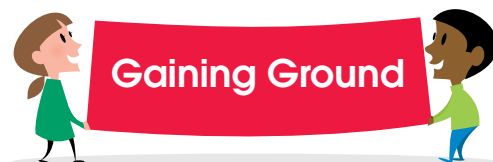


Stronger Governance Systems



The National Strategies

Stronger Governance Systems

Overview and user guide

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The websites referred to in these materials existed at the time of going to print.

Please check all website references carefully to see if they have changed and substitute other references where appropriate.

Stronger Governance Systems

Overview and user guide

Rationale

Strong governing bodies challenge and support schools to set a clear vision and ethos and provide an excellent service for the children and parents in their communities. They are a crucial component of effective school leadership. Ofsted has found that where governance is good, standards of attainment are likely to be higher; and the behaviour of pupils, the quality of teaching and the leadership and management of schools are also more likely to be good.

(Promoting Excellence for All, DCSF, 2008)

It is essential that a governing body knows if all the pupils in their school are making progress as expected or better and that the school focuses on improvement appropriately. Governing bodies play a central role in challenging and supporting schools to set a strong vision and provide the best service they can for children and parents in their communities.

Some governing bodies are not as effective as they could be; often they do not feel able to challenge the school leadership and are not aware of the resources available to support the school. We wish to equip governing bodies of these schools with the skills and knowledge to challenge and support their schools effectively.

(Gaining Ground, DCSF, 2008)

Where governing bodies have been deemed to be less effective some of the following are found to apply:

- Governors are purposely or otherwise given so much information that they cannot extract the important from the irrelevant.
- Governors are not given the information they need to do the job and either do not realise or feel unable to challenge the school's leadership on this.
- Governors are not given the relevant induction into their role in school improvement so miss key aspects.
- Governors become unnecessarily involved in day-to-day operational matters that are not their remit or responsibility.
- The quantity of governor engagement is high but the quality and therefore impact is poor due to lack of training and/or support.

The Stronger Governance Systems (SGS) programme is designed to help governors improve the quality and impact of the contribution they make to improvement of the outcomes for all the children and young people in their school. It focuses on practical but essential elements of governance directly related to school improvement, providing materials to help governors review, and improve their understanding of and practice in their strategic role in school improvement. This programme is designed to supplement the support for governors in their strategic role in school improvement not as a replacement for other high-quality support concerning their statutory obligations and procedures for effective day-to-day operation, all of which are available through local authority (LA) governor services, the National Governors Association (NGA) and other professional bodies. For example, in September 2009 the NGA are releasing a series of guides, each

guide will offer detailed information on the business of governance. Links to various useful websites and documents can be found at the end of these materials.

How the materials are presented

The materials are set out in a similar way to other National Strategies' programmes such as Stronger Management Systems. They include:

- this **overview and user guide** which explains the scope and potential of the programme
- overarching **quality standards** to describe the impact and nature of effective practice
- **self-assessment materials** that use the quality standards to help the governing body clarify what it does well, and where and how it needs to improve
- four **elements** or development units, each exploring an aspect of improvement through:
 - a **rationale** to explain its nature and importance
 - **quality standards**, relevant to the particular element and selected from the overarching standards, to define good practice in this aspect of governance
 - **exemplification** showing what good practice looks like in each quality standard
 - **governor training** offering examples of materials, templates and powerful processes to help governors achieve the quality standards
 - **resources and web links** offering a wider range of other easily accessible resources.

Elements

The programme is divided into four elements, listed below, with a summary of how each element will challenge and support the work of governors.

- Element 1 Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities**
Clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the governing body; understanding the role is one of strategic leadership not the operational management.
- Element 2 School improvement planning**
The characteristics of a good plan that drives improvement and facilitates close monitoring of impact.
- Element 3 Key indicators of how the school is doing**
Using data to identify the school's performance level – questions to ask and what to do about what you find out.
- Element 4 School self-evaluation – the role of governors**
Guidance on governors' role in relation to the School Self-Evaluation process the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) and the School Improvement Plan.

The elements are organised in a logical order to fit the development cycle of the school.

How to use the materials

SGS is a professional development programme designed to enable practice in governance to improve. The materials are designed to be used flexibly by school improvement partners (SIPs), National Challenge Advisers (NCA) and headteachers with the governors through short, focused development activities to bring about rapid change and improvement in governance. There is no expectation that governors will need to work through every section of the programme, although this is one possible approach. The programme is

designed to facilitate governors exploring and using those sections that are directly appropriate to their development needs as identified through use of the quality standards self-assessment materials.

In addition SIPs and NCAs and their governing bodies can draw on support from a National Strategies School Improvement Regional Adviser (SI RA) to support training in and delivery of elements of the programme.

The implementation and use of the programme is based around a quality management framework. Below there is a set of quality standards provided to help governors be more able to recognise what quality governance looks like and then work towards achieving this in their strategic role in school improvement.

Quality standards

Improvement begins with rigorous, honest and robust self-evaluation against a set of quality standards; this includes the work of the governors as part of the school leadership. The quality standards below should be used by governors to assess how effective their current practice is. A grid is supplied for this purpose and can be found on page 4 of these materials. Exemplification of 'what good looks like' in each quality standard can be found in the subsequent four elements of the programme which follow this overview.

- a. Governors hold a shared vision for the school which is clear, understood and well communicated to staff, parents and pupils
- b. The governing body sets the strategic direction of the school and has a central role in the leadership of the school
- c. Governors are confident in providing high levels of professional challenge to hold the headteacher to account
- d. The governing body is successfully focused on raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of all learners
- e. Governors have a clear understanding of the strategic priorities for the school and ensure an appropriate plan is in place and implemented effectively
- f. Governors engage effectively with parents, pupils and staff and are well informed about their views and use this to inform strategic priorities for development planning
- g. The governing body has a good understanding of the quality of provision within its school and how the school's performance compares locally and nationally
- h. Governors are fully and systematically involved in the evaluation process, keeping the work of the school under review and acting upon their findings
- i. The governing body has adopted a robust approach to self-review of its own performance, which includes a plan for improvement

(Quality standards formed in collaboration with Governor Mark)

It is recommended that governors first carry out the self-assessment exercise against the quality standards and then repeat at regular intervals to track their progress towards improved practice and increased impact. The self-assessment form can be found on page 4 in the section 'Self-assessment materials' section or as handout 1, Self-assessment materials.

Once specific areas for improvement have been identified governors should engage support from their SIP, NCA or LA officers and complete the relevant governor training activities found at the end of each element of this programme.

Self-assessment materials

Quality standards in effective governance

Improvement begins with rigorous, honest and robust self-evaluation against a set of quality standards; this includes the work of the governors as part of the school leadership.

