



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

Effectively managing headteacher performance

Annexe A – case studies

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Headteacher performance management reports

This document is one of a set of reports about the study of the effective management of headteacher performance in schools in England.

This report includes the case studies drawn from the research to illustrate approaches to headteacher performance management in a variety of schools and school groups around England.

We recommend that you read all the reports to understand the research fully. These documents are available on from gov.uk. The complete set of reports includes the following:

- **Research brief**
A summary of key areas for consideration by governors and those directly involved in the process of headteacher performance management.
- **Full report**
The full report, including the executive summary; details about the framework and design of the study; a review of the international literature on performance management of senior leaders in education and related sectors; analysis of empirical data collected for the study; discussion of significant issues arising from the analysis; and a summary of main findings and implications drawing on the analysis and review of literature.
- **Case Studies (Annexe A)**
Ten case studies drawn from the research to illustrate approaches to headteacher performance management in a variety of schools and school groups around England.
- **Vignettes (Annexe B)**
Twelve examples of important research themes contextualised in specific school settings.

Case Study MAT-B:

Aiming towards performance governance in a national multi-academy trust

Introduction

This national multi-academy trust (MAT) uses its oversight of principals as a vehicle for a broader restructuring of support and accountability across and within all schools. The framework depends on clear lines of responsibility that separate the duties of the director of education, who serves as the line manager of principals, from the work of each school's external adviser; a carefully-selected and highly experienced educational leader who supports the principal and the school local governing body (LGB) but has no direct responsibilities for evaluating the principal's performance.

Background

MAT-B is a charitable trust with over three dozen schools across England. A new chief executive, sought by trustees to bring new energy to the organisation, arrived in 2012. Shortly after arriving, he circulated a document outlining tenets of a new approach to managing senior leaders' performance throughout the trust. The document intended to provoke discussion among and feedback from senior leaders, who comprised executive headteachers of school federations, headteachers of independent schools and principals of academies. The chief executive brought in a new director of education, who took responsibility for consulting with school leaders around the design of the support and accountability system and consolidating it into clear processes to be applied across all schools.

The new director shared with the chief executive a strong belief in performance management as the way the central organisation could model for the senior school teams how to support and develop staff throughout the organisation. Equally important, the director felt that effective performance management, 'sets the tone and ethos' the trust wants to cultivate in all schools. He says, 'If you don't have great performance management, then you probably can't identify great performance and reward it, with whatever that reward might be. By the same token, you can't identify underperformance—and tackle it, address it.'

Restructuring performance management across the trust

Among the first things that the director clarified were the responsibilities of the three most important roles in the performance management of principals, those of the central director of education, the local governing body and the external advisers. The board of the trust delegated accountability for performance of participating schools to the director, who serves as line manager of school principals. The director is also charged with overseeing the local governing body (LGB) of each school. The LGB challenges and supports staff of the school but holds no statutory responsibilities in terms of formal oversight of the school.

Prior to the new director's arrival, his predecessor had been charged with both the support of principals as well as holding principals to account for performance. Under the new approach, the director increased the role of the external adviser as a source of support and challenge, while clarifying his own role as line manager with oversight of accountability. The external adviser could then focus more on a coaching/consultative role. Also the external adviser played an important role in verifying the information used in evaluating the state of the school and of the principal's performance.

The notion of keeping the roles distinct came from the 'challenge partners' role developed during the City Challenge programmes. Challenge partners orchestrated developmental alliance between very experienced headteachers who worked alongside and challenged supported headteachers in a developmental way.

As described by the 'Support and Accountability Framework' designed by the director, the new responsibilities of the external adviser encompassed the following:

- broker appropriate support, including:
 - middle and senior leader expertise from schools from within or outside the group
 - support from a national support school (NSS), teaching school or national leader of governance (NLG)
 - a peer executive coach
 - consultant support (including national experts in any particular sphere)
 - programmes to provide opportunities to young people or support attitudinal change
 - additional capacity from commercial and not-for-profit organisations
 - national training from organisations such as Future Leaders and Teaching Leaders

- work closely with MAT-B central teams, share knowledge and draw on their support
- monitor and evaluate the implementation of school improvement strategies, refining and/or revising as appropriate
- quality assure each school's self-evaluation and ensure that trustees are well informed
- coach and support senior leaders to develop their capacity to lead improvement and support academies to become self-improving and to contribute to and lead effective school partnerships.

