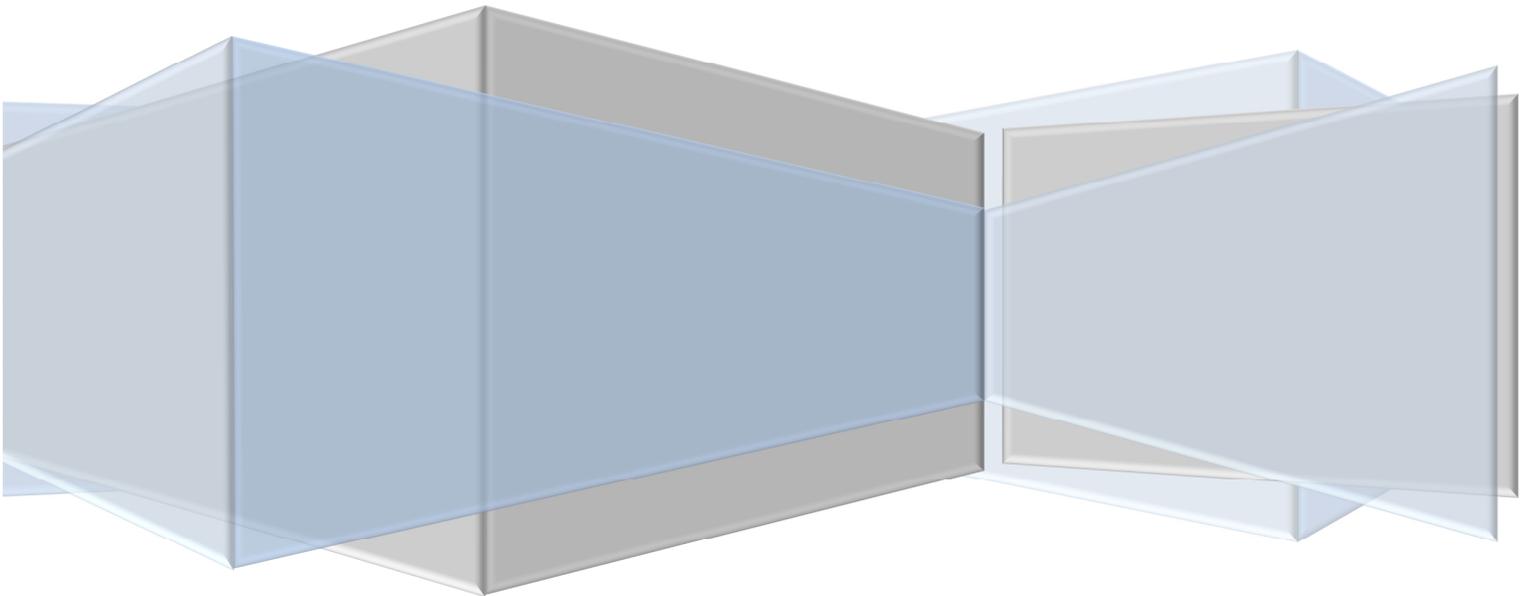


Review of governance

Moorthorpe Primary School, November 2013



Introduction

The external review of governance is intended to be a supportive process. Through a series of meetings with stakeholders and the review of evidence presented by the Governing Body, the LA Officers aim to provide Governors with an overview of identified strengths, areas for development and, finally, a list of recommendations for the governing body to take forward.

The Officers have attempted to triangulate information from various sources to prepare this report to Governors. The Officers have tried to avoid using an individual's perspective; rather they have sought to verify the views and opinions with other stakeholders and/or documentation. Individuals have not been named.

The Officers have tried to paint an accurate picture of governance at the school, including highlighting concerns if appropriate. The Officers have sought to provide an appropriate level of challenge where it was felt to be in the best interests of the school. The Officers seek to ensure the Governing Body has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development – without an honest review of governance the school will not be able to maximise the effectiveness of subsequent actions.