This exercise may be completed individually or in groups. Make a judgement against each of the quality standards and use the evidence section to make notes on links between your judgements, the evidence and available governor training materials in the following four elements of these materials.

Quality standards	RAG	Evidence to support this judgement	Support
a. Governors hold a shared vision for the school which is clear, understood and well communicated to staff, parents and pupils			Element 1
b. The governing body sets the strategic direction of the school and has a central role in the leadership of the school			Elements 1 & 2
c. Governors are confident in providing high levels of professional challenge to hold the school to account			Element 1
d. The governing body is successfully focused on raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of all learners			Elements 2 & 4
e. Governors have a clear understanding of the strategic priorities for the school and ensure an appropriate plan is in place and implemented effectively			Elements 2 & 4
f. Governors engage effectively with parents, pupils and staff and are well informed about their views and use this to inform strategic priorities for development planning			Elements 3 & 4
g. The governing body has a good understanding of the quality of provision within its school and how the school's performance compares locally and nationally			Elements 3 & 4
h. Governors are fully and systematically involved in the evaluation process, keeping the work of the school under review and acting upon their findings			Elements 2 & 4
i. The governing body has adopted a robust approach to self-review of its own performance, which includes a plan for improvement			Element 4

Stronger Governance Systems

1 Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities

Rationale

The responsibilities of the governing body are invariably detailed in the information packs issued to new governors. Further information on this can usually be obtained from the LA Governor Services team. In essence governing bodies are responsible for:

- establishing the vision and ethos of the school
- setting the strategic direction of the school
- promoting high standards and children's well-being
- setting the budget and achieving value for money
- setting the staffing structure
- ensuring the quality of provision
- holding the headteacher to account.

Effective governance is critical to the success of the school. It is reliant upon a strong professional working relationship between governors and the headteacher where both parties know and understand both the extent and limits of their respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. Some aspects of the role stated above are more procedural, guidance on this can be obtained through LA governor services and is not covered here. This programme is focused directly on the strategic responsibilities that will have greatest impact on improving outcomes for all children and young people.

Quality standards

- a. Governors hold a shared vision for the school which is clear, understood and well communicated to staff, parents and pupils
- b. The governing body sets the strategic direction of the school and has a central role in the leadership of the school
- c. Governors are confident in providing high levels of professional challenge to hold the school to account

The quality standards above are those that focus most on strategic responsibilities for governors, if it has not already been done it is recommended that governors carry out the self-assessment exercise against the quality standards on page 4 of these materials. They should use the following exemplification in relation to each quality standard to support an accurate self-assessment. Governors should then repeat the self-assessment at regular intervals to check their progress towards improved practice and increased impact.

The next section offers short exemplification and, where appropriate, related governor training activities. Based on the self-assessment, governors, with the support of SIPs or NCAs, can select and tailor these activities in order to address identified needs and priorities. Where the self-assessment reveals specific weaknesses in the governing body's exercise of its roles and responsibilities related to strategic vision and direction it is strongly recommended that the governing body draws on the support and expertise of the SIP or NCA or any external consultancy to facilitate the delivery of the related governor training sessions required to improve practice in this key aspect of school improvement.

Exemplification

- a. Governors hold a shared vision for the school which is clear, understood and well communicated to staff, parents and pupils

A governing body has a high level of strategic influence and needs to establish a compelling vision and positive culture for change and improvement. A good governing body will have clear and well-managed processes and procedures that ensure that 'routine' work is managed in the shortest possible time, allowing maximum time for them to fulfil their strategic role and focus on school improvement.

Good governing bodies realise that, for improvements to be sustainable, a clear vision of where the school wants to be in the future is vital. This vision has to be shared not just by governors but by everyone – staff, parents and pupils – if it is to be achieved. Once the vision is 'owned' by all groups, the strategic decisions relating to **how** the vision is to be achieved can be taken. Their implementation will be more successful because all concerned understand the reasons behind the decisions.

Use **Governor training session 1** to develop the governors' understanding of the process of developing and communicating the vision for improvement.

- b. The governing body sets the strategic direction of the school and has a central role in the leadership of the school

The governing body has school improvement at the heart of its strategic role and responsibilities to ensure that the quality of provision for all learners is as good as it can be. Effective strategic planning is carried out over a sensible and manageable time line producing plans that are clear and accessible to the whole school community.

It is important that governors appreciate the difference between 'strategic leadership' and 'operational management'. There is a clear distinction between the role of the governors and the role of the headteacher. The role of the former is to set the strategic direction of the school, the role of the latter (whether or not s/he is a governor) is to implement the policies and strategic actions for school improvement agreed by the governing body. In particular the headteacher has full responsibility for the day-to-day operational management of the school, something in which the governors have no part to play.

School leaders should not be micro-managed, and the governing body should concentrate on matters related to strategy and school effectiveness, delegating those tasks which are deemed to be managerial rather than strategic... School leadership teams should be fully involved in discussions of strategic issues.

Extract from *What governing bodies should expect from schools leaders and what school leaders should expect from governing bodies*. Copyright GLM. Used with kind permission.

In one school a parent governor, who had been approached by a parent with a complaint about the lack of homework being given by a particular maths teacher, approached the member of staff directly instead of advising the parent to contact the form tutor/year leader in the first instance themselves. This broke an agreed protocol and caused no little embarrassment when the teacher, rightly, expressed concern to the headteacher who knew nothing of the parental concern nor the governors involvement.

The example above serves to remind governors that they should never take up individual cases; this is not their role. Any complaints made to them should be immediately referred to the headteacher who will follow the correct procedures to deal with parental complaints as set out in the school's policy on the relevant issue or concern.

Use **Governor training session 2** to develop a full understanding of the strategic versus operational role of the governor.

Use **Governor training session 3** to help the governing body evaluate how strategically they are currently working and how they can improve on this practice

c. Governors are confident in providing high levels of professional challenge to hold the school to account

The governing body should be supportive of the headteacher and staff and have the skills and knowledge to act as a critical friend. Governors must trust the headteacher and must expect to be trusted by the headteacher who should be open to questions and suggestions from the governing body. These questions should be challenging in a positive and constructive manner, holding the headteacher to account.

Governors need to maintain a secure knowledge of the school, including its strengths and weaknesses, which is achieved through their regular commitment to monitoring and evaluation of school performance. They will then be able to use this knowledge to hold leaders to account for improvement through proportionate and appropriate challenge.

The finance committee regularly considered the budget monitor at its meetings. At their meeting in October – just about halfway through the financial year – it was noted that the current spend on supply staff was rapidly approaching the total committed for the year. Governors asked the headteacher to provide a breakdown of why so much had been spent, concerned that the school might be suffering a high level of sickness absence amongst its staff. The analysis demonstrated, however, that this was not the case, instead it appeared that the CPD coordinator had sanctioned a number of courses for members of staff that had not been identified in the original CPD plan. They did not relate to personal development as identified through performance management or to priorities identified through the School Improvement Plan. The headteacher was able to take appropriate action, and the budget was reset for the remainder of the financial year.

