

Business in the

Governing our Schools

Community

A report by Business in the Community



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Contents

Foreword by Bob Wigley	2
Response to the recommendations	3
1. Key recommendations	4
For the Government	4
For Employers	5
For the development of education-employer partnerships	5
2. Introduction and background	7
a. Introduction	7
b. Business in the Community and its education campaign	8
c. Raising educational standards and the role of governors	8
d. Research	9
3. Findings and recommendations	13
a. Introduction	13
b. The purpose of the governing body	13
c. The structure of the governing body	18
d. Membership of the governing body	19
e. Procedures of the governing body	20
f. Relationships of the governing body	23
g. Performance review and assessment of the governing body	25
h. What sort of people	26
i. Chairing	28
j. Training	28
k. Recruitment and placement	31
l. Increasing the number of volunteers	32
m. Recognition	33
n. The Role of Employers	34
o. Education-employer partnerships	36
Acknowledgements	37
Appendices	38
i) University of Bath Study: Executive Summary	38
ii) Employers' support template	41
iii) Board performance evaluation in the corporate world	43

Foreword by Bob Wigley



One of the primary aims of any successful education system must be to ensure that all children have the opportunity to make the most of their talents and fulfil their potential. To achieve that, we need to ensure that all our schools have first-class teaching, management and leadership supported and held to account by high-quality governing bodies.

Governors are obviously central to the stewardship of schools. There are approximately 350,000 governor places in schools in England, and school governors are the largest group of volunteers in England. However, there are 40,000 governor vacancies. Many of those vacancies are in the governing bodies of schools in challenging circumstances - the very schools that most need good governors. Recent waves of policy change may have improved the performance of schools, but they have made the role of governors, already a substantial one, even more complicated and demanding. At the same time, I believe the design of the school governor's role has not kept pace with other policy changes - and may therefore be described, in the words of the University of Bath study as "overburdened, overcomplicated and overlooked".

There is therefore a strong case for examining the governor's role, and how it might be enhanced to make it more effective, bringing in relevant expertise from the business world where appropriate. As Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, said in May 2008: "We know that some schools have difficulty recruiting governors with the necessary skills and that, in some cases, governing bodies are not able to provide the right balance of challenge and support . . . Strong governors are central to turning around underperforming schools and will be the key to raising standards".

As Deputy Chairman of Business in the Community and Chairman of its Education Leadership Team, I was invited by the Prime Minister in July 2007 to join the National Council for Educational Excellence (NCEE). I was subsequently asked to join a ministerial working group on school governance under the chairmanship of Jim Knight, Minister of State for Schools and Learners. I agreed to produce a report for the NCEE on school governance, considering what lessons could be learned from the corporate sector and looking at the current and potential role of employers in school governance. The Business Strand of the NCEE has recommended

a National Framework for business engagement with education. It identifies support for school leadership, including governance, as one of the key priorities of business engagement.

I am therefore delighted that Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP as part of the BITC Education Leadership Team has agreed to sponsor some research into school governance, working closely with the BITC Education Team and the University of Bath, to improve our understanding of the issues involved.

One of the main messages from the Bath study is that: "School governing is important and it is generally working well thanks to the efforts of all those involved. However, it could be improved and it will need to change if it is to respond to the ways schools are changing."

I believe that, while school governance is generally working satisfactorily in many areas, there are some relatively simple steps that the Government can take to help all schools to benefit from the support of an excellent governing body. This report sets out a number of key recommendations for government policy and for employers, designed to strengthen the role of school governing bodies, make it clearer and focused on delivering children's potential and raise the appreciation of good governance to achieving that objective. I believe that, if our recommendations are implemented, more people will be encouraged to volunteer as school governors and more employers will be keen to support them. If these steps are taken, I am also confident that many more children will achieve their potential as a result of better-governed schools.

We have made recommendations for greater clarity in the role of governors, changes to the way governing bodies are formed, improved information and performance data available to governors, the provision of support for governors from people employed to provide professional clerking services and improved recruitment, placement and training of governors, chairs of governing bodies and clerks.

I hope that this report to the NCEE, prepared by the BITC Education Team and funded through the kind support of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP will help to stimulate a step change in the quality of school governance, building on the study specially carried out by the University of Bath and generously sponsored by Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP.

**Bob Wigley, Chairman, Education Leadership Team,
Deputy Chairman, Business in the Community**

Response to the recommendations



We are delighted to support Bob Wigley, Business in the Community and the researchers at the University of Bath on the crucial topic of school governors. Creating the framework whereby the business community (including the professions) is able to contribute its skills and

experience towards improving the performance of our schools is an exciting challenge. We believe that the recommendations set out here will help to achieve this goal, especially the suggestions made about the clarity of purpose of school governors, the review of governor composition (with a greater emphasis on relevant skills) and more effective meeting procedures.

Most importantly, we hope that this report will encourage and enable more businesses around the country, whatever their size, to encourage and support those staff who wish to be school governors. There are 40,000 vacancies to be filled - and filling them with inspiring volunteers is critical to the lives and futures of our young people.

I believe increasingly that head teachers and the senior management team are responsible for (and in many instances, overburdened by) complex financial, building, legal, IT and HR issues. Governors with business experience can be invaluable in supporting them in meeting these challenges. Ideally, employee governors can be at the centre of a wider partnership between the school and the business community, lending support to many of these functions.

Being a school governor is a big commitment in terms of time and responsibility, so the individual has to want to do it - voluntarily - and be able to do it. Our job as employers is to provide the support and encouragement that enables people to follow through these responsibilities and, sometimes, to explain to colleagues why it is important that volunteer school governors are given that time and support.

So why do we think business should support their staff in becoming school governors? It is one way of enhancing the links between schools and the world of work which helps to improve understanding and, in the long run, ensure that the next generation is equipped for work.

We have two types of school governor at Freshfields - the people who are governors at the schools where we have special links, Redlands Primary School in Tower Hamlets and Haggerston Secondary School for Girls in Hackney, and those who have become governors through the School Governors' One-Stop Shop.

The special links with Redlands and Haggerston come in the form of volunteers such as reading and number partners, mentors, work experience etc, and our governors at these schools are able to tap into the many other experts in our firm if the schools need them.

For our other governors, we provide them with the time during the working day to meet their commitments, and there are various schemes which we have recently introduced which can be used as sources of financial support. We plan to run workshops and discussions and bring our governors together more often, and with other business governors, to share their experiences and learnings.

All our volunteers find being a school governor really fulfilling and rewarding, as I do. It enables us to use our skills and knowledge in a different way, which is beneficial to the school and wider society, to us as volunteers and to our law firm - having motivated individuals is what all businesses want in their workplace.

In the process of working on this report we have learnt a great deal - it has been an opportunity to work more closely with the people who are school governors at our firm, and I am pleased to say that we are already taking forward many of the recommendations ourselves if we haven't already. For example, we have adopted a policy on employee school-governor service and are looking into how it fits with our training and development programme, work allocation and how best to assess our community activities during the appraisal process. We are also planning a discussion forum that will help to feed into our wider community programme.

I strongly believe that the business community needs to commit its "best and brightest" to school governors - not only will our schools benefit but so will our businesses! I hope these recommendations will help to enable more businesses to encourage and support their staff in becoming school governors.

Barry O'Brien, Partner, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP, Member of Business in the Community Education Leadership Team and school governor at Haggerston School for Girls

1. Key recommendations

For the Government

1. Clarity of purpose

The role of the governing body should be clarified and simplified to ensure that it focuses on providing clear strategic direction and does not become embroiled in detailed day-to-day management of schools. It should support and hold the head teacher and senior management team to account for delivery of the school's objectives.

2. Composition of governing bodies

The historic model of governors' largely "representing" stakeholder groups such as parents, local authorities and the community, while important, may not necessarily result in governing bodies' having the necessary skill sets to perform their function effectively e.g. finance, property management and human-resource management. The skill sets of the governing bodies should be defined and the governor recruitment system reviewed to ensure these skills are found, while not losing necessary links with relevant stakeholders.

3. Skills audit, performance assessment and information

A governing body should be required to undertake a standardised skills audit and performance self-assessment annually. Ofsted should, inter alia, review and comment on these in its inspections. Reporting packs should be designed to ensure that governing bodies have the information necessary to perform their duties on a timely basis.

4. Professional clerking

All schools should have professional clerking support, shared among several schools if necessary. Greater support, training and guidance should be given to the clerks of governing bodies. An accredited training programme for clerks (which is available) should be made mandatory for all clerks.

5. Recruitment

In order to ensure that governing bodies have the necessary skills and the independence to perform their function effectively, the routes by which governors are recruited need to be reviewed and improved. This will increase the number of skilled volunteers and help avoid the position where the head teacher has to "twist arms" to recruit sufficient governors who then find themselves having to scrutinise the head teacher's performance, potentially compromising their independence. Greater consideration should be given to the use of associate governorships and probationary appointments, not only to provide access to specific skills, but also to help would-be governors to understand the governor role and develop their skills by exposing them to it in a phased way in advance of a full commitment.

6. Placement

A number of constraints on the speedy translation of volunteer interest into governor placement have been identified, in addition to examples of good practice that minimise delay. Those examples should be highlighted as part of a drive to complement the efforts already being made by the School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) in partnership with local authorities to improve the placement rate.

7. Induction and training

Appropriate induction and in-service training should be obligatory, for governors, chairs and clerks, together with formalised mentoring of less-experienced governors by the more experienced.

8. Attracting governors

A national campaign should be launched to recruit more governors, particularly for schools in challenging circumstances. Part of the campaign should be aimed at getting employers (particularly larger and medium-sized employers) to recognise the value and importance of supporting their employees as school governors.

9. Recognition

Greater public recognition should be given to the importance of serving as a school governor, and the work done by good governors should be more publicly celebrated.



For Employers

1. Board-level support

Employers should be encouraged at the highest level to support their employees to serve as governors. Employers should be encouraged to adopt a clear policy statement that sets out the support they will provide and ensure that it is communicated to line-managers*.

2. Support and training

Employers should be encouraged to facilitate support to employee governors in the form of relevant training and time off (preferably paid), and by creating and maintaining company networks through which they can share experiences and best practice.

3. Recognition

Employers should give greater recognition to the value of the skills and qualities developed by employees serving as school governors and their contribution to the education of young people.

For the development of education-employer partnerships

1. The role of employee governors

The role of employee governors in the development of education-employer partnerships needs to be encouraged. Employee governors can provide an excellent link between schools and employers, and help co-ordinate a wide range of business support for schools.

*Employers already have the legal obligation under Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 to allow employees who are governors time off to carry out their duties - see Employers' support template on page 41.



2. Introduction and background

a. Introduction

There has been significant investment in education in England during the last decade. Major policy developments culminating in The Children's Plan have placed emphasis on children's wellbeing and personalised learning.

Alongside those changes new models of school, such as Academies and Trust Schools, have been introduced; and the scheme for specialist schools expanded. Partnership working between schools has grown in various forms such as federations, learning partnerships and networked learning communities, with the integration of services for young people, families and communities.

The school workforce has also undergone considerable restructuring, with greater emphasis on training and support; and considerable efforts have been made to attract and retain first-class teachers with initiatives such as Teach First, which aims to attract top graduates into the teaching profession. The National College for School Leadership since 2000 has had an impact on the leadership and management of schools, many of which now have more effective and professional management teams.

As the research carried out for Business in the Community (BITC) by the University of Bath, generously sponsored by Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP, shows, greater responsibility has been devolved to schools. Governing bodies therefore now carry more responsibility.

All schools need high-quality governance as well as high-quality leadership, management and teaching, to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people. Some changes have been made to the way schools are governed, and efforts have been made to recruit more governors, but generally less emphasis has been placed on school governance than on other aspects of education policy. Neither has greater recognition been given to the approximately 350,000 people serving as governors. Schools in challenging circumstances have a particular need for good governance and often have most difficulty recruiting governors. The Bath study found that "governance was more often found to be less effective in schools in disadvantaged settings".

The Bath study shows that many schools are well governed, but that there are significant areas of weakness. Importantly, the research suggests that many less effective governing bodies experience a number of inter-related difficulties in recruitment, induction and training; procedures; and their understanding of their role.

The study found three principal barriers to greater involvement of employees in school governance:

- The need for employers to give their employees more paid time off to participate as governors;
- Misperceptions of who is eligible for participation in school governance (stereotyping governors as parents and older people); and
- A general misperception of the role of a school governor, which leads many potential volunteers to overestimate the work involved.

Schools found it hard to recruit sufficient employee governors, and employees themselves often found it hard to obtain time off from work to participate fully in school governance.

The study considered that employers, together with the government and SGOSS, could help to remove those barriers so that employers could play a fuller role in school governing to the benefit of society, employees and the employers themselves.

