Title	Governance models in schools
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Star rating*	★★★★★
Who should read it?	All governors; co-ordinators of governor services; Secretary of State and colleagues
Why?	It provides solid evidence of what works well and what needs improving in school governance. For COGs, it suggests how they can improve and develop services to governors in future.
Summary	**Based on surveys of governors and coordinators of local authority governance services (CoGs) between October and December 2010, this authoritative report considers the current model of accountabilities in school governance and alternative models that may be appropriate for the schools of the future.** • Following the introduction, *Chapter 2* explores current models of governance in the UK and internationally, and considers the key tasks and responsibilities of governing bodies in the UK. • *Chapter 3* examines the impact of the school governing body and considers the features that are key to effective governance • *Chapter 4* discusses the training and support received by governors and the extent to which it was considered effective • *Chapter 5* explores views on how school governance might change in light of greater autonomy in the future, including the appropriateness of current models and ways to improve the effectiveness of school governance • *Chapter 6* concludes the report and identifies any implications, particularly in light of schools having greater autonomy **Key findings** • principles and components of effective governance are more significant to the governance of schools than the type of model followed • an effective governing body can have a valuable impact on school improvement • the majority of governors felt that their governing bodies

were effective and coordinators were also positive about the overall effectiveness of governing bodies

- the stakeholder model is viewed as the most appropriate model of school governance, although needing some improvements to ensure flexibility and fitness for purpose in the context of greater school autonomy
- governors are currently principally fulfilling monitoring and supporting roles and a minority of governors and coordinators felt that governing bodies were challenging headteachers or the senior leadership team, representing the views of the local community, providing strategic direction, and carrying out self-evaluations
- governors perceived the most important elements for ensuring effective governance to be a productive working relationship between the governing body and the senior leadership team, and an effective chair of governors and clerk to support the governing body
- the key to effective governance was perceived to be governors having a clear understanding of their role (and its limits) and an understanding of the strategic responsibilities of governing bodies
- critical to achieving strategic focus is the quality of the relationships between the headteacher, the chair of governors and the clerk
- governors cited size of the governing body as the least relevant element of an effective governing body
- further ways for improving the effectiveness of governance were better selection and recruitment processes, mandatory induction training (although it is appreciated that current funding pressures may affect the feasibility of this), and better understanding of data
- the majority of governors reported that the governing body took into account how to support all children and young people in the local community. However, coordinators were less confident that governors were doing this

Other key attributes for governors of the future:

1. having an interest in and commitment to the school
2. the ability to recognise, particularly in the more autonomous schools of the future, what type of external guidance might be needed and to access the required support and/or training, if needed
3. the willingness to develop the skills and knowledge needed in order to provide strategic challenge, for example, by understanding how to interpret data

Training

- further training is needed to ensure all partners, including headteachers, understand the strategic responsibilities of governing bodies
- the majority of governors who had accessed training and, in particular, face-to-face training, felt that it was useful
- the clerk was considered to be a key source of support
- governors reported that they would welcome further support particularly in relation to new developments in education, governance self-evaluation, specific issues (relevant to their role on the governing body), and the statutory requirements and legal responsibilities of governing bodies
- coordinators identified key barriers to governors attending training as a lack of time, lack of support from employers, an unwillingness to travel and variable encouragement from schools

Implications for policy and practice

- recruitment of governors with appropriate interests, commitment and skills is more important for effective governance than the type of governance model that is adopted
- in order to meet the principles of effective governance, improvements include a better selection and recruitment process for governors and greater clarity of governor roles and responsibilities
- skills and knowledge needed to provide strategic challenge need to be further developed and supported, eg, by improving understanding of how to interpret data
- making some elements of training compulsory should be considered, such as ways to provide strategic focus and how to interpret data
- delivery of training needs to be flexible to meet styles of learning and lifestyles
- headteachers could acquire further appreciation of the importance of governors' strategic input through greater emphasis being placed on this in their current training
- networking opportunities should be further considered as they represent effective ways of sharing and disseminating good practice and information
- worth considering creative ways for neighbouring schools to reduce duplication of effort, replicate and share effective practice
- schools will have to reconsider the way they access governance support services as it is expected that local authorities' governance support services will change

Commentary For those who have been around in governance for a while, this

report can read as a statement of the obvious – not surprising, as it's based on the comments of experienced governors and COGS. That is its virtue. Unlike other recent reports on governance, such as the dreadful "Who governors the governors?" it is based on much more than ignorance, prejudice, partiality and lack of experience and feedback from real governors. Sadly, it is likely to be less well read and understood than that awful piece of work.

Recent Secretaries of State for Education have shared the view, based on no evidence at all, that smaller governing bodies are better than larger ones and that a skills-based membership is better than one representative of the community served by the school. The report looks at the alternative model and concludes that an amended version of the **stakeholder model** is best suited to the changed educational landscape. Size is not seen to be an issue.

The report includes a definition of **governing body effectiveness** (pp 12-13) which is worth comparing to that posited in publications like "Learning from the best" (Ofsted 2011).

Chapter 4 is of **special interest to COGs**, focusing on training and other support services. "Three-fifths of governors felt that the training they receive in their role as governor from the local authority governor support services was *effective* or *very effective* and over a quarter (29 per cent) reported that it had been satisfactory." This, coming at a time when governor services are under threat, is a useful reminder of what could be lost in the next few years.

Chapter 5 offers some helpful pointers to the **future of governance** and the support governors will need as greater autonomy requires more of governors' time and business acumen.

Relationship to government policy

Whilst the findings support some of the intended improvements to governance outlined in the White Paper, such as clarification of responsibilities, training for chairs and the appointment of trained clerks, the focus on the shape and size of governing bodies is shown to be a red herring.

Sadly, the recurring improvement themes of recent reports on governance, such as mandatory induction training, also supported by this report, are ignored in "The Importance of Teaching".

Yet another review of governance has been set up, following publication of the abysmal "Who governs the governors?" It is utterly unnecessary and a waste of public money, since

	"Governance models in schools" along with other recent reports like the University of Bath's "Governing our schools" tell legislators all they need to know in order to make the right decisions in supporting the work of governing bodies which is fast becoming more important than ever in the brave new world of more autonomous schools.
More like this	"Governing our schools" University of Bath 2008 www.thegovernor.org.uk "The 21st Century School: Implications and Challenges for Governing Bodies" DCSF 2010 www.thegovernor.org.uk

Star rating	
★	Don't waste your time
★★	Read only if you've nothing better to do
★★★	Skim read
★★★★	Well worth reading
★★★★★	Essential reading