

DFEE CONSULTATION ON SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES : SUMMARY

Executive Functions

It is proposed that heads should have enhanced responsibility for recruiting and disciplining staff, with the governing body only involved in the recruitment of heads, deputies and members of the leadership group, in considering grievances against the head and in hearing dismissal appeals.

Governing bodies should approve the annual budget plan, but not get involved in its detailed preparation. They should commission health and safety risk assessments, but not undertake the assessments themselves.

Size and Constitution of governing bodies

Smaller models are suggested for governing bodies which would reduce large secondary school governing bodies from 20/21 to 15/16; and large primary schools from 13-17 to 12. To achieve this, LEA governors would be reduced in community and controlled schools from 5 to 2; and in foundation and aided schools from 2 to 1.

Cooperation between Governing Bodies

There is a suggestion that grouped governing bodies could be reintroduced to allow expertise to be shared between schools, with the possibility of a shared headteacher in some circumstances.

Weak and Failing Schools

In exceptional circumstances, it is suggested that LEAs and the Secretary of State should be able to remove whole governing bodies and replace them with a small 'interim' governing body. It is envisaged that this power could be triggered in respect of schools in special measures which are making only limited progress or where the governing body has been identified as weak. It is suggested that LEAs should be able to pay 'interim' governors for their time to help recruitment.

Improving Support for Governing Bodies

Views of governors are sought on priorities for supporting governor training and on changes to improve clerking and administrative support for governing bodies. In particular, it is suggested that clerking arrangements, including clerks' training, remuneration and qualifications, should be reviewed by the DfEE. One option under consideration is for groups of schools to pool their resources and provide a shared bursar/clerk.

The DfEE intends to pilot packages of support. These may include enhanced clerking and administrative support, payment of expenses from outside the school's budget, chair's honorarium and ICT support. Consultees are invited to rank these items in priority order.

Improving the Supply of Effective School Governors

It is proposed that LEAs should set targets for filling governor vacancies as part of the Education Development Plan. A suggested target is to ensure that schools carry not more than one governor vacancy. To help identify a supply of 'additional' governors for special measures schools, the DfEE propose to set up a national or regional register of prospective additional governors.