BITC is convinced that employers, in both the public and private sectors, without any significant cost, could help to fill some of the gaps with suitably qualified people: indeed, our case studies show that there are many employers that already provide excellent support for school governance. However, the Bath study suggests that much more could be done: 60% of the school governors surveyed reported that "companies are not proactive enough about promoting the involvement of their employees in school governance". The perceived value of employee governors is shown by the fact that 59% agreed with the statement "I can think of a number of times in the last year when the contribution of governors with business expertise for example in finance, human resource management or project management has been crucial".

Apart from reluctance on the part of some employers to promote the involvement of their employees, participation in school governorship is currently inhibited by a number of barriers, including lack of awareness of the opportunity, lack of knowledge of what it involves and frustration arising from experience of ineffective governing bodies. Our report makes a number of recommendations for ways in which the government can help to lift the barriers; and, if it does so, we believe that employers and their employees will respond. Of course, not all employees make good governors - it is about having people with the right commitment and personal qualities, with children's wellbeing at heart - but there is a vast pool of potential governors out there.

b. Business in the Community and its education campaign

Business in the Community inspires, engages, supports and challenges companies on responsible business, working through four areas: Community, Environment, Marketplace and Workplace. With more than 850 companies in membership, we represent one in five of the UK private-sector workforce and convene a network of global partners. Our members are committed to integrating responsible business, sharing experience and taking collaborative action.

Our vision for Community is that, with our support, our members lead by example in delivering effective engagement on key social issues and in local communities, as part of a responsible approach to business. Education is a critical issue for our members and an important campaigning area for Business in the Community. We aim to build effective, sustainable partnerships between schools and businesses - with the ultimate goal of helping young people realise their potential.

Our Education Leadership Team brings together distinguished business leaders and educationalists in the important role of inspiring member companies to support education. We have used our evidence base and our unique network of companies to gather knowledge of what leading companies are doing in education; what works well and why; and what needs to be done to enhance and target their efforts to maximum effect. We are a leading authority on what makes for effective engagement between the worlds of education and business.

Our focus is on three areas where we think business can make most impact - employability, enterprise, and leadership and management, which includes school governance. We do that through five distinct but interdependent roles:

- Gathering and sharing knowledge - understanding and sharing knowledge on the education landscape, best practice and impact data;
- Leading the debate - helping set the forward agenda and being the voice of responsible business on education in discussions with government, businesses and schools;
- Building and facilitating effective partnerships - helping businesses to get involved and have a positive impact on education;
- Supporting new initiatives - using expertise to incubate the development of new programmes, codify what we learn and advise on roll-outs;
- Promoting the benefits of education-business links - organising events, conferences and meetings that bring key players together.

c. Raising educational standards and the role of governors

Announcing a major review into strengthening school governance in May this year, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Ed Balls, said:

“Governing bodies are the largest volunteer group in the country and have a proud tradition of serving their communities. No one can doubt their long-term commitment to improving the lives of children and I value having men and women prepared to invest their time and experience in our schools.

“But we know that some schools have difficulty recruiting governors with the necessary skills and that, in some cases, governing bodies are not able to provide the right balance of challenge and support.

“We want to raise the profile of school governors, attract talented and skilled people into this vital role, and provide them with the best support. I want every school to be governed with a strong focus on driving up standards and securing the best outcomes for every child.

“We need all governing bodies to lead the work of school improvement. Strong governors are central to turning around underperforming schools and will be key to raising standards in our 638 National Challenge schools, where less than 30% get five A to C GCSEs, including English and maths.*

“This is not about making governing bodies paid professionals - the voluntary ethos is here to stay. It is about making sure they have the right professionalism, skills and focus on holding schools to account and being accountable themselves to children, parents and local communities.”

Furthermore, as the Bath study notes, a new form of community governance is beginning to emerge that emphasises the integration of services for young people, families and communities. Importantly, schools have a much broader focus now than the achievement of attainment standards.

Through the Every Child Matters agenda, the education, health and social services are to provide a new framework for the education and care of young people. The desired outcomes are that every child should:

- be healthy;
- stay safe;
- enjoy and achieve;
- make a positive contribution; and
- achieve economic wellbeing.

d. Research

i. The University of Bath study

Business in the Community commissioned the University of Bath to undertake a study of school governance and the role of employee governors. The study considered:

- What lessons could be learned from different principles and models of governance in a range of governance settings;
- The current state of school governance;
- What companies were doing to help their employees serve as governors;
- What contribution employees could make and were making to school governance;
- Barriers that obstructed further employer and employee engagement;
- Options for ways of working to meet changing educational demands and to help remove any barriers to effective employer and employee engagement that have been identified; and
- Ways in which companies could arrange and manage their employee-governor programmes to achieve the highest degree of effectiveness and the greatest benefits to employers, employees, schools and students.

The study drew on the experience of governing bodies in the corporate, public and voluntary sectors, including innovative areas of education such as Academies and Trusts. It looked at accountability, responsibilities, organisation, composition, information flows, management, and performance indicators.

The study analysed the policy and research literature relevant to school governing. In addition, the study undertook in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, and carried out a large-scale random on-line survey of school governors and a smaller on-line survey of head teachers. Interviews sought respondents' views on the arrangements for school governance and their suggestions for improvements; and their views on the contribution of governors from the business community. The questionnaire for the on-line survey comprised a series of scale-based quantitative questions and open-ended questions that were targeted to particular groups of stakeholders.

The project was led by Chris James, Professor of Educational Leadership and Management, and the project team comprised: Dr Maria Balarin, a Lecturer in Education in the Department of Education at the University of Bath; Dr Steve Brammer, in the School of Management; Mark McCormack, a research assistant; Professor Michael Connolly, a visiting professor in the Department of Education and Emeritus Professor of Public Management at the University of Glamorgan; Professor Ian Jamieson, Pro-Vice Chancellor of Learning and Teaching at the University and a Professor of Education; and Professor Andrew Pettigrew, the Dean of the School of Management.

The findings of the study (see executive summary on page 38) have been used to inform this report and are published simultaneously with it. Copies are available from Business in the Community.

"It is critical to create a culture and ethos which allows us to keep regenerating ourselves as a vibrant learning community. I am convinced that we add to our work load because we do not always have the skills and knowledge needed, and things can become a paper chase because we overcompensate. I would really value having a skills base offered through links with the business world."

A Head Teacher

ii. Business in the Community and its members

Business in the Community (BITC) has carried out a number of in-depth case studies of its members' education programmes¹, and has held discussions with many others. The picture emerging is that a number of member companies have well-developed programmes to support their employees as school governors.

Furthermore, many employers find that involvement with school governance is both a major component of, and a way of developing, a broad and sustained relationship with a school.

As well as the case studies and one-to-one discussions, we have convened or taken part in a number of workshops bringing together educationalists and employers with a particular interest in education. At one such workshop, hosted by N M Rothschild and Sons, at which the main topic was Academies, concern was expressed that all was not well with school governance in the maintained sector². An academy sponsor defined the role of his organisation as "excellence in governance": it trained its governors and brought them together annually. Another mentioned that a high proportion of its UK employees were school governors, with a positive impact on spirit and morale. "Recognition of employee governors should be embedded as the key to governance."

A FEoS Business Forum seminar on school governance provided the opportunity to take soundings on the emerging findings of the research by BITC and the University of Bath, and to receive valuable feedback. Some of the points made were that:

- It is often very difficult to get governors onto the strategic level and away from day-to-day detail;
- The role of the clerk is clearly a key to providing stimulus, support and direction;

- The government needs to recognise that it has given governors a high level of responsibility and now needs to provide them with support to enable them to perform their task more effectively (much high-quality support is available, but the uptake is limited); and
- Potential governors are often put off by the over-complication and lack of clarity of the role.

iii. Mapping of governor vacancies and employers

BITC is co-ordinating an innovative project to map the locations of schools with governor vacancies and identify businesses in their locality. The aim is to provide an overview of locations of schools and businesses to help co-ordinate and target education-business partnerships and recruit school governors from businesses.

Ordnance Survey and Experian plc, which are supporting the project, are running a pilot in South Hampshire. Experian is analysing which companies are most likely to support education, and Ordnance Survey will combine that with detailed geographical information and publicly available schools' data. The School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) has obtained data on governor vacancies from the relevant local authorities, which give the vacancies by school and where specific skills sets are required - for example in finance and HR management. The data will be used with the specific permission of the local authorities concerned.

That will enable vacancies to be matched against employers in the area to see which employers should be approached to support their employees to volunteer as governors and fill the vacancies.

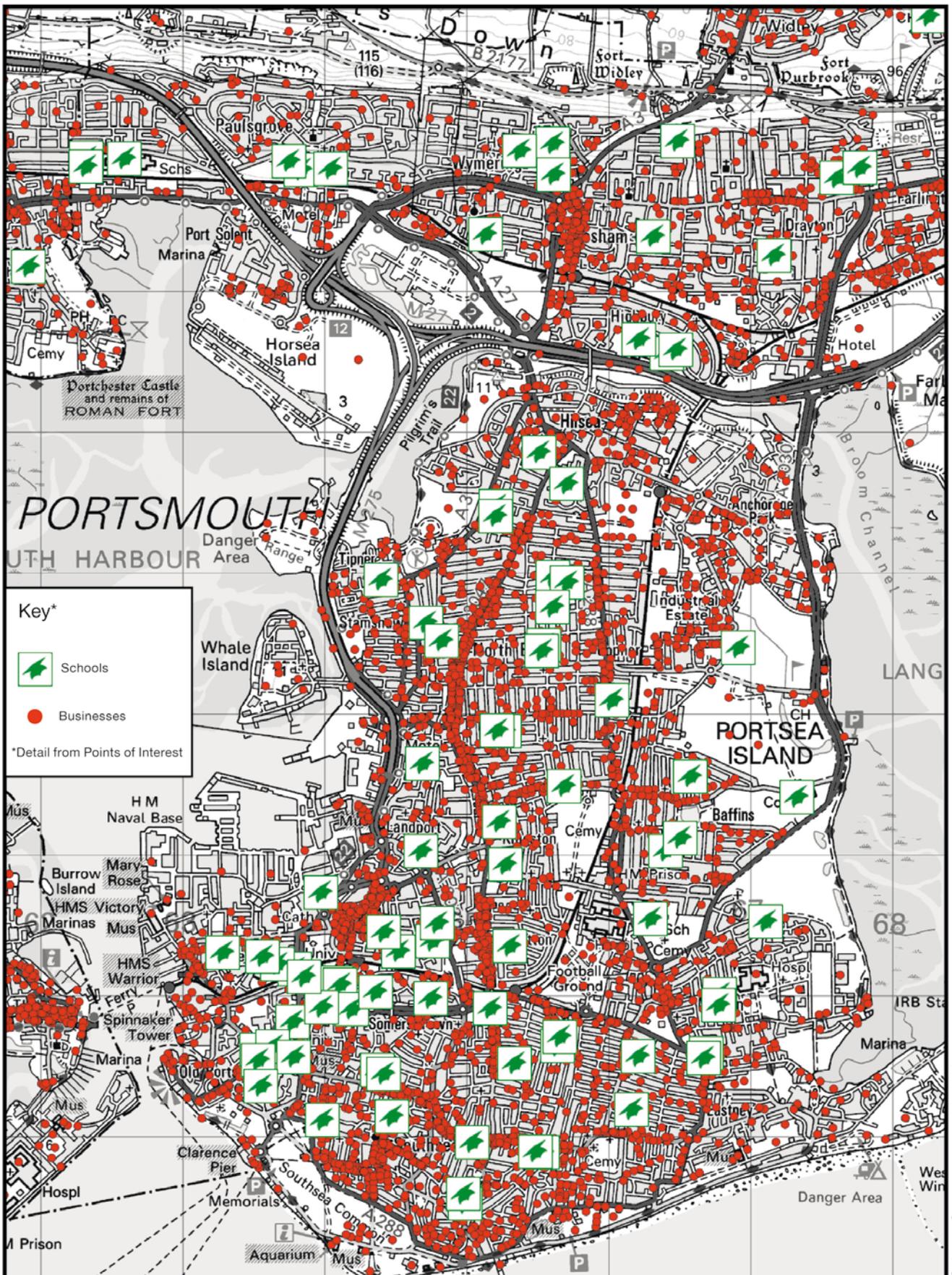
The maps on pages 12 and 13 illustrates the process.

¹ The companies include Deloitte, IBM, Merrill Lynch, Ernst & Young, Jaguar, Reuters, Citi, HSBC, Royal Mail, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Rolls-Royce, Waitrose, Starbucks, EDF Energy, Linklaters, KPMG, Oracle, BT, Standard Life, Cadbury and UBS.

² See also Dean, C., Dyson, A., Gallannaugh, F., Howes, C and Raffo, C. School governors and disadvantage. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007.



