



School Governance Strategy – 2018-2020

Purpose

This strategy is aligned to Leicester City Council's School Improvement Framework 2018/19 which seeks to work in partnership with key stakeholders/partners to ensure that:-

- All Leicester City maintained schools are judged by Ofsted to be at least 'good'; and
- Young people's outcomes across all key stages are at least in line with national averages.

Governing bodies are key partners and have a key role in promoting high standards and driving school improvement.

This strategy outlines the Council's commitment and approach to securing the effective governance of maintained schools in the City and supporting individuals to be effective in carrying out their governor role. In addition, it also sets out the Council's role in supporting this within the context of its statutory responsibilities, national and local strategies, initiatives and developments.

Vision

Leicester's vision is to develop and maintain strong, accountable governing bodies with access to highly skilled, well informed governors, who understand the City's priorities for its children and young people. It requires a partnership approach and joint working between the local authority, Leicester's schools and governing bodies and other key stakeholders.

Effective governance drives school improvement and enables young people to raise their aspirations, fulfil their potential and develop the right skills to play a positive part in the life of the City.

Leicester City Council will strengthen and develop effective school governance in Leicester through:-

- Communicating effectively with stakeholders and governing bodies the Council's objectives and duties to deliver transformational educational change for Leicester City;

- Strengthening governing bodies by operating a skills-led recruitment model for Authority governors and working with and developing National Leaders of Governance; and
- Maintaining an “intelligence-led” approach to ensuring that the Council and governing bodies are effectively discharging their statutory duties, driving school improvement and improving outcomes for children and young people in the City.

Context

Role of the Governing Body

Governing bodies are required to fulfil their statutory responsibilities for the conduct of the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement through:-

- Ensuring that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined;
- Ensuring that the headteacher performs his/her responsibilities for the educational performance of the school; and
- Ensuring the sound, proper and effective use of the school’s financial resources.

(as defined by The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances)(England) Regulations 2013)

National ‘Frameworks’ for Effective Governance

In January 2017 the Department for Education published ‘A Competency Framework for Governance’ and ‘Clerking Competencies’ and a revised ‘Governance Handbook.’ that. These documents, alongside the current ‘Governance Handbook’ set out the DfE’s vision and outline the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for effective governance based around ‘six features of good governance’ and effective clerking support

Role of the Local Authority

The Local Authority has a number of statutory duties in relation to the governance of maintained schools:-

- Provision of advice and guidance on the drawing up and changes to governing body formal constitution (Instrument of Government).
- Provision of election procedures, advice and guidance to community and voluntary controlled schools on parent and staff governor elections.
- Recruitment/nomination and removal of Authority Governors.
- Provision of information provided to new governors by the LA.
- Collection/maintenance of information provided by governing bodies to the LA on its constitution, membership and other information.
- Provision of /signposting to high quality governor training.

In addition, to prevent schools becoming “eligible for intervention” local authorities should promote and support high standards of governance and should take an active interest in the quality of governance in maintained schools.

To do so, they should:-

- be champions for high quality in school governance;
- help ensure that governors have the necessary skills; and
- have in place appropriate monitoring arrangements to identify signs of failure in relation to governors' oversight of finance, safety or performance standards".

(Department for Education Schools Causing Concern Statutory Guidance – January 2018 - Non-Statutory Guidance Relating to Governance in Maintained Schools)

Leicester's Current Position (as at August 2018)

73 single Governing Bodies
2 Federated Governing Bodies

2 Pupil Referral Unit Management Committees
28 Academy Governing Boards
2 Free Schools

67 (89%) of our governing bodies are considered to be good and outstanding, with the remaining 8 (11%) require improvement.

The overall governor vacancy rate is currently running at **18 %**, with vacancies for parent and co-opted governors being the highest category. This compares to the national vacancy rate of 16% (latest available figure as at April 2018)

Current Challenges for City Governing Bodies

- Recruitment and retention of skilled, effective governors and "governing body leaders" to ensure appropriate support and challenge.
- Reducing school budgets that require high levels of financial management by the governing body.
- Less LA capacity - smaller core LA teams available to provide support and challenge to governing bodies.
- The challenging context of new curriculum, assessment/testing and qualification frameworks.
- The recruitment and retention of high quality staff at all levels.
- The recruitment and retention of high quality clerks to governors/clerking.

Objectives of the Strategy

This strategy will:-

- assist the LA to fulfil its statutory requirements in respect of governance;
- support the development and maintenance of high quality school governance;
- support individual governors to develop and maintain the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding to fulfil their statutory duties and drive school improvement; and
- contribute towards a good or better judgement of the LA's support for governors in all quality audits.

Strands of Activity

1. Recruitment, Development and Retention of Skilled Effective Governors

a) Governor Recruitment

- Work with local universities and the business community to promote the benefits of supporting staff to become governors.
- Provision/operation of a skills based Authority Governor nomination process.
- Provision of a suite of recruitment materials for schools/governing bodies.
- Provision of parent and staff governor election procedures.
- Provision of induction training and information and guidance on effective school-based induction processes (traded service).

b) Provision of advice and guidance to support effective school governance

- Access to advice from LA colleagues (part traded).
- Provision of high quality guides, toolkits and materials, accessible through the traded services offer.
- Provision of and/or signposting to governor training and development activities.

c) Developing the “Leaders” of governing bodies

- Access to high quality support, resources and professional development activities.
- Signposting to national governance leadership development programmes.
- Access to Induction materials for new Chairs & Vice-Chairs (traded service).
- Access to support from National Leaders of Governance.
- Provision of succession planning support for “aspiring” Chairs/Vice-Chairs.
- Access to resources to support the role of a “Lead Governor”.

2. Improving/Maintaining Effective Governance

a) Developing/supporting effective Clerks to Governors

- Access to termly briefings.
- Provision of and/or signposting to specific training and development activities, including the national clerks’ development programme.
- Provision of guidance notes, briefing papers and resources.

b) Supporting effective, systematic governing body self-review and the sharing of best practice

- Promotion of and access to whole governing body self-evaluation materials/toolkit/ professional support through the traded services offer.
- Commission/signpost to External Governance Reviews.
- Publication and sharing of best practice via website and newsletters.

- c) **Providing targeted support for governing bodies to address specific issues identified through the Local Authority's school improvement work:-**
- Provision of bespoke programmes of support to governing bodies of schools identified as causing concern.
 - Use of LA's Statutory Intervention Powers, including the issuing of Warning Notices, the appointment of additional governors and the establishment of Interim Executive Boards where necessary.
- d) **Developing LA knowledge and understanding of City governing bodies to ensure the provision of appropriate and effective support**
- Identification of key governance performance indicators and collection and analysis of appropriate data.
 - Development of effective information sharing systems.
 - Input into the school improvement framework processes.
 - Keeping up to date with national governance developments through the National Governance Association, National Co-ordinators of Governor Services and other organisations.
- e) **Effective working relationships with partners**
- Working with local teaching schools to commission/deliver complimentary governor training and development opportunities.
 - Working with Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland National Leaders of Governance.

Key outcomes

1. All governing bodies discharge their statutory responsibilities (as defined by legislation and the current Ofsted Inspection Framework).
2. LA support for governing bodies is ranked good or better in internal and external quality audits.
3. The LA has an effective process for determining levels of support to individual governing bodies.

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