Thus, the director of education worked with the external adviser and the LGB to manage the performance of the principal. The process of performance review involves up to four formal monitoring meetings across the year:

- In the first half-term of each academic year, the director meets with the principal, the chair of the LGB and the education adviser to:
 - review performance over the previous year
 - agree the key performance indicators for the school for the coming year
 - discuss any additional areas identified by the director or the school
 - review the principal's performance and complete the appraisal process
 - agree the performance objectives for the principal for the forthcoming year.
- Principals and chairs are encouraged to invite other members of the LGB or senior team to the first part of this meeting.
- A second meeting will be arranged for the first half-term of the spring term. This will use each school's termly report and appraisal documentation to:
 - outline progress towards the agreed KPIs, annual school improvement plans and five year plans;
 - review the principal's performance to date in relation to the appraisal objectives agreed;
 - discuss any additional areas identified by the director or the school.
- A third meeting may be scheduled for the start of the summer term, but only for those schools where the particular circumstances suggest this would be appropriate.

Source: MAT-B Support and Accountability Framework

The principal has a limited number of objectives that cover the following four areas:

- **Delivery objectives** – these focus on what is to be achieved in the coming year. They include aspects such as finance/budgets, pupil numbers, and pupil achievement.
- **Leadership and management objectives** – these focus on building leadership and management capacity within the school, reflecting MAT-B values and behaviours.
- **Corporate objectives** – these will focus on what the individual does to contribute to MAT-B overall.
- **Personal objectives** – these focus on continuous professional development and career aspirations.

The principal holds responsibility for collecting appropriate evidence, and there is a high bar for the quality and integrity of evidence that is expected. Corporate objectives offer a way of developing capacity for system leadership:

As the principal of an academy becomes principal of an outstanding academy, we encourage them to look into opportunities to be head of a federation across more than one school. Linking performance management with career opportunities and continuing career development is really important. For example, one of our principals is involved in a senior role in helping with initial teacher training, so we're able to give people opportunities beyond their own school, as well as giving recognition and reward beyond pay alone.

Challenges

Performance-related pay remains a challenge. The trust has recently created pay bands for schools that take into consideration the school context and conditions of the local education 'market'.

Highlights

The orchestration of performance management across this trust exemplifies some of the attributes of what Bouckaert and Halligan (2008) describe as 'performance governance', 'broad span and depth of control that encompasses system-wide coherence, integration, consistency, convergence and comprehensiveness' (p. 39).

- Well-embedded, structured and consistent approach to managing performance across the trust and within schools affiliated with the trust

- Clear understanding and common interpretation of what constitutes appropriate performance information
- Clear roles and lines of responsibility for both support and development, along with structured system of ongoing monitoring.

Reference

Bouckaert, G. and Halligan, J. (2008). Managing performance: international comparisons. London: Routledge.

Case Study P4:

An 'outstanding' primary school in the north west of England illustrates the impact of a mature, efficiently organised and effectively managed headteacher performance management process

Introduction

The school has a successful and long-serving head as well as several members of the governing body who have been associated with the school over a number of years. Both the head and the governing body regard the leadership and management of headteacher performance as a key element of the school's strategy for continuing to raise standards and for supporting the development of staff. In addition, the governing body, the head and the staff have a clear focus on the learning and progress of the individual child.

Background

This single form entry school, situated in a small town in the North West, is a community primary school catering for approximately 215 boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 11. The school has 25 staff, 11 of which are teaching staff and whose work is supported by a combination of 'high quality' teaching assistants (TAs) and higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs).

The school became an academy in April 2013. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a small number from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the number of pupils eligible for free school meals. In addition to becoming a Foundation Trust School in 2010, it has gained several awards including the European Foundation Quality Mark, the Inclusion Quality Mark and Eco School Award. The most recent school Ofsted report, from July 2009, found the school's overall performance to be 'outstanding'.