Mapping Governor vacancies – the Portsmouth Pilot



Finding School Governors – the Portsmouth Pilot

1. Ordnance Survey, with the help and support of SGOSS and the local authority, identifies and maps all the schools in Portsmouth with governor vacancies.
2. Schools with specific needs are highlighted: e.g. Mayfield School requires a governor with science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills and experience.
3. Ordnance Survey locates and maps all businesses within, say, a 3-10 km radius of Mayfield School – approximately 5,000.

3. Findings and recommendations

a. Introduction

This section describes the role of the school governing body set out in official documents. It goes on to consider what can be learned from some more general principles of governance - in the corporate sector, the public sector and the education sector. It then looks at the structure of the governing body, its membership, its procedures, its relationships with stakeholders, the need for it to review its performance, the kinds of person that should be governors, the chairing function, training requirements, recruitment and placement of governors, how to increase the number of governors, how they should be recognised, the role of employers, and the importance of education-employer partnerships.

b. The purpose of the governing body

The DCSF website describes the role of a governing body as follows³:

***The governing body** has a range of duties and powers and a general responsibility for the conduct of the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement including setting targets for pupil achievement, managing the school's finances, making sure the curriculum is balanced and broadly based, appointing staff and reviewing staff performance and pay and many more.*

The governing body has considerable discretion as to how to discharge its responsibilities . . .

Guidance⁴ on the relevant Regulations (the Education [School Government] [Terms of Reference] [England] Regulations 2000) says that:

***The governing body** are to carry out their functions with the aim of taking a largely strategic role in the running of the school. This includes setting up a strategic framework for the school, setting its aims and objectives, setting policies and targets for achieving the objectives, reviewing progress and reviewing the strategic framework in the light of progress. The governing body should act as a "critical friend" to the head teacher by providing advice and support (Regulation 4); and*

***The head teacher** is responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school; and for advising on and implementing the governing body's strategic framework. In particular, head teachers need to formulate aims and objectives, policies and targets for the governing body to consider adopting; and to report to the governing body on progress at least once every school year. (Regulation 5).*

As the Bath Study makes clear, the regulations indicate the complexity of the arrangements for the process of developing the strategy. It may not be helpful to have a key responsibility of the governing body specified as a metaphor ("critical friend") that is open to wide interpretation.

³ <http://www.governornet.co.uk/publishArticle.cfm?contentid=748&topicAreaId=1&pageStart=1&sortOrder=title&searchWhere=all&searchString=roles>

⁴ http://www.governornet.co.uk/linkAttachments/information_11.doc

Table 1: Differences in perceived effectiveness between more and less effective governing bodies

	Less Effective Governing Bodies	More Effective Governing Bodies
The governing body has a clear understanding of its role and responsibilities	39%	94%
Governors from different stakeholder categories work well side-by-side	52%	91%
Attendance at meetings of the governing body is usually very good	60%	93%
The governing body and I share a common vision of what the school is trying to achieve	57%	96%
The governing body periodically reviews how it is working	30%	78%
Communication between myself and the governing body is good	48%	94%
Meetings of the governing body have a clearly structured agenda	75%	99%
Meetings of the governing body often run on too long	43%	30%
The chair of the governing body plays a very effective role	47%	91%
Members of the governing body feel able to speak their minds on issues	52%	95%
Our governing body has formal Terms of Reference	64%	87%
The clerk of the governing body offers specialist advice and guidance	49%	72%
The organisation of our governing body's business is greatly facilitated by our clerk	52%	77%
Balancing their role as a member of our governing body with other responsibilities is challenging for our governors	64%	73%
The clerk to the governing body also works in the school in a different capacity	29%	36%
The main job of the clerk is to take the minutes of the meetings	41%	49%
The governing body has participated in discussions about the effectiveness of its performance	42%	80%
Members of the governing body are supplied with good quality, relevant information	45%	93%

Source: University of Bath Study

The Bath study found that governing bodies engage in a range of different activities when discharging their responsibilities for the conduct of the school. Table 1 indicates those activities and contrasts the activities of those governing bodies considered by respondents to

be effective with those considered by respondents to be ineffective.

What can be learned from some more general principles of governance?

i) Corporate sector

The Combined Code of the Financial Services Authority⁵, the so-called “Cadbury Code”, sets out the following principles of good governance regarding company boards of directors:

- **Board:** every listed company should be headed by an effective board which should lead and control the company.
- **Chair and CEO:** there are two key tasks at the top of every public company - the running of the board and the executive responsibility for the running of the company’s business. There should be a clear division of responsibilities at the head of the company which will ensure a balance of power and authority, such that no one individual has unfettered powers of decision.
- **Board Balance:** the board should include a balance of executive and non-executive directors (including independent non-executives) such that no individual or small group of individuals can dominate the board’s decision taking.
- **Supply of Information:** the board should be supplied in a timely manner with information in a form and of a quality appropriate to enable it to discharge its duties.
- **Appointments to the Board:** there should be a formal and transparent procedure for the appointment of new directors to the board.
- **Re-election:** all directors should be required to submit themselves for re-election at regular intervals and at least every three years.

According to Patrick Dunne, Group Communications Director, 3i⁶:

For me, there are three generic things that a board needs to do: These are to:

- *Ensure the right strategy is in place and that it is being followed;*
- *Ensure there are the right resources in place to fit with the agreed strategy. The most important of these are human and financial resources;*
- *Keep out of jail. By this I mean that the board needs to ensure that the company complies with all the appropriate regulations relating to its industry and the countries within which it operates.*

The distinction between governance and management is particularly important:

“[Governance] is about ensuring that the organisation is well managed, but not about managing it . . . Governance is ultimately concerned with providing insight, wisdom and good judgement ⁷.”

“The board is responsible for ensuring that the business has the necessary framework within which to function ⁸.”

In essence the responsibilities of the board relate to scrutiny and not to management.



ii) Public sector

The Independent Commission for Good Governance in Public Services⁹ reports that the primary functions of the governing body of a public body are to:

- *establish the organisation’s strategic direction and aims, in conjunction with the executive,*
- *ensure accountability to the public for the organisation’s performance,*
- *assure that the organisation is managed with probity and integrity.*

In order to direct strategy and ensure that this is implemented and that the organisation achieves its goals, the governing body has to:

- *allocate resources and monitor organisational and executive performance,*
- *delegate to management,*
- *oversee the appointment and contractual arrangements for senior executives, and make sure that effective management arrangements are in place,*
- *understand and manage risk.*

⁵ Principles of Good Governance and Code of Best Practice.

⁶ Directors’ Dilemmas, Kogan Page, 2005.

⁷ Mike Hudson, Managing without Profit: The Art of Managing Third Sector Organisations, Penguin 1999, Directory of Social Change, Second Edition, 2002.

⁸ Glynis D Morris and Patrick Dunne, Non-executive Director’s Handbook, Elsevier and CIMA Publishing, Second Edition, 2008.

⁹ The Good Governance Standard for Public Services, OPM and CIPFA, supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2004.

¹⁰ Delivering Good Governance, presentation by Shane Rutter-Jerome, General Secretary, AGBIS, 10th July 2008.

iii) Education Sector

What about governance in the independent sector? The Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools (AGBIS)¹⁰ describes “three key strands” of governance: corporate/fiduciary governance, strategic governance and impact governance. Using those headings, we suggest the following:

Fiduciary governance:

- **Oversight of finances and assets:** to ensure that (a) income is maximised and (b) expenditure is effectively directed to achieving the objectives of the school, and well managed; an associated responsibility is good stewardship of the school’s assets.
- **Regulatory and legal compliance:** with the support of a professional clerk, to ensure that the school is meeting all its regulatory and legal obligations, while using them in an imaginative and flexible way, within existing constraints, to maximise the benefits to the pupils.
- **Internal controls:** to ensure that the school has all the necessary financial and other controls in place, and that they are operating effectively.
- **Key policies:** the governing body is the guardian of the set of key policies that set the direction for the school.

Strategic governance:

- **Think and work strategically:** the head teacher and the senior management team are responsible for the day-to-day and year-to-year management of the school, but the governing body (with advice from the head teacher and the senior management team) is responsible for setting the school’s longer-term strategy and driving it forward within that framework.
- **Make the strategy clear:** the strategy should be clearly articulated, and clearly communicated to all stakeholders.
- **Look outwards:** the governing body is the body responsible for ensuring that the school flourishes within an external environment that may be difficult and subject to change; it should be aware of economic, social and educational developments that may affect the school, and should develop a strategy to take them into account.
- **Be able to adapt to change:** pragmatism and flexibility within a changing environment are necessary on the part of the school as well as the governing body.

Impact governance:

- **Focus on the impact of the school’s objectives for its pupils:** in a school the education and wellbeing of the pupils are paramount, and it is the duty of the governing body to ensure that sight of them is never lost. The governing body develops and maintains the key policies (see above) for achieving the objectives, including the range of learning experiences available to pupils, and the teaching and other resources needed to deliver them. It is also the duty of the governing body to ensure that the objectives are achieved.
- **Assess performance:** as well as its own performance (see g. below) the governing body needs to ensure that effective performance-measurement systems and procedures are in place.

Section 21 of the 2002 Education Act makes it clear that “the conduct of a maintained school shall be under the direction of the school’s governing body” and that “the governing body shall conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement at the school”. The responsibilities of the governing body are to:

- Set the school’s vision and strategic aims;
- Monitor and evaluate performance;
- Approve the school’s budget;
- Ensure the school is accountable to those it serves;
- Appoint the head teacher; and
- Act as a critical friend by providing support and challenge.

This broad set of responsibilities has been confirmed recently in *Governing the School of the Future*, which was published in 2004 and adds establishing “a strategic framework for leadership development”, “making creative use of resources”, and championing continuous professional development (CPD) for all school staff. A *Guide to the Law for School Governors 2007*, which is available from GovernorNet, explains to governors what their legal responsibilities are and how they fit in with the responsibilities of the head teacher, the local authority and the Secretary of State. It is suggested that the guide should be read alongside the Law and Guidance sections listed at the end of each chapter, and any information on governance provided by the local authority. The Guide runs to 236 pages, has 25 chapters and two annexes, including a glossary, which has over 100 items. As the Bath study concludes, the responsibilities of governing bodies are extensive, complex and have a range of different aspects. They

include much that could be the responsibility of the head teacher (or given to governing bodies for them to assign to the head teacher and, in some cases, further delegated), and are couched in metaphorical ways that are then open to wide interpretation, such as “critical friend” providing “support” and “challenge”.

The role of the governing body should be clarified and simplified to ensure that it focuses on providing clear strategic direction and does not become embroiled in detailed day-to-day management of the school. It should support and hold the head teacher and senior management team to account for delivery of the school’s objectives.

c. The structure of the governing body

A school governing body is not fundamentally different from other governing bodies, such as company boards and charity trustees, and the principles of corporate governance are well established. Within the education sector, there are a number of different approaches to the application of the principles, in independent schools, academies, groups of church schools, groups of livery-company schools, etc.

The Bath study has looked at different governance models in some detail.

We strongly recommend that the Government consider the findings from the study by the University of Bath, which accompanies this report, and draw on them as appropriate in working up the detail of its reforms. The ways in which governing bodies are structured should allow for differences between different kinds of school, and a clear articulation of what they are (such as primary and secondary), to suit particular educational environments: one size does not fit all.

- **Relationships and visibility:** careful consideration needs to be given to the relationship of the governing body with the head teacher, the senior management team, other staff, parents, pupils and other stakeholders. The governing body needs to have a broad view of what is going on, and be visible, not least by the pupils, to whom its members are role models (particularly if they belong to the same minority groups), and involved in the activities of the school, but not in such a way as to stray into management as sometimes occurs.

- **Size:** some governing bodies are too big, but size is not by itself a factor in performance, although decision making by a large group is not easy. More flexibility is needed in the “quota” system to give governing bodies the freedom to adopt aspects of structures used in other organisations to operate efficiently in their particular educational circumstances and types of school, such as primary and secondary, and federations (see above). However, a recent large-scale study by PricewaterhouseCoopers¹¹ found that some stakeholders queried the size of some governing bodies relative to the proportion of staff and pupils in schools. The Bath study found that there was “no significant or substantive relationship” between the size of a governing body and “aspects of its effectiveness”. It is worth noting that the governing bodies of Academies are generally smaller than those of community schools. The corporate sector does not provide much guidance: there is considerable variation in the sizes of boards internationally, and there is a very significant degree of variation within each country.

The Thomas Deacon Academy in Peterborough, sponsored by Perkins Engines (part of the Caterpillar group) and the Deacon’s School Trust, is run as a corporation, with a small “board” and a chief executive officer in the position of head teacher.

