



**GUIDANCE**

**OFSTED – THE GOVERNORS’ INTERVIEW – GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNORS**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1** This guidance is partly based on responses to a questionnaire sent to governors of eight Diocesan primary and secondary schools after an OFSTED inspection between March and July 2013; it gives practical advice to governors in preparing for the interview with inspectors (the questions in section 4 are simply the range of questions that were asked across all 8 schools in the survey). Every school inspection will be different and inspectors may differ in their approach, but this guidance reflects the common themes that have emerged.

**2 CHANGES IN EMPHASIS**

**2.1** The current OFSTED framework which came into force on 1 September 2015 has undergone considerable change. There are three key sections in [The School Inspection Handbook September 2015](#) of which governors should be aware: paragraph 138 which sets out the matters inspectors will consider when judging the *effectiveness of leadership and management*, paragraphs 143-145 (see section 6.2 below) which set out specific expectations on governors and the grade descriptors on leadership and management which are summarised in 6.3 below. Once a number of schools have been inspected under the new framework, sections 3, 4 and 5 of this guidance will be updated as necessary.

**2.2** In the last academic year (2014/15) inspections have focused on the link between teachers’ pay and performance, performance management, the impact of teaching on pupils’ learning, pupil progress across all groups of pupils and finance; this is likely to continue. Inspectors have also focused on documented information relating to pupil progress, behaviour, attendance, safeguarding, school improvement and self evaluation. In recent years, small changes have been made to the framework on a termly basis and governors need to keep abreast of developments in the framework. Inspectors expect to meet with the Chair and as many governors as possible and also expect as many governors as possible to attend the feedback.

**3 THE INTERVIEW**

How long was the interview?	In most schools the interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.
Who was interviewed?	This varied: in all but one* school the Chair was interviewed and in 50% of schools the Chair was interviewed alone, either by choice or because no one else was available at short notice. In other schools, three governors attended and in one school, eight. * Chair unavailable.
Were governors’ minutes examined?	Yes, in over 50% of schools surveyed.

**4 QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED**

	Issue	Questions you may be asked	Possible answers
1	The school’s strengths and weaknesses	How do governors know the school’s strengths and weaknesses? What progress has been made during the year? What does the school do best? How are all groups of pupils catered for?	Data, self-review processes, visits to lessons, learning walks, meetings with head, review of school development plan, head’s report, work of the teaching and learning committee, surveys/talking to parents/pupils.

	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Questions you may be asked</b>	<b>Possible answers</b>
2	Governing body (GB) involvement in self evaluation; school development planning; governors' support & challenge of the school	What is the GB's view of the school's self evaluation?  How rigorous are the governors in holding the school to account?	Emphasis on approach taken by committees in challenging the school, eg the impact of interventions on pupils' progress.  Give examples of where governors have challenged the school and be able to show this in minutes.
3	Performance management (PM) policy	How do governors ensure PM is effective, including head's PM?  How are rewards linked to performance of teachers?  What % of teachers are on UPS?	Demonstrate understanding of process, receipt of head's reports on progress, handling of capability issues and addressing changes in the framework of PM through training, attending briefings etc
4	Pupil premiums	How is it spent and evaluated?  How is it used to support target groups of pupils?  What is its impact?	Review of performance for pupils eligible for FSM following termly pupil progress meetings.  Refer to data dashboard; governors expected to know about narrowing the gap and what the gap is.  Demonstrate with examples of how money used and impact.  Know information is on website.
5	Understanding of pupil data and progress of different groups of pupils	How does GB ensure all governors understand the data?  Have the governors done enough for children in Year X? (Inspectors may focus on a particular end of key stage year group if there is evidence of weakness in the data)  What sources of data are available to the GB?	RaiseOnline, data dashboard, pupil progress data, differences between classes and year groups, focussed discussion at teaching and learning committee.  Know whether there is a focus on a specific year group or key stage and what the school is doing to address the issues.
6	Impact of teaching and learning on progress	How effective are the teachers?  What is the impact of teaching on narrowing the gap?	Tracking data (including that given above), head's observation reports.
7	Governors' visits and links to classes, subjects etc	How are visits organised and what is the impact of the visits?	Frequency/regularity of visits; show visit reports which demonstrate evidence of implementation of development plan.
8	Governor training and development	How do governors address their training and development needs	Refer to list of training undertaken. Participation in Bishop's Certificate, induction training for new members.
9	Safeguarding	How do governors know all staff and pupils are safe?	Single central record; recruitment procedures; pupil surveys; governor has completed safer recruitment training; safeguarding policy reviewed.