Use **Governor training session 4** to develop practice and understanding in professional challenge.

Governor training materials

Governor training session 1: Developing a strategic vision

(70 minutes)

The following activity should be led by the SIP, an LA adviser or the NCA. It should be carried out with the full governing body.

Objectives

- To communicate the key principles of change management.
- To come to a joint understanding of how to develop a shared vision for improvement.

Resources

- Handout 1.1 (card sort activity)
- Leading change PowerPoint presentation
- Digital projector
- Large poster paper and coloured pens

(All handouts and PowerPoint presentations are available on the Stronger Governance Systems homepage at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)

Activity 1 (20 minutes)

Using page 2 of handout 1.1, provide a cut-up card version of the steps of change, and ask the group to work in pairs to sort them into what they consider to be the correct order to bring about change. Each group should review the other groups' lists and discuss emerging patterns and the implications for their change efforts. The first page of handout 1.1 confirms the 'correct' order.

Activity 2 (20 minutes)

The Leading change PowerPoint presentation reinforces the idea of how change can be led successfully. While many of the steps in this process are operational and thus carried out by the headteacher and the school staff, governors have a significant role to play in communicating urgency and also strategically developing a whole-school vision linked to the principles of school improvement (Step 3). Use the slides to discuss how governors should best approach the formulation of a shared and agreed vision, and how consultative and inclusive that process should be.

Activity 3 (25 minutes)

Shaping the vision

Governors work in groups to draft an article or poster for the school prospectus for three years' time about the changes they are proposing. In the article, talk about:

- how the school is different
- what pupils, parents and staff are saying about the school
- what staff are saying about the school
- improvements in pupils' achievements, attainment and progress.

Be concrete. Include quotes. Discuss and share with the rest of the governors.

Plenary (5 minutes)

Ask governors to now plan for three actions they should take in order to start the change process that will lead to more rapid improvement in progress.

Remind governors of Kotter's eight steps of change and where they might start.

Governor training session 2: Knowing the difference – strategic vs operational (45 minutes)

Operating strategically is about setting the direction and communicating the vision not in day-to-day management and actions to get things done. The following activity is designed to be carried out by the full governing body led by the SIP, LA adviser or NCA.

Objectives

- To clarify the distinction between what is operational and what is strategic.
- To emphasise that the role of governors is primarily strategic.

Resources

- Handout 1.2 (available on the Stronger Governance Systems homepage at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)

Activity 1 (25 minutes)

In pairs, members of the governing body should complete card 1 of handout 1.2 by deciding whether they think each statement is operational (O) or strategic (S).

Lead a whole-group discussion to clarify what is meant by strategic and what is meant by operational.

Further cards can then be used to ensure consistency of understanding across the whole group. There are a number of statements on the cards which will generate debate and possible disagreement about whether they are S or O. Discussion about these will aid governors to come to a view about the boundaries to their strategic role in their particular school.

Give out the set of cards with suggested answers and allow a few more minutes to resolve any differences of opinion.

Plenary (20 minutes)

Governors should now be asked to consider their own systems and practice and come to a view on the balance of operational versus strategic activity they undertake. Ask them to consider fully their actions as governors over the last term or year and lead their thoughts with the questions below.

Questions to ask:

- Do we think and act strategically?
- Do we know about and take into account recent changes in education and children's services?
- Do we canvass and take into account the views of parents, pupils and others in the community?
- Are we aware of possible future trends and changes?
- Do we ever get involved with the more operational day-to-day management of the school?

Governor training session 3: How strategic are we?

(45 minutes)

The following activity is designed to be led by the SIP, LA adviser or NCA with the full governing body. Governing bodies need to be able to demonstrate, with appropriate evidence, to outside bodies such as Ofsted that they are carrying out their strategic functions effectively.

Objectives

- To carry out a self-evaluation of the governing body to ascertain how strategically it is currently operating.
- To provide a simple self-review mechanism to allow the governing body to regularly check on its strategic operation.

Resources

- Strategic leadership PowerPoint presentation
 - Handout 1.3
- (Both available on the Stronger Governance Systems homepage at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)

Activity 1 (10 minutes)

Use the PowerPoint presentation as a script to discuss with governors the current position.

Activity 2 (15 minutes)

Ask governors to complete the self-assessment sheet on handout 1.3 (Question 1) using a simple RAG rating. Emphasise that regular use of this form will allow governors to track improvements in their functioning as a strategic body. Discussion will ensure that an agreed version of the RAG ratings has been secured.

Activity 3 (15 minutes)

Using the same form, ask governors to identify what, and where, documentary evidence to support their RAG ratings can be found (Question 2).

Plenary (5 minutes)

Summarise the outcomes and confirm, as necessary, any areas for improvement. Encourage the governing body to revisit the self-assessment on at least a yearly basis.

Questions

1. Use the template to RAG rate the current position regarding the strategic operation of the governing body (handout 1.3). Identify areas where changes/improvements need to be made. Reassess your position regularly in order to check on improvement progress.
2. Look at the principles of strategic leadership by the governing body (slides 3 to 5) again. Are you able to locate documentary evidence in your school that demonstrates these principles?

Governor training session 4: Challenging underperformance (55 minutes)

The following activity should be led by the SIP, an LA adviser or the NCA. It should be carried out with the full governing body.

Objectives

- To develop governor skills in challenging in an appropriate way.
- To develop the skill of being able to prioritise.
- To develop strategic skills that will lead to improved outcomes for pupils.

Resources

- Handout 1.4: (available on the Stronger Governance Systems homepage at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)
 1. LA note of visit following subject review at Torshire Community School
 2. role descriptions on cards cut up – one for each role of headteacher, chair of governors and the observer

Activity 1 (5 minutes)

Setting the context

Say that:

This role-play exercise is designed to help explore the role that governors play in holding leaders to account for improvement by robustly challenging underperformance and strategically planning a way forward.

A fictitious school (Torshire Community School) had asked the LA to carry out a review of its core subject departments: mathematics, English and science. The note of visit has just been received by the school, with a copy going to the chair of governors.

Prior to the review, the chair of governors and the headteacher had arranged to meet in order to discuss the outcomes of the review and any next steps.

In ten minutes time you will be holding a meeting in role to explore this and agree what needs to be done. For the activity, you will need to work in groups of three.

Agree the roles (see handout 1.4). The roles are:

- headteacher
- chair of governors
- observer.

Activity 2 (10 minutes)

Hand out the LA notes about the school and give out the role cards to the relevant people. Allow 10 minutes reading and preparation time.

Activity 3 (15 minutes)

Hold a meeting, led by the chair of governors, to explore the implications of the LA findings and agree what strategic steps now need to be taken.