- **Committees and working parties:** an effective structure of delegation can reduce the burden on the governing body (and the size required), provided it does not have to repeat what is done in the sub-groups, and provided it does not lead to over-specialisation on the part of individual governors.
- **Succession policy:** a governing body should always be looking to the future and to the need for gradual renewal, rather than disruptive upheaval (see Success breeds success, available from the Co-ordinators of Governor Services).
- **Co-option:** the availability of skills can be enhanced by greater use of powers of co-option and the use of “associate governors”.

We recommend that the government should, in reviewing the structure of governing bodies and providing guidance, take into account relationships, size (and the need for flexibility), the use of committees, succession policy and powers of co-option

¹¹ Independent Study into School Leadership, DCSF, 2007.

¹² Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, August 2005.

A COMPANY'S VIEW: HSBC

HSBC recognises the importance of volunteer governors and supports School Governors One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) financially as well as supplying staff volunteer governors. HSBC is the largest single provider of governors through SGOSS, with 535 volunteers - 10% of its governors - in place at the end of 2006. Some HSBC employees also serve as governors independently.

Rush Croft School is located in Chingford, London - a relatively underprivileged, multicultural area. The school has a high proportion of children with learning difficulties and is a specialist school with a focus on sports. Rush Croft belongs to the HSBC Family of Schools in the UK supported by the HSBC Global Education Trust.

"As the HSBC sponsor governor at Rush Croft, I am closely involved in two major areas of focus for the school: Developing higher standards of numeracy and financial awareness; and Encouragement of participation in outdoor and community programmes.

"Literacy is really about engaging with life at different levels, about acquiring skills, opening your mind to cultures, developing values that can compete for advantage in a global world - not always the outcome of just a formal education process, but almost always the outcome of a stimulating environment at home and in school. I feel proud to be a school governor at Rush Croft School."

Sarajit Mitra, HSBC employee

d. Membership of the governing body

We believe that, in the selection of governors, as with all public appointments, there is a need for diversity in the sexes, ages and skills and cultures represented on the governing body. The Commissioner for Public Appointments Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies states that:

The principles of equal opportunity and diversity are not only socially just, but will benefit any board to which they are applied. Individuals from all sections of society may have much to offer a public body by virtue of their diverse experience and background. Therefore . . . departments should take positive action wherever possible to attract suitable candidates from all sections of society, and this in turn should lead to a wider range of people on public bodies¹².

The governors need collectively to understand the culture of the school and the wider community in which it operates. We consider that the current rules on the numbers in the different categories of governor are too rigid, and do not deliver diversity anyway.

It would benefit all business people to be a governor for a period of time in order to provide a way of being more grounded in a wider social context and to communicate with a wider group of people.

A respondent to the study by A Ellis (2003) on "Barriers to Participation for Under-represented Groups in School Governance"

The historic model of governors' largely "representing" stakeholder groups such as parents, local authorities and the community, while important, may not necessarily result in governing bodies' having the necessary skill sets to perform their function effectively e.g. finance, property management and human-resource management. The skill sets of the governing bodies should be defined and the governor recruitment system reviewed to ensure these skills are found, while not losing necessary links with relevant stakeholders.

There is a potential lack of independence of view on the part of governors in that "parent governors" or "staff governors" (including the head teacher) or even "community" governors may act as individuals or in ways that they perceive are in the interests of the group from which they are drawn, rather than for the school as a whole; in practice, good governing bodies make use of a clear description of responsibilities, training and induction, and effective chairmanship, to ensure that governors act effectively, and collectively, in the interests of the school.

The experience of long-serving governors can be of great value, but excessive length of tenure may be a problem with some governors, and consideration needs to be given to ways of limiting it.

We recommend that all necessary steps be taken to ensure that the governors drawn from particular groups understand the nature of their duties towards the school; and that chairs and clerks be trained in assisting the effective participation of those governors. There is a case for reviewing the "quota" system to allow for the changing nature of schools and variation in their types.



e. Procedures of the governing body

The effectiveness of the procedures with which governing bodies operate is variable: some bodies are reported to be excellent: others are not. Indeed, ineffective procedures, leading to long, rambling meetings and time wasted on trivialities, are frequently cited in our interviews as reasons why employees have either resigned from governing bodies or been put off from joining in the first place.

The timing of meetings (usually in the evening) has been cited as a factor inhibiting potential volunteers, both employees and other groups such as young mothers. On the other hand, morning meetings would clash with the school day. This is not something that is likely to be easily resolved, but it needs to be considered.

We should like to draw attention to the crucial role of the chair, assisted by the clerk, in ensuring that governing-body procedures are effective in practice, not just in theory.

- **Systems and procedures:** *the governing body needs to have appropriate procedures and practices in place, set out in a standardised template, in respect of the schedule of meetings and agenda, briefing papers, minutes and action planning, and follow up of action.*
- **Coverage:** *the systems and procedures have to cover such areas as the committee structure, the terms of reference of committees and their reporting to the governing body; the oversight of key policies; financial control; the management of conflicts of interest; and the capacity to deal with appeals, such as those arising from staff discipline and pupil exclusions.*

I chair the governing body of a voluntary-aided school with an actively engaged parent body and a supportive local community. We have no shortage of governors (although many of those on the governing body have social ties to others, to teachers, to pupils and to other school stakeholders). In order to maximise the benefit of engagement by governors, to facilitate effective interface with the staff, to manage potential conflicts and to promote professionalism, it was necessary to provide detailed governance structures. These comprise:

- A dedicated committee of the governing body which focuses on governance issues. Subsequently, this merged with the staffing committee, and also includes the training remit.
- A detailed code of conduct, which is reviewed and ratified every September and includes the following:
 - o Behaviours and values
 - o Detailed descriptions of roles and responsibilities
 - o Meeting conduct and behaviours
 - o Delegation and committee infrastructure
 - o Protocol for school visits
 - o Annual objectives
 - o Annual results
 - o Material for prospective and new governors
- Regular self-evaluation, including one-to-ones between the chair and members of the governing body and annual questionnaires to all governors, with anonymised responses.
- Occasional meetings for foundation governors only to consider ethos issues.

Rebecca Hilsenrath, Chief Executive, LawWorks

The Co-ordinators of Governor Services have developed an accredited *National Training Programme for Clerks to Governing Bodies*. It is used by a number of local authorities, which have set up assessment centres. The Co-ordinators of Governor Services in North-East England (GovernorNorth) have set up a regional assessment centre with a team of trained assessors that are making its services available across the North East.

■ **The Clerk:** *the role of the clerk is crucial in ensuring that the governing body operates effectively, but it is not always well understood. Some local authorities provide a centralised clerking service (which schools are at liberty to purchase, or not). We believe that all governing bodies should have access to high-quality clerking, provided by trained people either from outside or within the school. The Bath study found a wide variety of practice concerning clerking, with many governors' expressing a strong preference of the "professionalisation" of the clerking role. As Table 1 on page 15 shows, between two fifths and a half of the governors surveyed during the Bath study regarded the main job of the clerk as taking minutes. The roles of Company Secretary, one of high status, requiring training and accreditation, and Clerk to the Justices are analogous. In the latter the clerk is responsible for the co-ordination of and advice on the selection of magistrates, organising and in some cases delivering training, and providing expert advice on and running the administrative systems.*

Reporting packs should be designed to ensure that governing bodies have the information necessary on a timely basis to perform their duties. All schools should have professional clerking support, shared among several schools if necessary.

The National Governors' Association (NGA), the Association of School & College Leaders (ASCL) and the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) have produced some guidance (see box on page 23).

Indications from a number of employers suggest that they would be willing to assist in preparing guidance by drawing on their experience in corporate governance, working with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and organisations such as the National Governors' Association (NGA) and Co-ordinators of Governor Services (COGS). Elements could include risk management and systems audit by Ofsted.

A COMPANY'S VIEW: Merrill Lynch

We are very fortunate at Osmani Primary School, we have an excellent head teacher, highly proficient teaching staff and a strong governing body that is focused on the needs of its students. To some people this may seem obvious, to others it may seem fortunate, but it is both relevant and important, because it is a combination of these factors that have allowed the school to leverage its business connections with my employer, Merrill Lynch, and deliver additional, targeted resources which I firmly believe are benefiting the social and educational development of the children at Osmani Primary School.

So why is it beneficial for the governing body of a school to have governors from the business community? What can a governor contribute and what benefit does the governor derive?

Business governors are typically completely independent of the school they serve and as such they may be better able to make objective, dispassionate decisions, providing alternative views, strategies and solutions to the wide variety of challenges faced by the governing body. Furthermore, the experience and expertise acquired in business is frequently different from that gained in education, allowing business governors to provide different perspectives on and alternative solutions to situations encountered by a school and this can be extremely beneficial in assisting the governing body to more effectively fulfil its responsibilities. Consequently, business governors may actually be better able to both challenge and

support the decisions of both the teaching staff and fellow governors leading to more sound decision making on the current and future management of the school.

There is, I believe, an additional benefit to schools in having governors from the business community; this is the potential to better leverage the business community for the benefit of its students. An excellent example of this is the volunteers from Merrill Lynch who every week spend time with pupils, individually assisting them with their literacy, numeracy and linguistics skills or simply challenging them mentally through games of chess. This not only improves their educational ability, but also helps them to develop their social skills through interaction with adults outside their normal school and family spheres of influence.

I have gained tremendously from seeing first hand the contributions governors from the business community and the companies they work for can make towards the progress of a school and the performance of its children. As such I am convinced that governors from the business community can and do make a considerable contribution to the schools with which they are associated, making this a model that others should adopt.

Ashley Kibblewhite
Governor
Osmani Primary School
Tower Hamlets, London



f. Relationships of the governing body

The governing body has a number of key relationships with stakeholders, all of which need to be well understood and well managed.

- **The relationship between the governing body (particularly the chair) and the head teacher is absolutely crucial:** *it is analogous to the relationship between a company board and the chief executive; the key elements are support and holding to account. The use of the phrase “support and challenge” may be misleading in that it implies confrontation rather than accountability and scrutiny. The governing body appoints the head teacher: the appointment of a head teacher is one of the most important tasks of the governing body. It needs to provide the support to enable the appointment to be a success, and there will be times when the head teacher, the staff and the school need special support; but the governing body is itself accountable to the school as a whole, and needs to establish and operate the performance-management framework in which the head teacher is held to account.*



National Governors' Association, Association of School & College Leaders, National Association of Head Teachers

In spring 2008, NGA, ASCL and NAHT met to discuss the effectiveness of governing bodies. It was acknowledged that there can be a lack of clarity about what is expected from both school leaders and governing bodies themselves for a governing body to be effective, and that some guidance would be helpful to all parties. A joint paper prepared by the three organisations made the following points, among others:

Governance and management: the distinction between governance and management needs to be clearly understood by all involved, so that governors are not asked to, and do not try to, involve themselves in day-to-day management. The governing body expects to be able to monitor the work of the school and to hold the headteacher to account for the performance of the school.

Supporting the governing body: in order to manage its workload, it is vital that the governing body is properly supported and serviced. Resources should be made available for the clerk to be properly qualified and capable of servicing and advising the governing body with independence. The clerk should have a job description and pay grade appropriate to the post.

Information: the governing body is reliant on the school to provide it promptly with the information that it needs to carry out its role. In addition to documents they are required by law to approve (such as the School Profile), governing bodies should expect to receive:

- school improvement partner reports,
- any local authority school improvement visit reports,
- the RAISEonline report (in full to at least one governor),
- budget reports presented in an appropriate format,
- self-evaluation form (SEF).

Training: like all responsible and professional bodies, the governing body should commit to its own professional development and training should be seen as an entitlement. Governing bodies should make it clear that there is an expectation that all new governors (including staff governors) commit to undertake both school-based induction and professional induction training. All governors should commit to specific issue-based training as it arises. It is essential to have a properly trained governing body and appropriate budget allocations should enable this to happen.

A GOVERNOR'S VIEW



Caroline Davison, 22, is a Governor at Kelford Special School in Rotherham. She says "After I had finished university, I had been through 17 years of education. I felt I could offer my skills, as well as my experience of the education system, to others. School, college and university were still a fresh memory, and I had a lot to offer any school that would have me! I signed up to be a governor, and the resulting training course was the highlight so far.

"Finding out about the inner-workings of schools opened up a world of understanding. I realised every person in the room really cared about children and education. A challenge has been to attend meetings regularly, as so many things crop up in life. But everyone is understanding, and can work around commitments. I am now a governor in a special school, and the outcomes of our 'debates' affect children's lives - to see changes being implemented around school is a joy".