The head describes the school's governing body as: 'the group of parents, local people, staff and business members who formulate school policy'. Currently, and in addition to the head, the governing body is composed of 2 foundation governors; 1 co-opted governor; 3 parent governors; 1 teacher governor; and 1 support staff governor. The governing body also benefits from the support and services provided by a clerk (not a governor).

For some years, the school has enjoyed stability in terms of the quality of the contribution and structure of the governing body. The recruitment of new governors is rarely, if ever, an issue for the school. This is partly attributable to the head's proactivity. Governors praised the vision, drive and entrepreneurship of the head in attracting resources to the school and in developing a strong governor and staff team. Of the nine current members of the governing body, several, including the chair of governors, the chair of the finance committee and the chair of the personnel committee, have been closely involved with the school, as governors, for more than ten years; and these governors have been strategically involved with changes in the school over time, notably the move towards academy status.

Several governors have a wealth of relevant professional and personal expertise from the business and other sectors that enables them to contribute to the work of the school. There is a well-established committee (often referred to as 'teams') structure, each with responsibility for monitoring aspects of the school's work in detail and for reporting back to the full governing body. Governors visit the school frequently and appropriately and are closely involved in its activities, including the selection of new staff.

The panel responsible for performance management has three members and is chaired by the chair of the personnel committee (who is not the chair of governors). The panel has had the same membership for several cycles of the performance management process.

The current head was appointed to this school as deputy over twenty years ago and, after three years in this role, was appointed to the headship. He demonstrates a deep passion about the significance of learning not only for children but also for adults. His involvement with performance management can be traced back to the mid-1980s when his interest in the potential of performance management to help bring about school improvement prompted him to introduce the initiative to the school.

The chair of governors has been a governor of the school for over ten years and been part of the appraisal panel for 5-6 years. In the past she has worked as a senior manager in an auditing company. For the last few years she has set up and run her own firm of chartered accountants. With that role comes significant responsibility for ensuring staff development and performance management.

The current external adviser is highly regarded by the governors and staff at the school. Now an independent consultant, she has been a head of a primary school, a national leader of education and a school improvement partner. Having heard of her

positive reputation, the head recommended her for selection by governors as their external adviser. The head was keen to employ the services of someone who had a strong understanding of primary schools and particularly, of curriculum and attainment data, Ofsted experience, and who could relate to an astute governing body. Moreover, as a highly experienced and successful head himself, he was anxious to work alongside a professional colleague who could support, question and challenge.

The personnel committee takes responsibility for the review of policies relevant to its role and its members often take part in interviews for new members of staff. The committee chair also chairs the pay committee, which meets once a year to review the pay of all staff, including that of the head. He has been a governor for about fifteen years. His involvement in, and knowledge of performance management is extensive.

Performance management cycle

The school operates within a culture of rigorous and regular monitoring. Staff can expect to be held accountable for the quality of their professional practice and for the progress of the pupils in their care. The school's performance management process is set out in an agreed policy that is reviewed by the governors annually. The formal cycle for the head currently begins in September or October each year and centres on a visit to the school by the external adviser. The appointment of a panel of governors to carry out headteacher performance management takes place in the previous summer term. The head regards the timing to be appropriate in order to use the outcomes to inform the performance management of the rest of the staff.

The head's performance management begins with a commentary and self-reflection on progress towards the previous year's objectives and this is shared with the external adviser and members of the appraisal committee. The commentary draws on evidence which is maintained by the head during the course of the year, as well as on his termly reports to governors. The head ensures that his performance management targets are covered in the report that he provides for all governors, although the governors are not aware that this is the case unless they are part of the appraisal panel.

On the basis of the commentary, the external adviser writes a preliminary report and sends this to the head and to the governors on the appraisal panel about two weeks before the visit. The external adviser constructs the report from the evidence she has been sent and her own background knowledge of the context and the school. The report also includes some suggested areas to prompt discussion but is not prescriptive.

The external adviser visits the school for one day. The morning is spent collecting evidence and, at times, carrying out lesson observations for the governors in a similar way to the role of a school improvement partner. This, previously statutory, role has now ceased but so helpful had this function been that the school decided to buy in the service.

