuilding Relationships</b></p> <p>Tues 3rd November 1.30 pm - 3.30 pm</p> <p>Suitable for School Leaders and Governors</p> <p>Click here <span>Just £55</span> For details and booking</p> <p><small>Cost for non-members of the ESP is £30</small></p>	<p><b>Live Online Training</b></p> <p><b>New to the SIAMS Inspection Framework</b></p> <p>Mon 9th November 9.00am - 12 noon</p> <p>Suitable for School Leaders and Governors</p> <p>Click here <span>Just £55</span> For details and booking</p> <p><small>Cost for non-members of the ESP is £30</small></p>
<p><b>Live Online Training</b></p> <p><b>RSHE Guidance: In a Church school context</b></p> <p>Be ready for implementation of the new RSHE guidance by the deadline of Summer 2021</p> <p>Tues 10th November 10 am - 3 pm <small>there will be a break for lunch</small></p> <p>Suitable for School Leaders and Governors</p> <p>Click here <span>Just £95</span> For details and booking</p> <p><small>Cost for non-members of the ESP is £160</small></p>	<p><b>Live Online Training</b></p> <p><b>Next Steps for Understanding Christianity</b></p> <p><b>with Stephen Pett</b> <small>RE Today</small></p> <p>Tue 17th November 9.30 am - 2.30 pm</p> <p>Suitable for School Leaders, RE Leaders, RE Teachers and Governors</p> <p>Click here <span>Just £95</span> For details and booking</p> <p><small>Cost for non-members of the ESP is £160</small></p>	<p><b>Live Online Training</b></p> <p><b>Exploring Excellence in Religious Education</b></p> <p><b>with Lat Blaylock</b> <small>RE Today</small></p> <p>Thur 10th December 9.30 am - 2.30 pm</p> <p>Suitable for School Leaders, RE Leaders, RE Teachers and Governors</p> <p>Click here <span>Just £95</span> For details and booking</p> <p><small>Cost for non-members of the ESP is £160</small></p>