- **Much the same applies to the senior management team (teaching and non-teaching):** although the SMT reports to the head teacher, it is part of the responsibility of the governing body to ensure that an effective team is in place, to establish the performance-management framework, and to support the head teacher in his or her relationship with the team. The governing body should assist the head teacher to make senior staff appointments by involving governors with relevant knowledge in the interview process.
 - **The workforce is the main asset of the school:** while the governing body is not responsible for workforce management, it needs to take a strategic oversight of workforce issues, to ensure that the school has the necessary complement; this is partly a matter of resourcing, and partly one of performance assessment and management. The governing body should receive all the information it needs to assess the health and morale of the workforce, including statistics on staff turnover, absenteeism, etc. The role of the "staff" governor is not to represent the workforce, either individually or collectively, but to give the governing body access to knowledge and understanding of issues concerning the workforce, and to facilitate communication. The governing body needs to be able to provide appropriate appeals procedures concerning workforce matters.
 - **As far as the parents are concerned,** it is again the role of the governing body to act in the interest of the school as a whole: there is a clear distinction here between the management role of the school staff in dealing with individual parents, and the role of the governing body in ensuring that the school meets the aspirations and needs of the parent body.
 - **The central importance of the pupils.** Schools now have a crucial role in the delivery of Children's Plans, which have the purpose of improving the wellbeing of children and ensuring that young people are healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing: thus governors should be unrelenting in their drive for improved standards, to the benefit of the children of the community. They need to have a physical presence in the school, establish links with the senior management team and other members of the workforce, and attend events, particularly those that celebrate achievement.
 - **The school is part of the local community:** "community" governors, while owing their duty to the school, not to the section of the community that they "represent", provide an essential knowledge and understanding of the community, or elements of it, and a channel of communication.
 - **Local businesses, and the general world of work,** are part of the community, one of crucial importance to the pupils in their later career. Thus, employee governors bring not only their skills (specific or general), but also their knowledge of the world of work. Whether as part of a Business in the Community (BITC) campaign or individually, they provide work-related learning and mentoring, and important information about career choices.
- We recommend that descriptions of the role of the governing body (see b. and c. on pages 14 and 18) include detailed guidance on the relationships between the governing body and the various stakeholders mentioned.**

g. Skills audit and performance assessment of the governing body

Skill audit and performance self-assessment is essential: the objectives are to ensure that the governing body includes the skill set to perform its role effectively; is fulfilling its legal and corporate duties; and is receiving appropriate and timely information from the senior management team; and that individual governors have the appropriate knowledge and are contributing effectively to the work of the governing body. Assessment includes review of the effectiveness (and time efficiency) of board meetings, the respective roles of the chair, head teacher and clerk, succession planning, induction and training, communication with other stakeholders and (from time to time) the governance structure itself. In developing assessment procedures it would be worth considering performance evaluation methods in the corporate world – see appendix.

Local authorities have a key role to play in supporting the governance of schools. Some provide excellent guidance on self assessment but that is not universal.

A governing body should be required to undertake a standardised skills audit and performance self-assessment annually.

The Ofsted guidance for inspecting schools, which was published in 1999 and came into effect in 2000, states that inspectors should examine “how well the governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities and is able to account for the performance and improvement of the school”. The guidance confirms that the main tasks of the governing body are to:

- provide a sense of direction for the school,
- support the work of the school as a critical friend, and
- hold the school to account for the standards and quality of education it achieves.

The ways in which the quality of governing was judged in the period from 2003-2005 used very clearly specified criteria.

The common inspection schedule for schools and other post-16 provision in the Framework for the inspection of schools that came into force in 2005 lists the questions inspectors must ask in every institution or setting providing education and/or training. Governing is referred to under leadership and management. There are no separate judgements made about the work of the governing body, and inspectors are required to evaluate the effectiveness with which governors discharge their responsibilities “where appropriate”.

There has been a shift to school self evaluation as part of the “New Relationship with Schools”. A school’s self

evaluation, summarised on the Self Evaluation Form (SEF), is now central in the inspection process. The school’s summary of its self-evaluation is used “as the basis for discussion between the lead inspector and the senior team and, where possible, governors of the school”.

In reaching judgements in the SEF, schools are expected to judge the effectiveness of governance “primarily in terms of outcomes for learners”. Further, when coming to a judgement about overall effectiveness, school’s leaders should consider the close link between learners’ progress, the quality of provision and the effectiveness of leadership and management. The guidance recognises that judging leadership and management can be difficult and that head teachers have found that judging leadership by outcomes “offers a very useful starting point”. It goes on to state that “If everything is very good in a school, the chances are that the leadership and management at all levels are very good. Likewise, the converse will be true. If for example, there is an inadequate sixth form, it is difficult to see how managers and governors can bear no responsibility for this: they must reflect on judgements about their performance overall”.

The inspectors are also required to establish how well the governors of the school “know its strengths and areas for improvement” and the governors’ involvement with the school’s self evaluation and that the SEF “has been completed with the agreement of the governing body”. The inspectors ‘may draw conclusions about the quality of the leadership and management provided by the head teacher, senior team and governing body, for example if they discover that a school’s judgements about its performance are too generous.

The Bath study recommends that: “The inspection of school governing bodies should be strengthened. Evaluation criteria for the performance of school governing bodies as recorded in the school self-evaluation form should be enhanced. The involvement of the governing body in inspections should be mandatory.”

We recommend that the role of Ofsted in evaluating the effectiveness of the governing body be reviewed, and that Ofsted inspectors be required to evaluate the effectiveness with which governors discharge their responsibilities in all cases. In its inspections Ofsted should, inter alia, review and comment on the governing body’s skills audit and performance self-assessment.

We recommend that Ofsted undertake a more rigorous inspection of local authorities’ governor services.

School Improvement Partners (SIPs) have an important role to play: since September 2006 all secondary schools in England have had a SIP and, since March 2008, so

have all primaries. The SIPs provide expert support for schools in raising standards and improving the education of all pupils. They help schools to set targets and priorities and to identify any additional support needed. SIPs are also required to advise school governing bodies on head-teacher performance management. They help a school to use the outcomes of the school self-evaluation, benchmarking data and inspection evidence, and understand local and national priorities; and help formulate the school's development plan and targets, use networks, and provide support for school improvement.

All SIPs need to understand the role of the governing body and how its proper working may be constrained in practice.

h. What sort of people

General skills are important, and it is essential that governors, whatever their skills and qualities, actually contribute actively to the work of the governing body: while there is a need for specific skills on governing bodies in areas such as finance, legal, property, mobilising resources and fund raising, marketing, IT, personnel and (of course) education, the most important skills are more general, including: good judgement, a strategic approach, knowledge of how to run an organisation and how to operate at board level; the latter is one that governors may not bring to the table initially, but is one that they will develop during their term of office, and take back to their working life, to their benefit and to that of their employer. The Bath study found that the expertise of employee governors was perceived to have been crucial by 80% of its respondents, and concluded that the business community made a considerable contribution to the effectiveness of school governing.

They think they are going to get a financial expert, which they might well do; but of course they are going to bring a whole range of other skills to the team as well, so people with good communications skills or good facilitation skills etc are useful.

Employee of a company in the financial sector

Personal qualities are illustrated in the IdEA's "ethical governance toolkit"¹³ which, evidently building on the Nolan Report¹⁴, proposes ten personal attributes for governance:

- **Selflessness:** serving only the public interest,
- **Honesty and integrity:** never behaving improperly,
- **Objectivity:** making decisions on merit,

- **Accountability:** being accountable to the public and co-operating with scrutiny,
- **Openness:** being prepared to give reasons,
- **Personal judgement:** reaching their own conclusions,
- **Respect for others:** treating people with respect,
- **Uphold the law:** always upholding the law,
- **Stewardship:** ensuring the prudent use of resources,
- **Leadership:** promoting and supporting principles by example.

I have learned from my school as much as I have given, in professional as well as personal terms. Lawyers have a lot to give to schools and a lot to learn. It is immensely relevant to a legal career and a valuable developmental opportunity for any member of the legal profession.

Rebecca Hilsenrath, Chief Executive, LawWorks

The governing body needs to have collective access to a range of experience: not every governor will have the full range, but collectively they should be able to bring a wide experience to bear. It is important to recognise that the role of particular categories of governor is to bring to bear knowledge and understanding, derived from experience, of an important part of the community: some may cover more than one area, such as "parent" governors who are also employees in local organisations.

Why anyone should want to be a school governor: those that volunteer may have fairly specific initial motives (e.g. to put something back into their child's school), but governors that persist find the role rewarding in a much broader and deeper way and develop a commitment to making a difference to the education of young people and to the wider community. Governors that are successful in their initial appointment in a school to which they have close affinities are often recruited to governing bodies of other schools, particularly those that are in challenging circumstances. There has to be a strong commitment to the school, but if it is too narrowly focused it may lapse into an insufficiently critical view of standards, and the need to raise them.

Detachment is valuable: people that are not too closely involved with the school are able to bring a critical detachment that is of great value in ensuring that the school is well run: as such they are analogous to non-executive directors on company boards, whose appointment is designed to assist the board to hold the executive to account, in ways in which a wholly "in-house" board cannot.

¹³ Ethical Governance Toolkit, IdEA, 2008.

¹⁴ Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life', The Nolan Committee, 1996

A COMPANY'S VIEW: Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer

When I was first asked to be a school governor, my initial reaction was "I don't know anything about the education system other than having gone through it myself a long time ago". But this is the point - you are not there as an education expert, but as a "critical friend" who asks questions and tries to understand what the school is doing well, and where it needs to do better. Your perspective on matters is, by definition, going to be different - and therein lies the potential benefit. Explaining why things are as they are, or what the options are for doing things differently, is good discipline and makes us reassess how we are going about things - and this is what we are constantly requiring the teaching staff to do. I have learnt an awful lot about teaching and teaching interventions from observing classes and from being link governor for special needs teaching (of which there is an astonishing and deeply impressive range

Redlands school has now had a number of governors from the business community over the last few years. While it is very important to ensure that we have a variety of people on the governing body to represent the interests of the parents, staff and local community, I see a number of benefits arising from the involvement of people who come at things from a "corporate" angle - from having the benefit of individuals who are not afraid to challenge and ask questions, to those who can offer practical advice on drafting policies or approaching problems outside the remit of our teaching expertise, to helping our

in my school). I have learnt how to chair meetings more effectively and have had to put myself in other people's shoes when considering some of the issues we encounter in a school based in a community with a distinct cultural make-up and a lot of associated challenges. In summary then, my time as a governor has involved personal and professional development, the satisfaction of feeling that I am contributing something, however minor, to the education of a disadvantaged section of society (for whom education is almost certainly going to be the key to a better life), and the interest of learning about something quite outside my own sphere of expertise. Not a bad return on my investment of time.

Deborah Dagleish, Head of UK Trainee Recruitment, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP, and Chair of Governors, Redlands Primary School, Tower Hamlets, London

children to think about what some of the options for them in life might be. Giving our children aspirations is something we are increasingly trying to focus on - and it can be easier to do that with real life examples! On a practical level, I think it is probably fair to say that our governing body meetings are now somewhat shorter than they used to be, and we don't have the same tendency to get bogged down in unnecessary or irrelevant discussions.

Ann O'Reilly, Head Teacher, Redlands Primary School, Tower Hamlets, London



Governors are not representatives: it is not always easy for governors that have been chosen by or from a particular group (such as “parents” or “staff” or a “faith community”) to leave their group label at the door; neither is it easy for people that may have put themselves forward because they have a particular view to promote; they can be assisted by careful induction training, and by competent management of the agenda and procedures by the chair and the clerk to the governing body. It is also important that they should not be put in difficult situations.

The Bath study notes that “Minority groups tend to be under-represented, which is a significant issue in areas of social disadvantage, or considerable ethnic diversity in the local community.” It recommends that: “Efforts should be made to recruit members of groups currently under-represented on school governing bodies. The beneficial outcomes for those involved in school governing should be made more widely known.”

The route by which governors are recruited needs to be reviewed to ensure that governing bodies have the necessary skills and independence to perform their function effectively. Greater consideration should be given to the use of associate governorships and probationary appointments, not only to provide access to specific skills, but also to help would-be governors to understand the governor role and develop their skills by exposing them to it in a phased way in advance of a full commitment.

i. Chairing

The importance of the role of the chair has been alluded to. He or she needs to manage meetings in such a way that business is dealt with efficiently, while involving all members in the discussion so that they feel that their contributions have been given due value. The relationship between the chair and the head teacher is vital, as is that between the chair and the clerk.

We recommend that standard guidance (such as the Taking the Chair training programme) be provided to chairs and that it form part of the training programme for all new chairs. There may be benefits from bringing chairs of governing bodies together in local forums to discuss matters of concern to the wider community, as already happens in some local authorities.

j. Training

Different types of training are required for different people, for example experienced governors and those that are newly appointed. The NCSL, which has a remit to work with governors on succession planning and has been asked to work on supporting the development of training for new chairs, reports¹⁵ that, while training for school governors is not compulsory, all governors are strongly encouraged to take up available training, particularly induction courses, in order to improve their effectiveness in the role and to be aware of developments that may affect their school and their role as governor.