Headteacher performance management meetings are conducted as follows:

- The head meets the external adviser for about an hour, in order to discuss the preliminary report, the commentary and the evidence related to the previous year's targets. Data on pupil progress is provided which shows each pupil's target and achievement. The external adviser will question evidence and probe what has been said about achieving targets.
- The process is repeated in a second meeting between the members of the appraisal panel and the external adviser. Using the external adviser as an external expert, governors scrutinise the report and probe through questioning. The head expects to be challenged as part of this process.
- The head is given preliminary verbal feedback on achievement of the previous year's objectives. He is also given an indication of the areas or the targets that need to be firmed up that seem to be appropriate for the direction that the school is taking. These areas are discussed and agreed during the course of this meeting. The head and governors perceive no distinction between objectives for personal development and those which help the school improve.
- Following the day of the visit, the performance management statement is drafted by the external adviser. This draft includes a review of the achievement of the previous year's objectives and objectives for the coming year and is sent to the chair of the appraisal panel. Following circulation to other members of the appraisal panel and any subsequent amendments, the statement is finalised between the external adviser and the chair of the panel and given to the head for signature.
- Monitoring of progress is not conducted formally through dedicated meetings. The termly reports to all governors are written to show where there has been progress towards objectives, however only those governors on the appraisal panel are aware of this. The various sub-committees of the governing body indirectly monitor progress towards the head's objectives through their scrutiny of various aspects of the school's development.

The head prefers his performance management to be done first because some objectives, particularly those that involve pupil performance, are used to inform the performance management objectives of other staff, through a 'cascade' process.

The head uses his objectives to inform the performance management of his deputy who, in turn, will use her objectives to inform the performance management of middle leaders and, thereby, those of all staff. It is usually the case that some of the agreed objectives may be of greater personal relevance to the head than others.

Pay decisions for the head do not depend solely on the performance review, although the pay committee, which considers salary issues for all staff, takes place after the annual statement has been agreed.

Both the head and the governors agreed that, if the head were less experienced, objectives would be used more to inform personal development as well as supporting the needs of the organisation. The experience and record of the head also means that national standards for headteachers are no longer relevant to his performance management. They suggest that the process of using performance management objectives to maintain challenge and sustain excellence for an experienced headteacher in an outstanding school is necessarily different from what would be the case for someone relatively new in post or in a different kind of school. The chair of the appraisal panel believes that the head has all the skills necessary to lead and sustain excellence, whereas if there were a newly appointed head the approach would be completely different and would then need to have the same regard for personal professional development that applies to the rest of the staff.

The external adviser believes that the process is particularly effective at this school because 'governors are not afraid to say what they think, either to each other or to the headteacher.' She believes that the quality of discussion has always been very high, but has continued to improve during the time she has been involved with the school.

Those interviewed agreed that it was beneficial to review the activities and outcomes of the last twelve months and reflect on how the achievement of objectives had really helped the school.

In addition to the expertise provided by the head, the school's governing body is fortunate in having a number of highly skilled and experienced governors with leadership and management experience in other contexts. These varying contexts include: a chartered accountant, a teacher, a banker, a nutritionist and an academic. This range of professional experience and expertise in contexts other than education is considered by the chairs of the respective committees to be extremely beneficial. Governors also believe that insights into judging performance in another role, either outside or within education, is essential for headteacher performance management. The external adviser believes that governors at this school show exceptional insight

and imagination in discussing the direction of the school and performance objectives, which she believes is a result of their broad experience and aptitudes.

The external adviser's support was also considered to have provided effective mentoring and training and had been useful to the panel, particularly in ensuring that procedures were followed. All interviewees agreed that the involvement of a highly competent external adviser is crucial to securing effective headteacher performance management.