Remember: It is important for the success of this exercise that you stay 'in character'. This is likely to be a challenge conversation at times but all parties should believe they have the success of the school and its pupils as their highest priority.

Activity 4 (10 minutes)

Review how the meeting went. Start with feedback from the observer, and then move into broader reflection. Agree two or three points/actions to feed back in plenary.

Plenary (15 minutes)

Take feedback from each group about what they have learnt through the activity. The discussion should centre not only on the actual improvement issues for this fictitious school but also on the way that appropriate challenge was given to the headteacher in order to move the school forwards and agreed the appropriate steps for further improvement.

Stronger Governance Systems

2 School improvement planning

Rationale

Schools traditionally produce a school development plan for up to three years covering all areas for development including such things as buildings, community links, extended services, etc. While it is agreed that all these things are important and need to be planned for, they can detract from a focus on and capacity for the single most important function of the school and that is to enable all its pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes. In addition where the plan covers an extended time frame, such as three years, then the sense of urgency to improve outcomes for these pupils, this year, can be diluted or even lost.

Where a school has been identified as needing to improve outcomes for its pupils it is recommended that the school produces a Raising Attainment Plan (RAP), which provides an explicit high-priority focus on attainment and achievement for the whole school community.

The RAP should drive improvement against school priorities and be informed by the school's self-evaluation and the work of the SIP. It is not merely a statement of intent but an instrument that drives school improvement. Progress towards targets is monitored and evaluated frequently. A RAP is most suitable for use in schools where the overwhelming priority is to raise attainment and/or progress of pupils, and so it is particularly appropriate for schools not making sufficient progress.

A RAP:

- provides a detailed, time-limited map that translates priorities into action
- aligns the work of the school (and any external support) around the agreed priorities and maintains a sharp focus on these
- identifies clear lines of accountability for actions and outcomes and supports all stakeholders in understanding their responsibilities linked to the agreed priorities.

Governors will have an important role in ensuring the right priorities are being addressed in an appropriate manner and time frame and also in monitoring the progress on the RAP and evaluation of the impact on the quality of the outcomes for every pupil in their school.

Quality standards

- d. The governing body is successfully focused on raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of all learners
- e. Governors have a clear understanding of the strategic priorities for the school and ensure an appropriate plan is in place and implemented effectively
- f. Governors engage effectively with parents, pupils and staff and are well informed about their views and use this to inform strategic priorities for development planning

The quality standards above are those that focus most on strategic planning for school improvement for governors. If it has not already been done it is recommended that governors carry out the self-assessment exercise against the quality standards on page 4 of these materials. They should use the exemplification that follows, related to each quality standard, to support an accurate self-assessment. Governors should then repeat the self-assessment at regular intervals to check their progress towards improved practice and increased impact.

The next section offers short exemplification and, where appropriate, related governor training activities. Based on the self-assessment, governors, with the support of SIPs or NCAs, can select and tailor these activities in order to address identified needs and priorities. Where the self-assessment reveals specific weaknesses in the governing body's exercise of its responsibilities related to school improvement planning it is strongly recommended that the

governing body draws on the support and expertise of the SIP or NCA or any external consultancy to facilitate the delivery of the related governor training sessions required to improve practice in this key aspect of school improvement.

Exemplification

- d. The governing body is successfully focused on raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of all learners
- e. Governors have a clear understanding of the strategic priorities for the school and ensure an appropriate plan is in place and implemented effectively

Governors bring a wealth and variety of knowledge and skills to their role but this is often not from an educational setting. Therefore knowing what is required in a good and effective School Improvement Plan in order for them to carry out their monitoring role can be a challenge.

Governors in one school were extremely conscientious in their role of monitoring at termly intervals sections of the school development plan. Priorities had been agreed and everything seemed to be progressing according to the plan time lines. Nevertheless the school was deemed to be making insufficient progress at a recent Ofsted inspection. In discussion with the lead inspector the chair of governors realised that unless the quality and style of the plan was significantly changed and improved the governors were not going to ever be able to fulfil their role and responsibilities with regard to monitoring progress of the plan and holding the school to account for the progress and also the pace at which improvement was being achieved.

Many governing bodies routinely monitor progress on sections of the school development plan through their committee structure. This takes the form of discussion around the progress made on a particular section of the plan, reviewing a different section each term. The discussion will normally be led by the headteacher or deputy head with responsibility for that aspect of the plan. Governors need to ask themselves: Does our current approach add value to the strategic planning for the school or are we merely 'rubber stamping' the work of the head and senior team? What difference have we made?

A good governing body would need to be asking some very searching questions:

- Does the plan still address the right priorities? And how do we know?
- Is this section of the plan the most important to be considering at this point in time? And how do we know?
- How do we know that what we are told about the progress made towards meeting each objective is accurate and appropriate?
- What is our evidence base? And is it the right one?

At the end of this process it is worth reflecting on whether governors are satisfied that the plan is being implemented effectively and good progress is being made, particularly in relation to pupil outcomes. Unless the governing body challenges the validity of the evidence and actively contributes to the process, the risk is that all they will have found out is that the headteacher and senior team are satisfied, and this does nothing to add value to the process.

A School Improvement Plan or RAP can be assessed against a number of known quality standards. If it is a good plan it will meet these quality standards and in so doing better enable the school to achieve the best possible outcomes for all of its pupils and achieve this at an appropriate pace.

Use **Governor training session 5** to develop understanding and practice further in effective school improvement planning.

- f. Governors engage effectively with parents, pupils and staff and are well informed about their views and use this to inform strategic priorities for development planning

*Partnership with parents – needs to be a fundamental element of any school improvement strategy. Parents’ support for their child’s learning is an essential foundation in raising standards. Parents say they want to be more involved in their children’s education, and schools see the benefit of greater engagement with parents... Two-thirds of parents want to be more involved; so we will be consulting parents to enable that to happen... We will also consult parents on how governing bodies take parents’ views into account.
(Promoting Excellence for All, DCSF, 2008)*

From September 2009 Ofsted will implement a revised framework and evaluation schedule and as part of this a ‘**good**’ governing body will ‘have clear systems for seeking the views of parents and pupils and mechanisms for acting on these’. Outstanding governors would expect to be meeting fully the quality standard above.

Governing bodies often rely on feedback from school leadership teams for information gathered on the views of parents and pupils. This will no longer be sufficient; schools will need to have systems in place to enable governors to gather views for themselves and more importantly take appropriate action in response to the views of users in their strategic role in school leadership. This does not mean that governors themselves will be expected to act directly on complaints or pieces of information they receive – this is the job of the head and staff of the school – but they should have mechanisms in place to gather information and to make informed proportionate strategic decisions based on a sound evaluation of the evidence.