## **5 TIPS FOR GOVERNORS IN PREPARATION FOR THE INTERVIEW**

**5.1** The following suggestions have been made by governors interviewed on the basis of their experience:

- (a) Know your school's strengths and weaknesses and key areas for development and progress made during the year; be prepared to explain **how** you know, eg, visits, discussions with senior leaders, meetings re performance data etc.
- (b) Know your school's monitoring regime.
- (c) Know your school's self evaluation form, school improvement plan and data dashboard.
- (d) Know your performance management policy.
- (e) Know the impact of the pupil premium (and tell the inspectors before they ask!).
- (f) Ask if you don't understand or don't know why something is being done.
- (g) Think about what may have triggered the inspection, so you can focus on those key areas.
- (h) Don't do it alone - Chairs don't need to know everything – use the expertise of committee chairs/members – ensure that there are governors available at short notice who have rehearsed the questions inspectors may ask;
- (i) Keep talking – ensure that you get your points across and take opportunities to expand on a question to demonstrate the impact that the governors are having.
- (j) Take with you a file of information which you can refer to easily when answering questions or illustrating a point (ensure the pages you want to highlight are easily accessed – one school had summaries of points they wanted to make in the file to counteract any nervousness); leave file with inspectors.
- (k) Be ready with examples of the work the governing body has achieved during the year.
- (l) Ensure your minutes show clearly that governors challenge the school and follow through any action and ensure that inspectors have a pack of recent minutes from day 1.
- (m) Have a briefing with the headteacher the night before so key messages to OFSTED are clear following day 1.
- (n) If possible, meet headteacher just before interview to identify any issues that may need reinforcing from day 1.
- (o) Ensure the website is up-to-date – inspectors will check the website to glean information about the school and to see whether required documents are accessible.
- (p) Attend the oral feedback and take notes.

## **6 SUMMARY OF OFSTED EXPECTATIONS ON GOVERNORS**

**6.1** Generic expectations:

- (a) evidence of the impact of the governing body on the school and documented evidence of the work of governors, this may include minutes, notes of visits, evidence of training;
- (b) the effectiveness of governors in discharging their core statutory functions, ie,
  - (i) ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
  - (ii) holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils and the performance management of staff;
  - (iii) overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.
- (c) engagement with key stakeholders, particularly parents;
- (d) promotion of equality.

**6.2** Paragraph 145 of the Inspection Handbook states that inspectors will consider whether governors:

- (a) work effectively with leaders to communicate the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school and develop a culture of ambition;
- (b) provide a balance of challenge and support to leaders, understanding the strengths and areas needing improvement at the school;
- (c) provide support for an effective headteacher or are hindering school improvement because of a lack of understanding of the issues facing the school;
- (d) understand how the school makes decisions about teachers' salary progression and performance;
- (e) performance manage the headteacher rigorously;
- (f) understand the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on the progress of pupils currently in the school;
- (g) ensure that assessment information from leaders provides governors with sufficient and accurate information to ask probing questions about outcomes for pupils;
- (h) ensure that the school's finances are properly managed and can evaluate how the school is using the pupil premium and the primary PE and sport premium;
- (i) are transparent and accountable, including in recruitment of staff, governance structures, attendance at meetings and contact with parents.

**6.3** Extract from *effectiveness of leadership and management* grade descriptors which specifically mention governors is given below for outstanding and good grades.

Key issue	Grade descriptor (Outstanding)	Grade descriptor (Good)
<b>High expectations of staff and pupils' conduct and relationships</b>	Leaders and <b>governors</b> have created a culture that enables pupils and staff to excel. They are committed unwaveringly to setting high expectations for the conduct of pupils and staff. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary	Leaders set high expectations of pupils and staff. They lead by example to create a culture of respect and tolerance. The positive relationships between leaders, staff and pupils support the progress of all pupils at the school.
<b>Outcomes and progress for pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils</b>	Leaders and <b>governors</b> focus on consistently improving outcomes for all pupils, but especially for disadvantaged pupils. They are uncompromising in their ambition. The school's actions have secured substantial improvement in progress for disadvantaged pupils. Progress is rising across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics.	Leaders and <b>governors</b> are ambitious for all pupils and promote improvement effectively. The school's actions secure improvement in disadvantaged pupils' progress, which is rising, including in English and mathematics.
<b>Deployment of staff and resources, including the various pupil premiums and SEN funding</b>	<b>Governors</b> systematically challenge senior leaders so that the effective deployment of staff and resources, including the various pupil premiums and SEN funding, secures excellent outcomes for pupils. <b>Governors</b> do not shy away from challenging leaders about variations in outcomes for pupil groups, especially between disadvantaged and other pupils.	<b>Governors</b> hold senior leaders stringently to account for all aspects of the school's performance, including the use of the various pupil premiums and SEN funding, ensuring that the skilful deployment of staff and resources delivers good or improving outcomes for pupils.

<b>Key issue</b>	<b>Grade descriptor (Outstanding)</b>	<b>Grade descriptor (Good)</b>
<b>Quality of education</b>	Leaders and <b>governors</b> have a deep, accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness informed by the views of pupils, parents and staff. They use this to keep the school improving by focusing on the impact of their actions in key areas.	Leaders and <b>governors</b> have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the quality of education at the school. This helps them plan, monitor and refine actions to improve all key aspects of the school's work.
<b>Performance management</b>	Leaders and <b>governors</b> use incisive performance management that leads to professional development that encourages, challenges and supports teachers' improvement. Teaching is highly effective across the school.	Leaders and <b>governors</b> use performance management effectively to improve teaching. They use accurate monitoring to identify and spread good practice across the school.
<b>Safeguarding</b>	Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and <b>managers</b> have created a culture of vigilance where pupils' welfare is actively promoted. Pupils are listened to and feel safe. Staff are trained to identify when a pupil may be at risk of neglect, abuse or exploitation and they report their concerns. Leaders and staff work effectively with external partners to support pupils who are at risk or who are the subject of a multi-agency plan.	Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and staff take appropriate action to identify pupils who may be at risk of neglect, abuse or sexual exploitation, reporting concerns and supporting the needs of those pupils.