The DCSF recommends that all governing bodies should have induction procedures in place for new members, which might include an induction pack about the school and some form of mentoring arrangement using experienced governors to support new governors.

However, the Bath study found that participation in induction training by new governors was apparently low and arguably unduly so. It also found that only half of the governing bodies surveyed had a structured induction process for new governors, and that only 44% adopted a mentoring scheme for them. A quarter of the schools in the survey did not provide new governors with information describing their roles and responsibilities.

A number of interviewees felt that flexibility in provision was important and that the increasing use of on-line training would be helpful. Locally-tailored provision was valued because it provided a local context. Views on the quality of national programmes varied. Some local providers used national programmes as a basis for their provision. Some respondents felt that a national college for school-governor training, perhaps in virtual form, should be considered but that it would need to recognise local provision and work with current providers.

There is a national training programme for new governors, which was developed with the support of many local-authority co-ordinators of governor services, and is used as a basis for most of the training provided by local-authority governor services, which also takes account of local circumstances. In addition most, if not all, local-authority governor services provide either the National Governors' Association's *Introduction to Governance* or a locally-produced version for new governors as part of their welcome pack. Further training, information, support and advice are also available. Our interviews with employee governors suggest that much local-authority training for new governors is well-designed and convenient (typically two Saturday mornings), but that is not always the case. Some local authorities have also begun to offer e-learning opportunities as part of their service.

¹⁵ School governor training and development - current arrangements, June 2008.

A COMPANY'S VIEW: Rolls-Royce

More than 200 Rolls-Royce employees are registered as school governors.

Our support includes working with the government's School Governors One-Stop Shop initiative to match interested employees with schools in their area.

We also hold regular forums at our facilities where governors can get together to discuss their roles, share ideas and best practice.

Financial support comes from the Rolls-Royce Governors Fund, set up in 2001 to allow employee governors to apply for grants of up to £1,000 to implement a school project. The projects support learning in the areas of engineering, science or technology and, to date, more than 70 awards have been made.

Rolls-Royce website

Richard Betts is Head of HR at Rolls Royce. He is also a governor at St. Andrew's Special School in Derby.

Why did you decide to become a School Governor?

Partly it was practising what I preach - I'd encouraged others to become governors. I also wanted to give something back, as I'd had the benefit of a good education. And it's in all our interests that today's kids

go on to do as well as possible - I'm relying on them for my pension!

Which aspect of the role did you find most rewarding?

I get to work with a wider range of people than I normally do, which I really enjoy. It's also great seeing the students developing and achieving.

We're currently recruiting a new headteacher, which is a real responsibility because having the right leader in place is essential to the success of any school.

How has your experience as a governor helped you in your own life, either professionally or personally?

As well as personal satisfaction, I get to use my skills in a different environment. Being on the governing body is a bit like being a director of a medium-sized business, so you can get involved in a wide range of issues such as finance, premises, health and safety, and performance management.

What would you say to anyone thinking of becoming a school governor?

Go for it! Yes, you will be making a commitment, but you'll be welcomed with open arms, and you get the satisfaction of making a real difference.

A GOVERNOR'S VIEW

I am a mother and grandmother and my growing family need to get the best education possible to provide them with choices in the future.

My profession is human resources and I am a manager in a local company. When I saw an advert asking for volunteers and especially for ones that could use their experience and skills to help local schools for very little time commitment, I thought - why not - I have something I can give that won't cost me anything but might benefit the community.

At that time I had no preference for where I went and I was asked to be a governor at an infant school in a nearby town. Shortly after I accepted I was also asked to be a governor at a nearby secondary school - so game for anything - I accepted both positions and I am still there five years later.

I attend a committee meeting and full governor meeting every term. That's a total of six per year

and they last anything from one hour to three hours maximum. It depends on what we have to discuss!

It's entirely optional if you wish to devote more time - I help with recruitment and staff issues and sometimes there is nothing going on and other times it can be quite time consuming. I like to visit the school during the day at least a couple of times a year and we hold governor open days. If you want to attend assemblies or become a governor with special responsibilities e.g. literacy governor, then you can volunteer more time.

There is no pressure and the school is very grateful for any time you can give.

I have attended some training which the school has arranged for governors as a whole. This includes how to understand budgets, performance appraisal etc. It's all valuable to me even in my own job.

Cathy Pinnock

Starter packs and training for governors, as well as advice and support, are available nationally from the national governor organisations:

- National Governors' Association (NGA); and
- Information for School and College Governors (ISCG).

Some independent providers are also sources of training, advice and support.

Where appropriate, joint training for governors (particularly chairs) and school staff (particularly head teachers and members of the SMT) can help to ensure that all those involved in school leadership and management share a common set of objectives and understanding of their respective roles.

We recommend that existing training provision be reviewed and consideration given to the commissioning of high-quality standardised training provision, which would include on-line training. Training should be obligatory for new governors, with a "comply or explain" regime for existing governors. Delivery mechanisms should be convenient for all; and, for employee governors, employers should give the necessary time off or time off in lieu.

Different considerations apply to the training of chairs, other governors and clerks:

- *The twin keys to an effective governing body are good chairing and good clerking: without them the representative and strategic roles cannot be reconciled; training for chairs should be compulsory (cf magistrates); the relationship between the chair and the head teacher is crucial, and there should be an element of joint training¹⁶.*
- *Other governors should receive induction training, CPD and mentoring from more experienced governors.*
- *Every school should have a trained clerk: training and accreditation for clerks should be compulsory, and their pay should be commensurate with their importance. There are various potential sources of training, such as the NCSL, LAs and employers.*
- *The Bath study recommends that consideration be given to establishing a Virtual College for governor training: with specific responsibilities for quality assuring governor training, overseeing national governor-training programmes, and analysing governor-training needs.*

Appropriate induction and in-service training should be obligatory: for governors, chairs and clerks, together with formalised mentoring of less-experienced governors by the more experienced.

A COMPANY'S VIEW: Microsoft

Microsoft has an active volunteering policy through the Go MAD (Make a Difference) campaign, which supports employees by providing three paid days of volunteering leave annually as well as a variety of volunteering campaigns. One is the opportunity to become a school governor, which is promoted and facilitated by a partnership with School Governors One-Stop Shop (SGOSS).

Supporting education is a key part of Microsoft's strategy, and its volunteers not only act as governors but take into schools key internet-safety messages and offer business skilling and interview advice throughout the UK. In its Education team alone 40% of employees are currently school governors, and it is hoped that this figure will be achieved in all areas of the business.

Microsoft is part of the SGOSS focus group on school governors and hopes to develop its scheme to encourage more staff to become governors and to provide high-level internal resources that can be taken into the schools they support.

"For me, being a governor helps me keep in touch with, and contribute to the educational and cultural ethos of the school that my children attend. I feel involved in the school that my children go to, and feel like I am making a contribution which impacts them, but also of course, all the other children and parents that attend the school. I feel it's a privilege and responsibility to be able to contribute in this way, and it's a great forum to meet with, and learn from the other governors and staff."

Microsoft Employee and School Governor

¹⁶ See the Tomorrow's Leaders Today section of the NCSL website at www.ncsl.org/tlt-home.htm



k. Recruitment and placement

The Bath study found that most governing bodies had at least some difficulty in finding good people for their governing bodies, with only a third finding it “fairly easy”.

Much governor recruitment is carried out directly by schools, by serving governors, by local authorities, by faith organisations and by third parties such as the School Governors’ One-Stop Shop (SGOSS).

In order to ensure that governing bodies have the necessary skills and independence to perform their function effectively, the route by which governors are recruited needs to be reviewed.

To assist schools to find volunteers to serve as governors, the Department for Education and Skills established School Governors One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) with the remit to recruit governors with management skills for schools that need them most. Since 2000 SGOSS has helped place over 7,000 governors in “local authority” and “community” vacancies in schools across England; increasingly it is also helping find suitable volunteers for “parent” and “foundation” vacancies. The applications of a further 1,500 are being processed with local authorities around the country.

SGOSS’s experience, validated by governor organisations and the DCSF, is that on average it takes six months for a volunteer to be placed as a governor, and SGOSS manages expectations accordingly: when placement takes longer it is much more difficult to maintain a volunteer’s interest, and often potential high-quality volunteers are lost not just to a particular local authority but to governance in general, since their frustration leads them to fail to respond to contacts by SGOSS or the local authority.

The individual processes of local authorities and the local preferences of schools do complicate the placement process, but there are many examples of good practice, which should be built on and their benefits disseminated.

The mapping tools that are being developed by Ordnance Survey and Experian plc could be extremely beneficial in co-ordinating recruitment by showing vacancies by school and priority areas, and the location of employees.

In order to ensure that governing bodies have the all necessary skills and the independence to perform their function effectively, the routes by which governors are recruited and placed needs to be reviewed and improved. This will increase the number of skilled volunteers and help avoid the position where the head teacher has to “twist arms” to recruit sufficient governors who then find themselves having to scrutinise the head teacher’s performance, potentially compromising their independence. The time taken between recruitment and placement needs to be reduced considerably.

Our research suggests that many people are often daunted at the thought of committing themselves to serve as a governor for four years, and they should be reminded that they are volunteers and that, if their circumstances change, it is reasonable for them to ask to stand down - ideally to reapply when circumstances allow them to do so. Ways of giving people a taster of what is involved, such as the chance to attend governors’ meetings and to spend time in the school, could help. Potential new governors often need to know more before committing themselves fully.

We suggest that those governors that are new to the school or new to governing could have an initial appointment period of one year followed by confirmation of their appointment at a later stage. New governors should receive mentoring from experienced governors.

Alternatively, the new recruit could opt to be an associate member; not a governor but appointed by the governing body to attend committee meetings and/or full governing body meetings because of his or her particular skills or experience.

I. Increasing the number of volunteers

There are many other organisations and professional bodies that are willing to promote service as a governor. They include the Royal Society of Arts, Volunteering England, Teach First and professional bodies such as LawWorks (the operating name of the Solicitors Pro Bono Group), which is encouraging lawyers to volunteer to serve as governors.

The RSA is proud to be launching a network to support new and innovative approaches school governance. Created in collaboration with its users, it will provide a space for current, past and future school governors - and anyone with an interest in education - to discuss how to foster local leadership in education and how school governance can help to create schools fit for the 21st century

Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive, RSA

As part of its mission to close the education gap within the UK, **Teach First** supports and encourages its Ambassadors (graduates of the two-year Teach First scheme) no longer in teaching to serve as governors of urban complex schools. Through this crucial role, we hope that they will be able to draw on their experience of teaching in an inner-city school, combined with the leadership skills gained through this, to continue their impact on education in a meaningful way. Our partnerships with Business in the Community, School Governors One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) and the Government among others are critical to the success of this initiative.

Brett Wigdortz, Founder and CEO, Teach First

In launching the National Council for Educational Excellence, Ed Balls, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, confirmed his aspiration and that of the Prime Minister that "every school should have a business and a university partner". One way of securing those partnerships with higher education institutions would be for universities to promote the involvement of their staff in school governing. Such involvement could deliver considerable mutual benefits to schools and to higher-education institutions: the same could apply to further-education institutions.

Business in the Community (BITC) is also willing to help. We have more than 850 companies in membership, including 75% of the FTSE 100, and represent one in five of the UK private-sector workforce - more than six million employees. One of the objectives of the BITC education campaign is to raise public awareness of the need for governors and to steer interested employers

and employees in the right direction. We hope to work with representative bodies of employers and employees - in particular the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Institute of Directors (IOD), the British Chambers of Commerce, the Trades Union Congress and the Small Business Consortium - and professional bodies, in order to widen the range of employers that support their employees as governors.

Supporting and encouraging employees to be school governors can deliver real benefits, both for the school and the business. It offers the opportunity for individuals to gain valuable experience, through exposure to positions of responsibility and institutional leadership, and the business skills they bring can add immense value to governing bodies. Strong education-business links can be a powerful tool in helping raise young people's achievement - and employees as school governors can help ensure these ties are more effective and long-lasting. The CBI is pleased to work with BITC to encourage more employers to consider supporting their staff as governors.

John Cridland, Deputy Director-General, CBI

We recommend that a much larger pool of volunteers be formed, particularly for schools in challenging circumstances, including many of the National Challenge schools. A national campaign targeted at employers is required to encourage them to help their employees to serve as governors.

Nine years on from the inception of the School Governors' One-Stop Shop, the general level of understanding of who governors are, what they do, how they add value and what they get back from the role has significantly improved to the extent that SGOSS has seen a significant increase in number of young people volunteering to be a governor; a significant increase in the number of volunteers coming forward from the ethnic community; and a significant increase in the number of employers adding school governance to the menu of volunteering options available to their staff and supporting their getting involved.