Use **Governor training session 5** to further develop an understanding of the characteristics of a good improvement plan with clear and appropriate priorities that can be closely tracked and monitored for progress and impact on pupil progress.

Use **Governor training session 7** in Element 4 of this document to develop understanding and practice further in gathering the views of staff, parents and pupils to inform whole-school priorities.

Governor training materials

Governor training session 5: The RAP and effective school improvement planning

(1 hour and 30 minutes)

The following activity should be led by the SIP or NCA, and it is recommended it is carried out with the full governing body but is suitable for use with smaller groups of governors.

Objectives

- To understand the characteristics of a high-quality effective School Improvement Plans.
- To assess the quality and effectiveness of governors' own School Improvement Plan.

Resources

- Handout 2.1
- Handout 2.1a
- Handout 2.2
- The current School Improvement Plan for your own school
- Timetable and minutes from governors' meetings for review of sections of the plan
- Sticky notes and highlighter pens

(All handouts and PowerPoint presentations are available on the Stronger Governance Systems homepage at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)

Activity 1 (15 minutes)

Give out a copy of the current School Improvement Plan for the school and handouts 2.1, 2.1a and 2.2.

Ask governors to identify the overall priorities for the year from the plan and then to say:

- why and how these priorities came about
- what part the governing body played in establishing these priorities
- whether they agree that these are still the right priorities to accelerate progress and raise standards in the school. If not, what should they now be?

Activity 2 (45 minutes)

- Ask governors to read the quality standards for an effective RAP in handout 2.1, and then discuss with them the meaning of each in the context of schools, their need to improve and the governors' role in terms of challenge and accountability.
- Using the quality standards in the RAP management guide and the self-assessment grid in handout 2.2 ask governors, working in groups of two or three, to 'RAG' their current plan against the quality standards.

Take feedback and resolve any difference of opinion, asking for evidence about any variation in judgements (it is important the presenter has completed this exercise themselves prior to the session).

Ask the questions:

- Have all governors seen the plan before?
- How are governors carrying out their strategic role in monitoring and holding the headteacher to account for progress on the priorities?

Explore the answers to the above questions in regard to the role of governors with respect to the School Improvement Plan. Lead the governors to a better understanding of their strategic role in agreeing priorities and monitoring effective implementation of the plan.

Activity 3 (20 minutes)

Using the guidance notes and exemplar RAP in the RAP management guide ask governors to assess whether the School Improvement Plan they have enables them to carry out their monitoring and evaluation role or hinders it.

Do they rely solely on the headteacher and leadership team to know when and if an action has been completed? Do they evaluate the impact on pupil progress of any actions rather than taking a simple task-completion role?

Plenary (10 minutes)

Ask governors:

- What learning will they take from the session and what actions will they carry out?
- How will they change their practice?
- What support do they still need?

Stronger Governance Systems

3 Key indicators of how the school is doing

Rationale

In order to ensure their contribution to school improvement, governors need to know their school well and also be aware of the key questions to ask in order to acquire this knowledge. Indeed, this lies at the heart of the improvement process.

The fundamental purpose of any school improvement activity is to improve outcomes for all pupils. Self-evaluation should therefore focus specifically on the impact provision makes on these outcomes, and understanding what the school's attainment and progress data indicates about the quality of this provision is fundamental to this process for governors.

The majority of schools now make good use of national data to measure the impact of their work and to compare their own performance with that of similar schools. However, schools need to be supplementing global performance data with in-depth analyses of a range of other data to identify more subtle but important patterns of performance. This data includes analysis of the performance of different groups and individuals by gender, ethnicity, age, prior attainment and socio-economic background. As a result, it is possible to produce challenging but realistic targets for individuals and groups of pupils, and to establish clear milestones against which governors can monitor this progress.

Key sources of information for governors

How can you find out about standards and progress in your school?

- Headteacher's termly report to governors
- The school's self evaluation form (SEF)
- SIP's annual and individual visit reports
- Subject leader presentations to governors
- School's RAISEonline report

All governors should have regular access to the above sources of information and use them to inform their knowledge of the school and inform the strategic direction they take.

Quality standards

- g. The governing body has a good understanding of the quality of provision within its school and how the school's performance compares locally and nationally
- h. Governors are fully and systematically involved in the evaluation process, keeping the work of the school under review and acting upon their findings

The quality standards above are those that focus most on key indicators and questions with regard to school improvement for governors. If it has not already been done it is first recommended that governors carry out the self-assessment exercise against the quality standards on page 4 of these materials. They should use the exemplification that follows related to each quality standard to support an accurate self-assessment. Governors should then repeat the self-assessment at regular intervals to check their progress towards improved practice and increased impact.

The next section offers short exemplification and, where appropriate, related governor training activities. Based on the self-assessment, governors, with the support of SIPs or NCAs, can select and tailor these in order to address identified needs and priorities. Where the self-assessment reveals specific weaknesses in understanding key indicators and questions to ask it is strongly recommended that the governing body draws on the support and expertise of the

SIP/NCA or any external consultancy to facilitate the delivery of the related governor training sessions required to improve practice in this key aspect of school improvement.

Exemplification

- g. The governing body has a good understanding of the quality of provision within its school and how the school's performance compares locally and nationally
- h. Governors are fully and systematically involved in the evaluation process, keeping the work of the school under review and acting upon their findings

The role of the governor requires:

- knowledge of a school's performance and the steps being taken to improve
- 'critical friend' feedback and challenge on this performance where necessary
- checking that the measures the school takes to address underperforming groups are credible.

Key questions that governors might ask about performance are usually centred on attainment, for example what was the overall figure for GCSE for the school and did this meet or exceed the target set?

More governors are now beginning to explore in greater depth the difference between standards and progress, in that a school's raw attainment might look satisfactory, or even good, but how much progress have pupils made from their starting point? If progress improved, many more pupils would have improved outcomes and standards would be even higher!

Schools now routinely compare themselves with similar schools on the basis of the prior attainment of their pupils and in relation to a range of contextual features. This can raise issues that are not immediately apparent when making comparisons with overall national data. Single-sex schools, for example, may be presented with a very different picture when they compare themselves to other single-sex schools rather than to all schools.

A school had good value-added results on the basis of its pupils' prior attainment (PA) but its contextual value-added results (CVA) were not nearly as good. Closer analysis revealed that Indian pupils, the school's highest-attaining group, were not performing as highly as Indian pupils nationally. This led the school to provide more challenging work for those pupils.

Governors not only have a responsibility to hold schools to account for standards but also for the well-being and personal development of all pupils and, again, there is a wealth of data that can be used to support governors in knowing their school and how well it is doing. Governors can gain real insight into this through regular evaluation of data on attendance, persistent absence, exclusion and also internally generated data on behaviour, detentions, and levels of engagement in out-of-school activities. Who to ask and how to get this data is covered in more detail in Element 4 of these materials.