General comments:

- The Governing Body is supportive of the school.
- The school was previously categorised in Special Measures in 2011. The school is no longer in special measures. The Governing Body is proactively seeking to be as effective as possible to drive the school forward.
- There is evidence that governance has strengthened in the school, such as Governors challenging and asking more questions.
- In reflecting on their current practice all Governors would benefit from reviewing the LAs 'Further Developing Effective Governance' resource: <http://tinyurl.com/FDEGpdf>

Areas identified as strengths:

- Governors are aware of the increased demand on school governors and they have stepped up to meet the new challenges. Governors have the desire to be involved in school.
- The minutes of meetings held since September 2013 show that Governors are asking more questions in meetings. Governors are aware that they need to offer greater challenge through the use of questions.
- Governors speak confidently about the school and some have an understanding of the data. Governors know that Key Stage 1 writing and Key Stage 2 reading are the school's priority areas.
- The Governing Body has a diverse range of skills. A skills audit has been undertaken. Governors with the appropriate skills have been appointed to serve on relevant committees e.g. a Governor with finance expertise has been appointed as Chair of the Resources Committee. The audit has also been used to identify training needs.
- Governors have filled Governor vacancies and the new Governors have been encouraged by the Training Link Governor to attend the LA's Induction session.
- The Chair of Governors comes into school every week to meet with the Headteacher.
- Many Governors are visible and known by parents. Governors listen to parents' views, however they are clear of the boundaries between their role and that of the Headteacher/school staff.
- Staff know the Governors and vice versa. Staff/Governor meetings have been held.

- The Chair has joined the NCTL Chair's Leadership Development programme. This will help the Chair in further developing governance at the school.
- Governors have attended some training including Finance, New Governor Induction, Headteacher Performance Management, Pupil Premium and Sports Premium. The Headteacher has done some training with Governors on preparation for OfSTED.
- A number of Governors have attended pupil progress meetings.
- Governors invite senior leaders to brief them at Governing Body meetings e.g. Early Years Leader.
- Governors know the teaching profile of the school (80% good). The HMI has worked with Governors to look at how lessons are judged. Some Governors have observed how feedback is given to teachers.
- Governors have contributed to shaping the School Development Plan (SDP). The plan includes aspects on governance written by the Headteacher and shared with Governors. The Vice-Chair has been into school to look at writing which is an area for development. Governors need to evaluate the impact and progress of the School Development Plan and capture their discussions in the minutes of full Governing Body or committee meetings.
- The Headteacher's report is distributed in advance of meetings to allow Governors to prepare questions for the meeting. Governors have asked the Headteacher to use a different report format which he has responded to by introducing a new style report. They feel they now receive the information they need. There is evidence in the minutes of Governing Body meetings that Governors ask questions (18 June and 1 September 2013).
- The meetings are run well and time is used effectively.
- Chairing responsibilities are shared. The full Governing Body and Committees have different chairs, which aids succession planning and builds capacity through a distributed leadership model.
- The Resources Committee and Standards Committee meet. However, not all meetings are recorded formally which restricts the opportunity for Governors to effectively monitor and evaluate progress.
- Governors are taking the opportunity to prepare for the next OfSTED inspection. Some have attended training on Understanding Performance Data. The Training Link Governor has prepared an overview of RAISEOnline 2013/2014 which he intends to share with Governors at the next meeting.
- Governors have discussed the OfSTED Data Dashboard and LA Headline Governor Data Profile.
- Some Governors come into school during the school day. Some of the visits are focussed based on priority areas e.g. writing, book sampling. At the meeting of the Governing Body on 10 September 2013 Governors adopted a Governor Visits Policy. Governors will need to share the reports of their visits with the full Governing Body.
- The Governing Body has adopted the LA's model Pay Policy, Teacher Appraisal Policy and Teacher Capability Procedure (10 September 2013). Governors will need to monitor the implementation of the policies.
- The Headteacher's performance management meeting will be held prior to the end of the Autumn Term in, line with statutory requirements. Governors are awaiting a preferred date from the School Improvement Adviser. The Performance Management Committee will need to provide a report to the full Governing Body confirming that the meeting has taken place and that a cycle of review is scheduled. The detail of the committee meeting remains confidential to the committee members and Headteacher.
 - The Governing Body has adopted a Code of Conduct for meetings and copies are issued to new Governors.
 - Governors contribute to the school newsletter with significant items of news/information.

