

External Review of Governance template report for reviewer

Reviewer: (name)	Barry Newton Carole Gregory	External Review of Governance at: (name of school)	Blakedown CE Primary		
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Reviewer's background: describe current role e.g. NLG, NLE, education consultant		Schools' Manager (North)			
Chair of Governors	Fr Paul Harrison	phone no:	(w)	Email:	
			(m)		
Date of inspection (if review recommended by Ofsted)	9 th June 2016		Date reviewer appointed		
Date of planning meeting(s)			Date of external review	12 th September 2016	
Background and context of school		<p>Blakedown CE is a 4-11 Voluntary Controlled Primary. The school is growing in size as the result of an increase in the authorised PAN limit to 30 places per year from 2014. There are approximately 140 pupils on roll. This means that classes in the Early Years and Key Stage 1 are taught in single age classes and this will extend through Key Stage 2, beyond the current Year 3, in coming years.</p> <p>Most pupils are of White British heritage and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is very small and well below the national average.</p> <p>In 2015 the school did not meet the government's floor standard which sets the minimum expected standard for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6. The OFSTED inspection in June 2016, largely as a result of this performance, judged the school as</p>			

	<p>requiring improvement and stipulated that an external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management should be improved.</p>
<p>Issues identified by Ofsted</p>	<p><i>'Governors are provided with a diverse and vast range of information by the Headteacher. However, some of the information presented is overly complex or ambiguous. As a result governors are not always clear about the school's key priorities or the school's effectiveness.'</i></p> <p><i>'Governors have some understanding of assessment information as this is presented by the Headteacher in her termly reports. However, this information is not summarised to give the governors the headlines as to which groups are achieving well and if any cohorts are falling behind in reading, writing or mathematics.'</i></p>
<p>Process of the review</p>	<p>Key activities: Collection and analysis of documentation including Governor body minutes, Governor visit notes and website analysis. Full Review including Meetings with Chair of Governors, Clerk, and 4 other Governors plus Headteacher</p>
<p>Summary of findings: strengths – what the governing board does well</p>	<p>Strong governance areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing their roles and responsibilities • Have a firm grasp of their strategic function • Recognise the need to monitor and evaluate • Are proactive and not reactionary • Financial management of the school is exemplary • The governance structure is effective and all governors work well together • Chair of governors holds to account the prescribed committees

- Website is compliant but also has additional and helpful information
- Governors link to individual year groups and track their progress which helps to build their own knowledge
- Governor visits are frequent and 'informal' visits help to develop positive relationships
- Performance management of all staff and the Headteacher ensures that appropriate support and challenge helps to raise standards but also checks that continuing professional development is robust and timely
- Strong clerking appointment
- Governors willingly give of their time to attend additional training
- Meetings are well attended

This governing body does not have the feel of one that requires improvement as there are many features to commend. There are very positive relationships between governors and school leaders that are based on trust, openness and transparency. The governance supports honest, insightful self-evaluation by the school, recognising problems and supporting the steps needed to address them.

There is clarity about the different roles and responsibilities of the headteacher and governors underpinned by protocols, specific duties and terms of reference which are made explicit. Effective governing bodies are often driven by a core of key governors, such as the chair and chairs of committee. At Blakedown they see themselves as part of a larger team and are building strong relationships with the headteacher, staff and other governors.

Governors routinely come into school and gather information about the school at work. All the governors who were interviewed visit school regularly and often 'informally' yet within a recognised framework. They felt and the headteacher agreed that this helped them to build their knowledge of the school so they can make informed decisions, ask searching questions and provide meaningful support.

	<p>There are clear induction procedures for new governors which help them to understand their roles and responsibilities and especially in ensuring that best use is made of their varied skills and expertise. They consider their own training needs as well as how they organise their work.</p> <p>The governing body constantly reflects on their own effectiveness and demonstrated throughout the review a keen willingness to make changes to improve.</p>
<p>Summary of findings: areas for development</p>	<p>Developmental areas for GB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring absolute clarity about the objectives within the school development plan and the key priorities; • To take ownership of strategic planning; • Reduced reliance on the Headteacher; • Raise the profile of the clerk to assist in planning for timely and effective governance; • Improve the format for providing governors with information, essentially through the headteacher's report; • Consider external research information to be able to make informed decisions about pupil premium expenditure and preparing for the new requirements on the website. <p>Effective governing bodies systematically monitor their school's progress towards meeting agreed development targets. Information about what is going well and why, and what is not going well and why is shared. This is entirely where the governing body are, at Blakedown, but the key to strengthening this is to consider carefully the process for gathering the information, how it is presented and how it enables governors to raise queries, contribute to discussions and develop a greater understanding of the performance and standards within the school. The role of the head and that of the clerk are crucial in differing ways.</p> <p>One potential recommendation is for a more streamlined Headteacher report that moves beyond the descriptive to the evaluative giving a clear rationale for decisions taken</p>

	<p>operationally that the governors can then question, comment and increase their knowledge. The aim is to provide enough information to provoke discussion but not too much as to stifle comments due to time constraints. The governors should have access to a wide variety of formats for displaying the information and should comment on which they find most helpful and why.</p> <p>The role of the clerk is pivotal in ensuring meetings are well organised and governors receive the information they need in a timely manner. Consequently, governors come to meetings well prepared, take ownership of the agenda, with pertinent questions ready so that they are able to provide constructive challenge.</p> <p>By developing the role of the clerk and involving her in the setting of the strategic direction of meetings and agendas the governors will be creating a formalised structure. The clerk can ensure consistency of recording minutes which reflect questions, decisions made and clear time lined actions. The summary of actions is very helpful and should now be linked back to the body of the minutes. Questions should be tabled ahead of the meeting where possible and the clerk can include them in the documentation. Also discussed was how the clerk could highlight questions and queries raised in the minutes to demonstrate challenge areas. The outcomes of these discussions can then be tracked through future minutes.</p>
Target areas for action	<p>1. The governing body is influential in setting the strategic direction of the school in partnership with senior leaders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors can articulate the vision of the school which is consistently set out in relevant school documents; • Governors know the main priorities for improvement; • The work of the governing body should be focused on and driven by the school's strategic priorities; • Governors monitor progress against the school development plan

2. The governing body is well informed and knowledgeable because they are given high-quality, accurate information that is concise and focused on pupil achievement.

- The Headteacher provides the governing body with a range of information to enable the governors to have confidence in the school's evaluation of its own performance;
- The governors include members with appropriate skills and understanding who have the ability to engage in self-evaluation;
- Governor visits inform their knowledge of the school;
- Minutes, questions and discussions all demonstrate that the governors are using their time effectively to engage in self-evaluation

3. Governors use pupil premium to overcome barriers to learning.

- Governors regularly monitor the outcomes of pupil premium and know gaps are being reduced or removed;
- Governors have a clear understanding of where gaps exist both within the school and against national performance data;
- Value for money, in terms of impact on pupil outcomes, is regularly discussed and challenged by governors using relevant national benchmarking and research;
- Governors ensure that the school website continues to provide parents, with a clear understanding of the funding, how it is spent and its impact, including any barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils.



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