Use **Governor training session 6** to develop understanding and practice further in understanding the data and asking the right questions.

Governor training materials

Governor training session 6: Understanding data and knowing the questions to ask (75 minutes)

This training session is based on the training given to chairs of governors at the regional conferences for Gaining Ground, spring 2009.

The following can be carried out by the whole governing body or by a committee whose focus is on monitoring the quality of provision and overall performance and outcomes for pupils.

Objective

- To ensure that governors have a clear overview of their school based on an accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses indicated by the performance data.

Resources

- Data for governors PowerPoint presentation (available on the Stronger Governance Systems homepage at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)
- The available performance data about attainment and progress
- Selected sections of the school's own RAISEonline report that correspond to the generic slides in the presentation
- Handout 3.1 (available on the Stronger Governance Systems homepage at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)
- Digital projector
- Flipchart/whiteboard
- Print handouts of the presentation with three slides per page and space for notes

Activity 1 (30 minutes)

Show the first four slides of the PowerPoint presentation, which provide an introduction to the session.

Say:

We are not expecting governors to be data experts, but they should have an idea of data sets and analysis available to the school, and the questions that they should be asking the SLT with regard to performance.

Governors should want the best for their school and the pupils in it. They can be a friend to the school but this doesn't mean governors should be afraid to provide challenge to the SLT. Indeed they would be failing in the primary responsibility to their pupils if they did not.

Ask governors to work in groups and suggest what they think are the key questions to ask of their school leaders and what they hope to find out – give 5 minutes for discussion and then take feedback and record on flipchart/whiteboard.

Show slide 5 and distribute handout 3.1 on key questions.

Key questions for governors

1. Are overall GCSE results concealing poor progress?
2. Are our pupils fulfilling their earlier promise or could they achieve more?
3. Are the most disadvantaged pupils or those with SEN left behind and disengaged from their education?
4. Are the most able pupils stretched and challenged sufficiently?

5. Does the school analyse and respond to data about rates of progress for subjects and groups of pupils?
6. Has the school identified which pupils or groups of pupils are most at risk of underperforming?
7. How does the school ensure that underperformance is identified quickly – in one subject, or across a number of subjects?
8. What sort of additional support is offered to pupils or groups that are at risk of underperforming?
9. How are parents/carers involved?
10. How does the school monitor the effectiveness of additional support provided?
11. Are school targets analysed carefully to ensure that high expectations and challenging targets are set for all groups of pupils?
12. Is pupil performance affected by poor attendance?

The facilitator should begin to draw out differences between standards and progress.

Say that a school's raw attainment might look satisfactory, or even good – but how much progress have pupils made from their starting point?

- If progress improved, standards would be even higher!
- Note that **all groups** covered in bullet points 4 and 5 refer to ability/gender/ethnicity/FSM.

Elicit from governors their understanding of the different groups and if they know the relative performance of each group for their school.

Show slide 6 and explain what it shows. Then pose the question:

The graph shows that standards have risen between 2006 and 2008, and in 2008 were above the national average. But are they good enough for this school and your pupils? How do you know?

Show slide 7.

Say that the green box on this slide, which is taken from a school's RAISEonline report, shows that in 2008 the standards in the school would be judged to be significantly better than the national average while in 2006 and 2007 standards were 'in line'. If standards were significantly below the national average we would see blue boxes.

Explain that when we use the term 'significant' we mean, in everyday language, that something is important. In statistical terms, significant means something that we are confident didn't occur by chance.

Give out this page from the school's own RAISEonline report and ask them what they think it shows.

Encourage them to be accurate with the language they use.

Show slide 8 and say:

- Here is an example of another report from RAISEonline that focuses on performance in each subject at GCSE. The pupils in English, English Language, Geography, etc. have done significantly well, while pupils in Mathematics, Chemistry and Business Studies

have not. Pupils in subjects that are not colour-coded have performed in line with national averages.

Give out the school's own data and ask:

- What is the position for each subject in your school?
- What questions should you be asking of the leadership team, what actions might you want to take?

Show slide 9. Explain what is meant by levels and what we mean by national age-related expectations in terms of level 4 at Key Stage 2 and that this should translate into at least a grade C at GCSE.

Say that as well as considering standards, which may appear to be good, governors and school leaders must also consider the progress pupils make.

Provide some exemplar data on pupil intake levels at Key Stage 2 for your school.

Pose the question:

Pupils arrive in your school having attained a level at Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science. Given their Key Stage 2 attainment, what might we expect them to achieve at GCSE?

Show slides 10 and 11.

Say that although three levels of progress seems a reasonable expectation for some pupils, this slide shows that many pupils make four or more levels of progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 (27.9 = 167,000 in English) – which equates to a pupil with Key Stage 2 level 4 achieving a GCSE grade B or above.

Too many pupils make two or fewer levels of progress during the first five years of secondary schooling.

Ask governors to suggest some of the reasons why pupils fail to make as much progress as they might in their school. Give 3–5 minutes then take feedback before showing slide 12.

Show slide 12 and discuss conclusions.

Activity 2 (30 minutes)

Say:

You probably know about the standards in your school but do you know how much progress your pupils make? You are now going to look at a different way of judging pupils' progress.

Give out the 'stickmen' progress charts in handout 3.1 and also the charts for governors' own school in English and mathematics if available, and show slides 13, 14 and 15.

Make the point that: Key stage 3 tests now no longer take place and currently it is unclear how standards will be judged at the end of Year 9 and whether any national data will be published. Therefore it is not yet clear whether these 'stickmen' charts will continue to be published.

Presenters should take time to ensure that governors have grasped how to interpret this data and the next slide.

This first report shows how pupils have progressed from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4.

Explain that at first glance we can see that most pupils are gaining grade C or above in mathematics (blue stickmen) and therefore we might think that standards are reasonable. However we can see that 7% (11 pupils) of pupils who achieved level 6, 7 or 8 at Key Stage 3 achieved a grade D, when they should have achieved at least a grade B. Also the 9% (13 children) who achieved level 5 at Key Stage 3 should have gained a grade C. This shows that 16% of pupils (24 pupils) could have got a grade C, but did not.

Talk through the questions posed on slide 16; ask for feedback from governors with regard to their school.

Note that this report does not allow us to break down the results of the higher-attaining pupils.

Show slide 17. Explain the graph to governors showing how it describes the performance of boys and girls, high attainers and others, that is, pupils for whom expectations are different.

A large number of middle- and lower-ability pupils are not doing as well as expected – a mixture of boys and girls, but the majority are boys. Draw attention to three girls and two boys with very low outcomes.

These graphs can be used by the school to compare the performance of different ethnic groups, pupils entitled to free school meals, and so on.

Show slides 18 and 19 or give as handouts from RAISEonline for your school.