In every case there has been recognition of the real benefits to employers, to communities and to individual volunteers of involvement in governance.

I am absolutely delighted to be working alongside Business in the Community and its member companies to increase employee volunteering as school governors, and help schools in England deliver the best possible standards of education.

Steve Acklam, Chief Executive, SGOSS

m. Recognition

More recognition should be given to the work done by school governors and greater efforts made to recognise their contribution to education. There is the DCSF Award for Governor of the Year as one of the Teaching Awards. Occasionally governors receive State honours and are invited to royal garden parties and ministerial receptions, and many local authorities run governor-recognition-award ceremonies. However, our survey has shown that the public at large has little awareness of the role of governors. There is more that could be done to recognise both the people that serve as governors and also the employers that support their staff. Greater public awareness is needed of the role and importance of school governors, and that would help in recruitment.

School governor perception survey

What is the public perception of a school governor? How does being a governor compare with other forms of volunteering? Do people know what it takes to be a governor and how many people would consider being one? The answers to these questions are important to our understanding of why so many governor positions remain unfilled and what we can do to encourage more people to become governors.

To address these questions YouGov surveyed a representative sample of over 1,000 people. The survey offers a unique insight into the skills, experience and characteristics that the public perceive a school governor to need. It also shows that the perception of the skills needed to become a governor (such as management and accountancy skills) does not necessarily relate to what makes an effective governor.

Some of the key findings from the survey are:

- About seven in 10 people believe that school governors should have specialist skills such as planning and performance monitoring, financial, legal or marketing skills.
- Just over half (55%) believe that governing bodies do an effective job but a quarter think they are ineffective.

The survey also gives some cause for optimism – although the majority have never considered becoming a school governor in the past, four in 10 would do so in the future if they thought they could help young people achieve their potential and they felt they were giving something back to the community.

Greater public recognition should be given to the importance of serving as a school governor, and the excellent work done by governors should be celebrated.

Any initiative which raises the profile and importance of Governors is readily supported by Robert Clack School.

Schools operate against a complex landscape. The governing body needs people who have the necessary experience and skills to help the school succeed in facing the challenges that this poses.

Paul Grant, Head Teacher, Robert Clack School, Dagenham, and member of the BITC Education Leadership Team

I have a superb Chair of Governors. The role of the Chair is vital in supporting and challenging my thinking and also in supporting me through the trials and tribulations of financial management in schools, risk assessments, Ofsted, etc: and then there is maintaining the high standards we have for teaching and learning.

Brenda Bigland, Head Teacher, Lent Rise Combined School, and member of the BITC Education Leadership Team



The UK Teaching Awards recognises governors' valuable contribution through the DCSF Award for Governor of the Year, won at UK level last year by **Lynette Kirk, chair of governors at Belle Vue Girls' Upper School in Bradford.**

When asked how governors could be even more effective, she said:

"While pass rates and targets are obviously important, I find it's just as important to get to know the pupils and teachers. I'm lucky because everyone seems interested in my role and supports me a lot. The job isn't without its challenges but the rewards, like seeing how proud the students are when they get their exam results, make it all worthwhile and give you the perspective to stay focused."

Margaret Platts MBE was appointed head teacher soon after Lynette became the chair, and Teaching Awards judges observed that together they made a strong and dynamic team.

She said:

"I always try to support Lynette's work and get involved as much as I can. I think it's important to understand her role as chair of governors in order that we continue to address the most important issues for the school and communicate any concerns to each other."

n. The Role of Employers

Many employers have governor programmes: they recognise that employee volunteering is an important part of their wider corporate social responsibility activity, and that being a school governor is a valuable and rewarding form of volunteering, helping to raise pupils' standards. Some employers also link school governorship, and other forms of volunteering, into their own training and development programmes as a means of broadening the skills and experiences of members of staff, and bringing their in-house schemes to life.

We are asked to prove that we are recognising diversity as a school through the work we do on local community cohesion and wider community cohesion; and yet frequently we cannot reflect that diversity within our governing bodies. If links with business could help us to do this in positive ways that would be hugely supportive and beneficial for school communities.

A primary-school head teacher

The benefits of school governorship are significant and varied: they include benefits to the school, such as access to skilled and committed people, and often to company resources; and benefits to the company, including a perspective on education (which can also be useful in terms of recruitment and developing community investment programmes), experience of the local community and a "licence to operate", getting to know customers and future employees (and reduction in recruitment costs), professional development for staff, the creation of staff pride in the organisation and enhanced loyalty.

We recommend that employers should support a national campaign aimed at getting employers (particularly large and medium-sized employers) to recognise the value and importance of supporting their employees as school governors.

The case is relatively easy to make to employees: it is stimulating and rewarding, a good thing to do, and provides a valuable form of CPD and training. But they do need the support of their employer. It is not enough simply to encourage employees to become governors, if they have the right personality and skills: the most important thing is to create an atmosphere of expectation and support in the organisation, combined with information on the role and its benefits to the school; and the skills that employee governors are expected to gain, as well as the way in which they will be rewarded by the employer.

The Skinners Company, which provides centralised clerking services for its four schools (with an Academy on the way), have a "governors' day" once a year with a structured programme, the day before a governors' meeting.

This is also important to ensure that volunteer school governors have the support of their colleagues when they spend time during the working day fulfilling their commitments.

Specific benefits to the volunteers include personal and professional development; an improved understanding of the school system and ways of contributing to pupils' development; and opportunities to be mentored by and draw on the experience of existing governors, and to gain board-level experience.

Under Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 employers must give employees that are school governors reasonable time off to carry out their duties. Employers may give time off with pay but do not have to do so.

We recommend that employers should send out strong signals from the highest level in support of employee governors, as part of a wider community-volunteering programme, and as a core element in partnerships with schools and the local community. This support should permeate through the organisation to ensure that all line-managers are supportive. Employers are encouraged to adopt a formal policy at board level (based on the template for support for employee magistrates - see Appendix).

We are a business and enterprise college and so the role of business is very important. We do feel that the skills that people have in business are helpful in working with some of the issues that the school now faces . . . I think the business governors have brought a clarity of purpose - we can sometimes get a bit woolly - it does not do us any harm to have our assumptions and ethos challenged. And that has been really good.

A secondary-school head teacher

A COMPANY'S VIEW: PricewaterhouseCoopers

Nick Francis (PricewaterhouseCoopers, Norwich, and chair of governors at Earlham High School) and David Brunton (new head teacher) explore their relationship:

Nick Francis: Being chair at one of the country's most disadvantaged schools brings huge challenge and great reward. The school serves a disadvantaged community in Norwich, and there is stark contrast between the difficult circumstances and low aspirations of students and families, and my own ordered professional life. My journey began as a novice parent governor at my children's school elsewhere in Norfolk, where I grew in confidence to become chair, working hard at understanding how to build an effective partnership with the head. Later the local authority sought my help at Earlham - a school facing special measures, at the bottom of the league tables and with a turbulent history.

Throughout, with the supportive encouragement of PwC, and the flexibility afforded to me, I have been able to bring time and some skill to the school, and I hope I have "made a difference". I have developed new transferrable skills and strengths, particularly in

leadership and persistence, and have taken those back to the workplace with success. I am also grateful for the direct role PwC has played at the school - sponsoring and delivering a Business Dynamics enterprise event in July to which students responded very positively, showing determination and team working, and building self-esteem.

David Brunton: The relationship between a head teacher and chair of governors is extremely important. You have to be open, frank, honest, supportive and challenging of each other. Nick has always managed to get this balance absolutely right, has a clear understanding of the governors' strategic role and allows me to deal with operational matters. He keeps abreast of educational thinking and news; this helps me enormously when discussing the broader educational picture.

As well as offering support, governors must ask important questions about attainment and the needs of the pupils, parents and community; Nick is not afraid to ask these questions and he makes sure that we are clear about meeting those needs.

Employers should give access to advice and training to those thinking of becoming governors on what it involves and how they should go about it. A forum should be established for the group of employee governors to facilitate peer-support mechanisms. Such forums are often highly valued by employees, and give the opportunity for employees from different parts of the company to gain first-hand knowledge of education.

Employers should give employees who serve as governors time off or time off in lieu to allow them to fulfil their duties. Recognition of the skills and experience gained by the employee should be given through the annual appraisal process (including counting them as part of the company's training requirement). Of course this would only apply to employees who wanted to participate in the company's formal employee-volunteering programme - others might still wish to serve as governors in their own private time and to so without involvement of their employer.

We recommend that employers should provide support to employee governors in the form of relevant training and time off (preferably paid) or time off in lieu, and by creating and maintaining company networks through which they can share experiences and best practice.

There are a number of organisations that can provide employers with training, support. For example, Business in the Community, FEdS and HTI have inaugurated an annual employee governors' conference at the first running of which this report will be formally published. FEdS is expanding the employee-governor network that it has run for a number of years for Unilever and ExxonMobil.

o. Education-employer partnerships

The aim of any successful education system must be to ensure that all children have the chance to make the most of their talents and fulfil their potential, and employers have a role to play. The type of engagement between employers and schools varies and is dependent on the age of the pupils and their specific needs. The NCEE National Framework covers:

- *leadership and governance;*
- *literacy, numeracy and awareness of the world of work;*
- *Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); and*
- *enterprise and employability (including apprenticeships and the Diploma).*

In order to deliver that, schools need to have effective and sustainable partnerships with employers. The partnerships will also vary according to a number of factors - the age of pupils, school specialism, education needs and geographical location.

Evidence from research undertaken by BITC of successful partnerships indicates that employees of the business partner are often members of the school governing body, or are on secondment as associate governors to assist with particular projects. Such links can be vital in helping the school to understand business, and the business to understand education.

Some excellent work has been done by BITC North West on needs assessment. Guidance and a needs-assessment template have been developed to help schools and local businesses to find the best ways to support and deliver the activities listed above. The employer may provide a wide variety of opportunities for work-related learning, including the development and delivery of diplomas and work experience.

Volunteering activities by employees could include pupil mentoring, personal and life skills, business skills, induction days, company presentations, acting as Young Enterprise business advisers, and delivering subject days, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

A governor that takes a particular interest in this area can be very valuable in helping the development of education-employer partnerships. As more vocational routes are developed in the curriculum (for example, with the Diplomas), governors with a business background are increasingly likely to become involved in work-related learning.

The National Education Business Partnerships Network (NEBPN) provides invaluable brokering services between employees and schools and is developing new quality standards to help meet the objective of the National Council for Educational Excellence for "brilliant brokerage".

The role of employee governors in the development of education-employer partnerships needs to be encouraged. Employee governors can provide an excellent link between schools and employers, and help co-ordinate a wide range of business support for schools.

A GOVERNOR'S VIEW



Hugh Goulbourne is a Solicitor / Legal Adviser with APACS, the UK payments association

Why did you decide to become a School Governor?

"I consider that education is the key to ensuring equality of opportunity for all. Equipping our young people with the technical and spiritual skills that they require in order to get the most from themselves and conduct themselves as valued members of the wider community.

How has your experience as a governor helped you in your own life, either professionally or personally?

"Becoming a school governor is one of the most personally rewarding ways of helping our community. Through this role I feel that I have developed a more rounded lifestyle, broadened my skills base by taking on greater responsibility and become a more effective communicator by working with people from outside of my immediate day-to-day environment."

What would you say to anyone thinking of becoming a school governor?

"Anyone who is considering taking on a leadership role in their community is probably also looking for broadly the same things that I was, namely to learn more about the community and to feel part of a higher purpose.

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Nick Chambers

Director of Education

Business in the Community

Appendices

i) University of Bath Study: Executive Summary

Since the mid-1980s governing bodies have had a significant role in the governance of education in England. Currently, they are responsible for the conduct of all maintained schools. There are about 350,000 school governors and they are all volunteers. During the last 20 years, the English school system has changed substantially and the work of schools has become more complicated and demanding. These changes have had important implications for school governing and are likely to further complicate it in the future. A study of school governing is therefore timely and appropriate.

The School Governance Study took place between April and September 2008. Its aims were: to review the arrangements for school governance and propose improvements; review the business contribution of governors; and to analyse what can be learned from the business and human/public service sectors about governance and how those insights might enhance school governance. It was commissioned by the Business in the Community Education Team and was funded by Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP.

The Study analysed the policy and research literature relevant to school governing. It carried out 43 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, undertook a large scale random on-line survey of over 5,000 school governors and elicited the views of 42 headteachers.

The main messages from the Study

1. School governing is important and it is generally working well thanks to the efforts of all those involved. However, it could be improved and it will need to change if it is to respond to the ways schools are changing.

2. At present, school governing is:

- **overloaded** - governing bodies are responsible for too much
- **overcomplicated** - their work is unnecessarily complex, difficult and demanding
- **overlooked** - what governing bodies are responsible for and how they should function has not received enough of the right kind of attention and the work of governing bodies goes largely unnoticed.