- Governors have discussed the Pupil Premium (18 June 2013) and information appears on the school website. Governors are aware that they need to evidence that they are monitoring the spending and impact. They need to ensure that discussions regarding the pupil premium and questions are evidenced in the minutes of full Governing Body and committee meetings.
- The school has established links with another school. There is a greater emphasis on school-to-school support and this may extend to the Governing Body. Some Governing Bodies in the district have formed collaborative partnerships. The Governing Body may wish to explore options for collaborative working with pyramid Governing Bodies.

Areas for development:

- Governors receive the pupil performance data, both summative and formative. Whilst some Governors are becoming more confident in their role and are supporting and challenging the Headteacher and senior leaders, this is an area for further development.
- Governor visits are sometimes ad-hoc rather than planned and focussed. Governors have documented some visits. Governors should consider documenting all visits to school.
- Governance would be enhanced by a greater monitoring and evaluation focus, using the School Development Plan as the driver. Governors should plan how and when they will monitor each priority through a focussed planned schedule linked to the School Development Plan priorities. This may include staff presentations, meetings with leaders, learning walks, work sampling and classroom visits. This should clearly indicate when each Governor needs to visit school during the course of the academic year and these visits should be documented.
- The Headteacher's Performance Management meeting has yet to be scheduled for the Autumn Term 2013.
- Governors would benefit by attending pupil progress meetings.
- Governors may wish to look at ways of engaging with parents such as a termly newsletter from Governors.
- Governors have not undertaken a self-evaluation activity.
- Committee meetings are not always minuted. Committees could be clerked on a rolling programme amongst Governors, or the LA's clerking service could be accessed. These records are essential in demonstrating that the Governing Body delves into data and information with rigour to help ensure that they hold leaders to account. Governors may wish to consider ways in which the work of committees feeds into full Governing Body meetings, in order to improve overall efficiency and use of time.
- Governors' understanding of data is evolving. They may wish to consider accessing further training. The Headteacher is supporting Governors in developing their understanding.
- Governors need to validate evidence through a wider range of monitoring activities to inform their evaluations of impact of actions taken to address issues.

Recommendations:

The Officers conducting the external review would make the following recommendations to the Governing Body. However, this is presented as guidance only and decisions must be made by the governing body:

1. Produce an improvement plan for governance based on this report and the Governing Body's own reflections. This should be owned by all Governors and all Governors should contribute to its implementation. This should be shared with the LA Officer within two weeks. A template is provided (<http://tinyurl.com/kbon8we>).
2. Agree a schedule for monitoring and evaluation of the school's progress against School Development Plan priorities for the current academic year. The LA's Governing Body Annual Planner template can be used to support this. The monitoring and evaluation activities should include conducting the Headteacher's performance management before the 31 December 2013 deadline, staff presentations, school visits to meet subject leaders, class visits linked to the School Development Plan and pupil work sampling. This should relate to the SDP priorities so that Governors are collecting more information first hand and are not over reliant on the Headteacher.
3. The Governing Body needs at least two or three Governors who are confident in understanding and analysing pupil performance data, such as RAISEOnline. Training and quality time to explore key data is essential. Governors are urged to continue to enhance their knowledge and understanding of data through attending training, meeting with school staff, attending pupil progress and MRE meetings etc. The role of the Standards Committee is key to the exploration of this data. The committee should explore pupil performance data, including that of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups on a termly basis. Headlines and actions to be taken should be reported to the full Governing Body.

These actions will enhance the quality of governance in the school. School Governor Services are committed to supporting the school to address these priorities. The Governor Training Programme and bespoke support is available.

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