Say that:

This analysis provides the number of pupils who achieved 5A*–C including English and Mathematics in 2008, grouped by their estimated probability of achieving the threshold. The probability for each pupil is worked out by taking into account their contextual characteristics and their prior attainment at Key Stage 2. Significance tests have been performed on the data using a 95% confidence interval, and where the school value differs significantly from the school's corresponding predicted success rate, it is highlighted in green (sig+) or blue (sig–) as shown on the next slide.

More detail may need to be given here about the full meaning of CVA and the contextual factors that are used in this type of analysis. (RAISEonline users can log in then refer to Getting Started, the **online** Tutorials or Help materials for assistance in using **RAISEonline**.)

Briefly show slides 20 and 21 or give as handouts.

Explain that governors are not expected to be able to suggest steps for improvement in teaching and learning but these points are some they might want to look for in the various reports they receive from the headteacher or SIP.

Plenary (15 minutes)

Show slide 20. Allow governors 5 minutes to reflect on the questions and on how they will take what they have learnt and apply it to their role to increase impact on pupil outcomes in their school.

Refer back to the last page of handout 3.1, which lists key questions for governors.

Stronger Governance Systems

- 4 School self-evaluation – the role of governors

Rationale

In order to improve, schools need to know themselves well and governors need to know their schools. However, schools are complex organisations and so it is no small feat to ensure that a thorough, accurate and objective self-evaluation is arrived at. The purpose of this element is to assist governors not only in the evaluation of their own effectiveness but also the quality of the schools' self-evaluation processes.

The fundamental purpose of any school improvement activity is to improve outcomes for all pupils. Self-evaluation should therefore focus specifically on the impact provision makes on these outcomes and should be informed by the views of a wide range of users. In a cycle of continuous improvement the findings from self-evaluation should then inform priorities in strategic development planning.

A new relationship with schools: Improving performance through school self-evaluation (Ref: 1290-2005DOC-EN) identifies some key points about self-evaluation that schools should take into account:

- rigorous self-evaluation helps schools to improve
- schools should shape for themselves a process that is simple and integrated with their routine management systems
- schools must listen and respond to the views of users.

Quality standards

- f. Governors engage effectively with parents, pupils and staff and are well informed about their views and use this to inform strategic priorities for development planning
- g. The governing body has a good understanding of the quality of provision within its school and how the school's performance compares locally and nationally
- h. Governors are fully and systematically involved in the evaluation process, keeping the work of the school under review and acting upon their findings
- i. The governing body has adopted a robust approach to self-review of its own performance, which includes a plan for improvement

The next section offers short exemplification and, where appropriate, related professional development activities. Based on the self-assessment, governors, with the support of SIPs or NCAs, can select and tailor these in order to address identified needs and priorities. Where the self-assessment reveals specific weaknesses in self-evaluation it is strongly recommended that the governing body draws on the support and expertise of the SIP/NCA or any external consultancy to facilitate the delivery of the related governor training sessions required to improve practice in this key aspect of school improvement.

Exemplification

- f. Governors engage very effectively with parents, pupils and the staff as a whole and are well informed about users' views of the school, using these views to inform strategic priorities for development

The views of pupils about their experiences of teaching and learning are central to the self-evaluation process. Pupil voice provides a valid and valuable perspective based on the daily experience in the classroom. School councils are the obvious place to canvass pupil opinion but rarely the most fruitful. There are many and varied ways now employed by schools that provide a rich variety of evidence from the pupil voice.

There is an expectation of governors that the views of all stakeholders, staff, parents and pupils are sought on a regular basis and used to inform the self-evaluation process. This might be through the use of questionnaires but other sources could include:

- discussions at parents evenings
- meetings held to discuss particular topics
- parent/teacher associations
- parent governors
- other community-based meetings.

Governors are encouraged to participate in their own self-evaluation and in addition contribute to the school's self-evaluation processes. They should receive regular reports from senior and middle managers and analyse strengths and areas for improvement, both in specific areas to which they are assigned or have a personal interest and across the school. Many governing bodies have now restructured their committees so that each one focuses on a specific area of the School Improvement Plan and the subsequent evaluation of impact.

Use **Governor training session 7** to develop understanding and practice further in gathering the views of staff, parents and pupils to inform whole-school priorities.

- g. The governing body has a good understanding of the quality of provision within its school and how the school's performance compares locally and nationally
- h. Governors are fully and systematically involved in the evaluation process, keeping the work of the school under review and acting upon their findings

Self-evaluation is at the core of the governors' activities and is the key tool to bring about improvement in its own performance and that of the school. This process must be facilitated and underpinned by school leaders providing the necessary data and information essential to effective practice.

Evidence gathered from self-evaluation should be analysed and used fully to:

- diagnose precisely where strengths and weaknesses for the school lie and the implications for change
- identify the key strategic priorities
- plan the action needed to bring about improvement.

There is a range of information now available to schools. This includes both quantitative and qualitative indicators of performance. Both types of data are of value and inform the self-evaluation. Neither type should be valued over the other. More detail on the key questions for governors to ask and the data required to verify the answers is addressed in Element 3 of Stronger Governance Systems.

Good self-evaluation accesses evidence from a range of existing school data and information:

- review of data, including the RAISEonline report (in full to at least one governor)
- SIPs' reports
- Self-Evaluation form (SEF)
- headteacher's report to governors
- LA school improvement visit report.

In addition the following may add more detail to the outcome:

- canvassing the views of pupils and other users
- reports on outcomes of routine monitoring activities in the school
- regular reports to governing bodies from middle leaders
- minutes of meetings held across the school and from the governing body
- information from governor visits.

Use **Governor training session 8** for further guidance and supporting materials on leadership of self-evaluation for governing bodies.

- i. The governing body has a strong commitment to self-evaluation and has adopted a robust approach to evaluation of its own performance which includes a plan for improvement

From September 2009 a new Framework for Inspecting Schools will come into use, which states that Inspectors will make eight main judgements that relate to the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school. One judgement will relate directly to governance and will judge:

The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met.

From *Framework for the inspection of maintained schools in England from September 2009*. Ofsted. © Crown copyright 2009.

Do we make a difference and add value to the work of the school, are we effective in challenging and supporting the school? These are questions that every governing body should ask itself at least once a year.

Governors are encouraged to participate in their own self-evaluation and in addition contribute to the school's self-evaluation processes. Governors should be able to answer the following questions about their own performance and provide evidence to support this view.

- Have we helped to shape the vision and direction of the school?
- Have we added value to the work of the school, what is the evidence?
- Are we accurate in our assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the school?
- Have we challenged the school leadership in an appropriate, proportionate and supportive way?
- Do we really know the views held about the school in the wider community?

Use **Governor training session 9** for further guidance and supporting materials on self-evaluation for governing bodies and how governors know they are making a difference.