A summary of the findings

1. **School governing is important.** Governing bodies can add value to the organisation and performance of schools and can help to legitimise schools as institutions.
2. **Generally, school governing is working well but there is scope for improvement.** About 85% of the governors in our survey reported that their governing bodies were effective. A slightly smaller proportion of the head teachers we surveyed agreed with that assessment. The governors' and head teachers' assessments are therefore broadly comparable with Ofsted judgements of school governing over a number of years. Ofsted reports that governing is less effective more often in schools in disadvantaged settings. So, although school governing appears to be working well generally, there is room for improvement in the governing of a minority schools and especially in the governing of schools in disadvantaged settings. We conclude that a number of relatively straightforward changes to governing processes could substantially improve school governing. Effective governing bodies contribute positively in a range of ways but ineffective governing bodies tend not to challenge the head teacher, monitor plans and targets, undertake a scrutiny role and ensure the accountability of the governing body. The non-education (business) community makes a considerable contribution to the effectiveness of school governing. There are significant benefits from participation in school governing. Minority groups tend to be under-represented on governing bodies. Governing bodies may not engage in discussions about "the kind of school we want" and are not required to undertake any formal reporting on their work.
3. **Schools are changing and school governing will need to change.** Increasingly, schools are: more diverse; collaborating - and benefiting as a result; providing an extended range of services for their communities; undertaking a broader range of responsibilities and tasks; and are changing as a result of workforce re-modelling. Headteachers and senior staff are better trained. However, even with all these changes, 'the school' as a thriving, self-managing and well governed institution remains important.
4. **School governing is overloaded.** Governing bodies are responsible for the conduct of the school and must comply with numerous regulations which generally apply to all schools regardless of their size. Many of their responsibilities could be assigned directly to the

headteacher. Governing bodies have a high workload and strategic management, scrutiny and other responsibilities. Governing bodies' extensive responsibilities may prevent them discussing 'the kind of school we want'. In non-education settings, governing primarily entails scrutiny.

5. **School governing is overcomplicated.** The role of governing bodies is described ambiguously in policies and regulations. Governing bodies have to manage a number of conflicting roles: support and challenge, the representational role of members and their skills, the operational and the strategic; and management and scrutiny. They have to decide which of their responsibilities to delegate to the headteacher. Governing bodies are part of a complex and intensive accountability system. Schools and therefore governing bodies have a complicated yet important relationship with local authorities.
6. **The overloaded and overcomplicated nature of school governing is likely to make recruitment challenging, training complicated, and retaining governors difficult.**
7. **School governing does not have a sufficiently high profile.** It is not widely publicised, understandings of it are not widespread and its contribution is hidden.

8. **New arrangements for school governing.** New models of school governing are being implemented by some individual schools and groups. Some models have the potential to transform school governing and the governance of the English school system.

A summary of the recommendations

1. The range of governing body responsibilities should be reduced.
2. The role of governing bodies should be simplified.
3. The status of governing bodies should be enhanced, their contribution more widely recognised, and greater publicity given to school governing in all sectors of society especially the business community. Together, these recommendations are likely to:
 1. *enhance the quality and effectiveness of school governing*
 2. *improve recruitment to governing bodies*
 3. *reduce the workload of governors and governing bodies*
 4. *enhance governor motivation*
 5. *lead to improvements in governor training and increase participation.*

A COMPANY'S VIEW: Unilever

The Governors' Network, run by FEdS, began in 1990 in order to support Unilever Employees who volunteer to be school governors and now has 150 members. The Network provides the Unilever governors with an annual conference (now superseded by the BITC/FEdS/HTI national conference), monthly briefings on emerging education issues, an email networking facility, and a handbook on how to be a school governor. The network is being developed as a national network, to be launched by FEdS at the conference.

The Governors' Network harnesses the knowledge and experience of its members, providing school staff with support, advice and information. Specifically, the Network helps to design improvements strategies for implementation in schools.

Frank Thompson talks about his experiences: "Being a governor is hard work, but extremely rewarding - and it helps our own personal development too. It makes me feel proud to work for a company that shows such commitment to its values. Unilever devotes a lot of time and energy to the support of employees who get involved in education, thereby helping to develop employees of the future."

John Ripley works at Unilever's Corporate Centre at Blackfriars, London, where he leads the Finance function of the home and personal care division. Membership of the Unilever Governors' Network has helped him in a number of ways. John highlights the excellent materials provided, together with the conference that allows members to listen to and interact with education leaders. "Above all, it shows tremendous and infectious commitment - and the confidence that we can make a difference in this 'other world'."

David Saunders is a company risk manager who works at the Kingston office. David explains that being a governor has helped him to develop leadership, management and interpersonal skills: "I have applied the lessons in my professional life to the benefit of both me and Unilever. My Unilever experience has in turn been valuable to me in my governor role, not least in terms of the encouragement to become a governor in the first place. The Network offers immense experience and support, as well as an opportunity to engage with senior national figures. I am proud to be part of the team."



Specific recommendations are as follows

1. Governing body responsibilities that can be assigned to the headteacher should be specified as such in the regulations. The headteacher should be responsible for strategy, policy matters and the operation of the school and should be accountable to the governing body. The headteacher should delegate responsibilities to colleagues as appropriate. The governing body's responsibilities should be: to scrutinise and agree relevant aspects of the management of the school and to provide a forum for discussion of strategy and policy matters. Their responsibilities should be described simply, clearly and unambiguously.
2. The accountability relationships in which governing bodies are involved should be clarified by making reporting responsibilities more straightforward.
3. Governing bodies should continue to be responsible for appointing and managing the performance, setting the remuneration and if necessary the dismissal of the headteacher. The local authority should be routinely involved in the head teacher appointments. Schools should be the employers of the staff and should take responsibility for all employment matters.
4. The status of the clerk to the governing body should be raised and the clerk should not work in the school in a different capacity to reduce the potential for conflicts of interest.
5. The public profile of school governing should be raised. Companies and all 'nonschool' work organisations should be encouraged to play a part in recruitment. Where schools or groups of schools have a business and higher education partner, the partners could be represented on the governing body.
6. Efforts should be made to recruit members of groups currently under-represented on school governing bodies. The beneficial outcomes for those involved in school governing should be made more widely known.
7. All schools should maintain very high quality relationships with their communities because it is on these relationships that governor recruitment will be built.
8. Training for new governors, chairs and clerks should be compulsory. There should be a quality assurance system for school governor training programmes. Consideration should be given to establishing a Virtual College for Governor Training.
9. The inspection of school governing bodies should be strengthened. Evaluation criteria for the performance of school governing bodies as recorded in the school self evaluation form should be enhanced. The involvement of the governing body in inspections should be mandatory.
10. New models of school governing should be evaluated.

A COMPANY'S VIEW: BP

The Schools Link programme supports BP people who form a link with a teacher to plan and deliver curriculum enhancement activities. It currently works with 250 schools around the UK. A BP employee (Link Co-ordinator) and a teacher (Link Teacher) from a school close to a BP site plan a programme of activities for the Link school.

Why do BP employees want to be involved?

BP people benefit from becoming School Governors as it:

- develops new skills and strengthen existing ones;
- helps you practice work talents; as part of a team, being a school governor will give you the opportunity to work with a wide range of people from a variety of social, cultural and religious backgrounds;
- helps give an understanding of the decision-making process of school governing bodies and an awareness of the education system as a whole;
- makes a real difference and helps to contribute to the good of the community, leading to personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement; and
- provides excellent professional development opportunities in listening, time planning and communication skills.

ii) Employers' support template

Policy statement on employee school-governor service

[Name of Employer] recognises that school governors are an invaluable part of our education system. As part of its overall commitment to employee volunteering and community engagement [Name of Employer] supports employees who are, or who wish to become, school governors. This policy demonstrates the support of [Name of Employer] for employees that are, or wish to become, school governors; and provides a framework for allowing such employees time away from the workplace for the performance of school-governor duties.

Time allowance

Employees who are, or who wish to become, school governors will be permitted a minimum of [] days [paid/unpaid] [delete as appropriate] leave per year for school-governor service. This will be in addition to the employees' contractual leave entitlement/leave entitlement under the Working Time Regulations. Where needed, additional time will be granted on the same [paid/unpaid] basis [delete as appropriate], provided that the needs of the business allow it.

The scheduling of leave for the purpose of school-governor service will be agreed between the employee and his or her line manager, having regard to the needs of the business and the occasions on which the employee is required to attend to school-governor duties.

This policy is applicable across the organisation and can be varied only where it is determined by [insert name of relevant person] that the needs of the business make it impossible for a particular employee to be released under the terms of the policy.

Other support

In recognition of the benefits of forming and maintaining wider relationships with the schools in which its employees are school governors [Name of Employer] undertakes to provide further support in the form of financial assistance for projects promoted by employees in their schools; and in the form of access to the company's expertise, systems and facilities in, for example, the financial, legal, HR and strategic-planning areas. Requests for such support will be submitted to [insert name of relevant person] for approval in the form specified in [].



iii) Board performance evaluation in the corporate world

Sir Adrian Cadbury's seminal review of corporate governance in 1992 established the principle of "comply or explain" for major listed companies. Essentially there is a code ("The combined code") which listed companies are expected to say in their annual reports that they comply with or explain the reasons why they don't.

The latest version of the combined code states that the board should undertake a formal and rigorous annual evaluation of its own performance and that of its committees and individual directors. So public companies will normally say that they do and give a brief description of how they do it. There is clearly a spectrum of formality applied depending upon the scale and nature of the company.

The late Sir Derek Higgs's 2003 review of the role and effectiveness of non executive directors provided some very helpful guidance on performance evaluations for major public companies which could be used as a menu for other companies. He started by saying that:

"It is the responsibility of the chair to select an effective process and to act on its outcome. The use of an external third party to conduct the evaluation will bring objectivity to the process. " And;

"The results of the board evaluation should be shared with the board as a whole, while the results of the individual assessments should remain confidential between the chair and the non-executive director concerned.

He then provided a list of potential questions to cover in a review. These were:

- How well has the board performed against any performance objectives that have been set?
- What has been the board's contribution to the testing and development of strategy?
- What has been the board's contribution to ensuring robust and effective risk management?
- Is the composition of the board and its committees appropriate, with the right mix of skills to maximise performance in the light of future strategy? Are inside and outside the board relationships working effectively?
- How has the board responded to any problems or crises that have emerged and could or should these have been foreseen?
- Are the matters specifically reserved for the board the right ones?
- How well does the board communicate with the management team, company employees and others? How well does it use mechanisms like the Annual General Meeting and the annual report?
- Is the board as a whole up to date with the latest developments in the regulatory environment and the market?
- How effective are the board's committees?

He also set out some questions with respect to board process, namely:

- Is appropriate timely information of the right length and quality provided to the board and is management responsive to request for clarification or amplification? Does the board provide helpful feedback to management on its requirements?
- Are there sufficient board and committee meetings of appropriate length held to enable proper consideration of the issues? Is time used effectively?
- Are board procedures conducive to effective performance and flexible enough to deal with all eventualities?

He then went on to list some questions with respect to the Chair

- Is the chair demonstrating effective leadership of the board?
- Are relationships and communications with shareholders well managed?
- Are relationships and communications with the board constructive/
- Are the processes for setting the agenda working? Do they enable board members to raise issues and concerns?
- Is the company secretary being used appropriately and to maximum value?

Patrick Dunne, Group Communications Director, 3i

A GOVERNOR'S VIEW



Elaine Harris is 24 and a Governor at Knavesmire Primary School in York

She says: "For a while I had wanted to learn some new skills and meet new people, so I did some research on the internet to see what volunteering opportunities were available in my area. One of the things that stood out was the idea of becoming a school governor, because it seemed to offer sufficient colleagues and suited my skills and experience.

"Attending my first full governing body meeting was quite overwhelming, as for the most part I had no idea what my fellow governors were talking about. However I was given a lot of material to read and I've also been to three introductory courses run by the local council. I already feel that I have learned a lot in only a few months, and I hope to learn more and be able to play a full part in this role"



Education Leadership Team

Business in the Community's Education Leadership Team brings together distinguished business leaders and educationalists in the important role of inspiring member companies to support education. They are responsible for leading and guiding the direction of BITC's work in education.

Education is BITC's oldest campaign and one in which most of its member companies are engaged. The campaign aims to build effective, sustainable partnerships between schools and businesses - with the ultimate goal of helping young people realise their potential.

For more details visit **www.bitc.org.uk/education** or contact us at **education@bitc.org.uk**



Business in the Community - mobilising business for good. We inspire, engage, support and challenge companies on responsible business, working through four areas: Marketplace, Workplace, Environment and Community. With more than 850 companies in membership, we represent 1 in 5 of the UK private sector workforce and convene a network of global partners.

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