

SUPPORT FOR GOVERNING BODIES

To: Heads and Governors Consultative Group

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A PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To inform the Group of developments both locally and nationally to support school governors and to seek the Group's views.

B PROPOSED ACTION

2. The Group is invited to comment on the DfEE's proposals for governing bodies and the support provided for governors in Buckinghamshire.

C RESOURCES APPRAISAL

3. There are no resource implications arising directly from this report.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4. There has been considerable debate, both locally and nationally, about the workload placed upon governing bodies. The introduction of the Performance Management Framework in particular highlighted this issue. This paper identifies the actions being taken to support governing bodies and seeks the views of the Headteacher and Governors Consultative Group about ways in which we could strengthen this support.

National Developments

5. Regulations and Guidance were issued by the DfEE in the Autumn term on the Roles and Responsibilities of headteachers and governors. This guidance identified the various functions of the governing body and suggested that, where there is discretion, governing bodies should consider delegating as many functions as possible to the headteacher so that they could focus on their largely strategic role.
6. The DfEE has recently issued a Consultation on School Governing Bodies. This paper puts forward a series of proposals designed to free governors from some of their executive duties in order to allow them to focus more on their strategic role. It also looks at the size and structure of governing bodies, recruitment and retention of governors and the support available for governing bodies. A summary of the key proposals is attached at Annex A.
7. The LEA intends to discuss the proposals with headteachers and Chairmen of governors at the early term briefings, and also with the Buckinghamshire Association of School

Governors and the Director's Schools Management Team. It would also be helpful for this Group to comment on the proposals. Responses to the consultation are required by 28 February.

Buckinghamshire Developments

8. The following paragraphs outline the support currently provided for governors by the LEA and planned developments.

Support for Executive Functions

9. Early term briefings for heads and Chairmen provide an opportunity to discuss the term's agenda items as preparation for governing body meetings. The development of Schools Management Briefing has helped to ensure a more coordinated flow of information to governing bodies about LEA business. A helpline is available to all governors.
10. A series of good practice leaflets is currently being developed for governors. Leaflets on Quality Chairmanship and the role of the Link Governor have recently been published. Leaflets on the role of the SEN governor and on developing and monitoring school policies are in the pipeline. A handbook for Chairmen, incorporating model policies, is also being planned.
11. As a tool to enable all governing bodies to assess their strengths and weaknesses, a model of governing body self evaluation has been developed and is currently being piloted with a number of schools. It is anticipated that this will be particularly helpful to governing bodies in preparing for OFSTED inspections. Subject to feedback during the pilot, the document will be published at Easter.

Clerking

12. The clerking service provides a clerk for one governing body meeting per term. In 2000/01, 85% of schools purchased the LEA's clerking service. As part of the clerking service, the LEA identifies each term those standard items which all governing bodies should consider and produces supporting summaries, with action points, to ease governing body decision making.
13. The clerk provides a critical role in ensuring that governing bodies comply with relevant legislation and procedures, thereby enabling them to concentrate on their strategic responsibilities. With the refocusing of the area offices, the clerk is becoming increasingly important to schools as a channel of communication with the LEA. The intention is to develop the clerking service to be able to advise governing bodies, and to seek advice on their behalf, on the full range of the LEA's functions.
14. Governing bodies are required to appoint a non-governor to clerk each of their statutory committees (such as pupil discipline, staff dismissal etc). Equally, some governing bodies hold two meetings a term and these should also be clerked by a non-governor. The LEA cannot guarantee to provide a clerk for these meetings, although every effort is made to meet any requests.

Training

15. In 2000/01 88% of schools purchased the LEA's governor training and development package and the LEA continues to receive positive feedback from governors on the range and the quality of the training available. All training is evaluated on a termly basis through the Governors Consultative Group.
16. It is recognised that the training does not reach all governors and measures are being developed to make training more widely accessible. From 2001/02, the intention is to include a whole governing body training session as part of the package, as this is an effective way of reaching a wider group of governors. Additionally, it is planned to develop some distance learning training for governors through the use of the internet in 2001/02.

Recruitment and Retention

17. LEA governor vacancies are the responsibility of the newly constituted Governance Panel. The LEA promotes governor recruitment through ongoing publicity campaigns, issuing leaflets, posters, application forms etc. Advertisements in the local press are currently being prepared for the local press. Members of the public who express an interest are directed either to schools with vacancies or, in the case of LEA vacancies, to the local members.
18. Details of the governor vacancies across all Buckinghamshire schools are as follows:

Type of Governor	Number of vacancies	% of vacancies
LEA	27	4%
Parent	59	5%
Teacher	14	5%
Staff	5	2%
Co-opted	57	7%
Foundation	39	13%

19. All newly appointed governors receive a welcome pack and an invitation to the LEA's two day induction course. Governing bodies are entitled to set up a scheme for paying expenses to individual governors. However, such expenses must currently be funded from school budgets and we are not therefore aware of many governors using this facility.
20. The LEA currently has the power to appoint up to two additional governors to schools in special measures to support the governing body. To date, additional governors have been appointed to four schools in special measures.

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