Governor training materials

Governor training session 7: Governors know and take into account the views of all users (1 hour)

The following activity can be carried out by governors alone or as a group with senior leaders.

Objective

- To ensure that the views, particularly of learners, but also parents and carers, are actively sought and taken into account by governors.

Resources

- Part A Section 2 from school's current SEF

(A new version of the SEF will be published for schools to use from September 2009 in line with the new Framework for inspecting schools. At the time of production of these materials final details of the new SEF were not yet published.)

Activity 1 (30 minutes)

Ask governors to work in groups and list all the different ways they and the school currently seek the views of all stakeholder groups.

Take feedback and discuss:

- Are all groups are canvassed equally?
- Is the evidence first hand or the headteacher and senior team's analysis of the evidence collected?
- How have governors checked on the validity of the analysis provided?

Give out the copies of Section 2 of the school's own SEF and ask governors to compare this to the outcomes from previous discussions. What are the implications for future behaviour?

Ask governors to suggest a number of ways that a wider range and quality of views can be accessed from each stakeholder group.

Activity 2 (20 minutes)

Pose these questions to governors:

- What do other stakeholders think about the school?
- How do you know? What evidence do you have to support this?
- How has this informed and influenced the actions of the governors in their role for setting the strategic direction and holding the headteacher to account?

Plenary (10 minutes)

Ask governors to agree who, when and how this will be achieved in the next term and over the following year.

Governor training session 8: Having a clear overview of the school and an accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses

(1 hour and 25 minutes)

The following activity can be carried out by governors alone or as a group with senior leaders.

Objective

- To ensure that governors have a clear overview of their school based on an accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses.

Resources

- The school's record of self-evaluation
- SEF part A
- Headteacher's report to governors
- SIP's annual report
- Handout 4.1 (available on the Stronger Governance Systems homepage at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)
- Handout 4.2 (available on the Stronger Governance Systems homepage at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)
- RAP or School Improvement Plan

(A new version of the SEF will be published for schools to use from September 2009 in line with the new Framework for inspecting schools. At the time of production of these materials final details were not yet published.)

Activity 1 (15 minutes)

Ask governors to work in groups and make a list of all the things that governors should be monitoring in their strategic role, then compare it to the example list in handout 4.2.

- Are there any differences?
- Do you disagree about any of them?

Now make a second list of all the sources of information governors can draw on to help them in their monitoring role.

Get the groups to compare lists with the one provided in handout 4.2.

- Are there any differences?
- Are there any sources that are more useful than others?

Activity 2 (25 minutes)

Ask the group to work in pairs and discuss and complete handout 4.1: Self-evaluation evidence grid.

- What issues and questions arise?
- What actions need to be taken?

Use the outcomes to come to a view on the following assertion.

The school's processes for evaluation demonstrate that:

- headteacher and senior leaders and governors give priority to and lead self-evaluation personally
- self-evaluation is integral to the culture of the school
- staff at all levels are committed to it and fully involved.

Activity 3 (30 minutes)

Ask governors to work in groups of two or three and each group to take and read a separate section of the SEF Part A 2–7 and then complete a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis based on the information in that section of the SEF and anything else they know about the school.

Pose the following questions to each group:

- How do you know what you have read in the SEF is valid and true?
- Does the information in your section of the SEF support your current view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school? What other information/evidence do you need?

Plenary (15 minutes)

Bring the groups together and ask them to share their conclusions from the previous activity and compare and contrast outcomes for strengths and weaknesses.

Say that the School Improvement Plan is a vehicle for addressing weaknesses and threats to the school. Look at the copy of the priorities in the plan for the school. Do the weaknesses identified by the groups appear as priorities to be addressed in the School Improvement Plan? If not what steps will the governing body now take to challenge this position with the school leadership?

Governor training session 9: Governors' own self-evaluation
(1 hour)

The following activity can be carried out by governors alone or as a group with senior leaders.

Objective

- To ensure governors know how well they are doing and that they are adding value to the school.

Resources

- Handout 4.3 (available on the Stronger Governance Systems homepage at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)
- Flipchart or whiteboard

Activity 1 (25 minutes)

Review with governors the outcomes of the previous training sessions on the school self-evaluation process. Ask them to ask themselves the questions:

- Have we helped to shape the vision and direction of the school?
- Have we added value to the work of the school?
- Are we accurate in our assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the school?
- Have we challenged the school leadership in an appropriate, proportionate and supportive way?
- Do we really know the views held about the school in the wider community?

The presenter could either give all questions to every group or ask each group to do a single question in more depth – depending on time available.

Take feedback with justification from each group and put notes on a flipchart/posters round the room so they are visible for Activity 2.

Activity 2 (20 minutes)

Give out handout 4.3 or use the relevant section from the 2009 Evaluation Schedule for inspecting secondary schools, not yet published at the time of completing these materials. Ask governors – How good are you really: do you know according to external standards?

Ask governors to work in groups of two or three and assess themselves against the criteria given in handout 4.3 or the Ofsted evaluation schedule section on judging standards of governance. Ensure governors can justify their judgement.

Take feedback from each group, and then come to a shared view on quality of governance of the school.

Plenary (15 minutes)

What are governors doing well, what could be improved?

Ask governors to devise their own action plan for improvement, ensuring they have short-, medium- and long-term objectives and a means to monitor their progress towards meeting these targets.

Resources and web links

National Strategies

www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies

RAP management guide (00748-2008PDF-EN-01)

RMG induction pack (00838-2008PDF-EN-02)

Stronger Management Systems (00838-2008PDF-EN-02)

What governing bodies should expect from schools leaders and what school leaders should expect from governing bodies

www.nga.org.uk/uploadfiles/documents/GovernorsandHeadsfinal08.pdf

Governornet, information for school

www.governornet.co.uk/index.cfm?topicAreald=13

A Guide to the Law for School Governors, March 2009

www.governornet.co.uk/publishArticle.cfm?topicAreald=26&contentId=1347&pageStart=1&sortOrder=c.publishDate

National Audit Office: Improving school performance, a guide for school governors

www.nga.org.uk/uploads/NAOISP.pdf

National Governors Association, NGA

www.nga.org.uk/

NGA, newsletter

www.nga.org.uk/NGA%20Newsletter.aspx

NGA Guides – to be released September 2009

www.nga.org.uk/guidesmain.aspx

Ofsted: School Governance Making it Better

www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Leadership/Governance/School-governance-making-it-better

NGA Guides to Governance

www.nga.org.uk/guidesmain.aspx

RAISEonline

www.raiseonline.org

Acknowledgements:

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Audience: School Improvement Partners,
Headteachers, Governors,
National Challenge Advisers
Date of issue: 06-2009
Ref: **00578-2009PDF-EN-02**

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