Key features of headteacher performance management at this school

- The formal appraisal process takes place against a background of rigorous and ongoing monitoring of the school's work by the full governing body, supported by reports from its committees. A combination of regular termly and half-termly headteacher's reports are compiled with reference to the year's performance objectives and contribute to the evidence base for formal review.
- The formal headteacher performance management process is taken seriously by all concerned and conducted effectively and efficiently. The head takes care and time to prepare and maintain a folder of evidence that facilitates the monitoring process. For example, the head keeps up-to-date with his progress in meeting agreed performance management objectives. Governors consider that the evidence they are given is relevant and concise and that they are left in no doubt about whether objectives have been achieved or not.
- Very good relationships, characterised by mutual respect, trust, open communication and a willingness to challenge and be challenged were considered essential by those interviewed.
- Governors believe that the input of the external adviser is essential, for example, in providing guidance on the interpretation of data and contextualising this. The external adviser contributes her educational knowledge and experience of the role of the headteacher to make sure that governors fully understand the information provided and that messages are clearly communicated.
- Members of the governing body are persuaded that the experience they bring of leading and managing performance in other sectors is essential. They believe that this experience is capable of adding enormous value to the training made available elsewhere eg through local authorities. The external adviser regards the professional qualities of governors at this school enable a particularly insightful and imaginative approach to discussion.

- The head and the governing body agree that without openness and trust, the integrity of the performance management process would be severely compromised. Confronting issues and accepting challenges are powerful features of the excellent relationships between the governors and the head.

Key challenges

Currently, the school's headteacher performance management process is efficient, rigorous and effective, strongly supported by staff and championed by an experienced head and an astute governing body. A key challenge for the school will be to sustain the impact of its successful performance management strategy on its 'outstanding' status. There is an awareness that the impending structural change that will mean that the existing head and deputy will share the headship in the new academic year. Members of the governing body are fully aware that this new situation will present key challenges to its ways of working.

Highlights

Headteacher performance management at this school is highly effective because:

- It provides an excellent opportunity to help unify the governing body and all of the school workforce in their key task, that of securing high standards of education for pupils.
- It acts as a framework to bring about improvement and to ensure that staff are well-trained, highly motivated and feel cared for.
- The structure of the governing body is fit for purpose and the supporting processes provide effective and ongoing monitoring of all aspects of the school, including the contribution of the head.
- The process enjoys the trust of the participants and is treated seriously by all parties.
- It is carried out rigorously and sensitively and with thorough preparation.
- It relies on an appropriate range of comprehensive evidence to inform performance reviews.
- It makes use of a skilled and experienced external adviser to advise the head and the governing body on how to determine the school's priorities, how to gather evidence and how to interpret the impact of teaching on pupil learning.
- The school's governors are highly skilled in a range of areas and bring leadership and management experience from within and outside education. This is combined with a deep knowledge of the school and long-standing relationships with the head.

- Relationships between members of the governing body and the head are described as excellent and brought about by open communication and frank discussions.
- The governing body and the head have been able to achieve the right balance between ongoing support and appropriate challenge.

Case Study S5:

Developing 360 degree headteacher performance management in a north-eastern comprehensive school

Introduction

This good, with outstanding for behaviour, comprehensive school is using a process suggested by the head, which is as close to 360 degree as possible, with data collected from parents and students, as well as other stakeholders. As a result the governing body has become confident in collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data in a sophisticated manner, drawing on the professional skills they bring to their roles. It has led to greater thought about how headteacher performance management should take place, who should be involved and what data should be used and; the model has been refined and sharpened over time. headteacher performance management is linked to school targets and objectives are made public and included in the school's development and action plan. The model and process is highly valued by both governors and the headteacher.

Background

This 11–18, mixed comprehensive school used to be a grammar school and is described by the chair of governors as still having those traditions. It became an academy in autumn 2011. The school is split over two sites and is located in the north-east of England. It has strong links with the local community and local universities. In 2012, Ofsted judged it good with outstanding for behaviour. There are approximately 1400 pupils including a sixth form of approximately 300.

Most pupils are described as 'middle-class' although some are drawn from one or two mining communities. It has a low percentage of pupils on free school meals. It was described as a 'happy school' with 'great staff' and 'just the best kids in the world...with no edge to them' by its head and pupils consistently achieve good results. A governor said the school's ethos was 'very caring towards staff and pupils. Very ambitious with high aspirational values in all sorts of areas. Particularly learning and teaching. Was results focussed but has broadened into how children learn'.

The current head moved to the school in the early 1990s as faculty leader. He was deputy head for seven years and then associate head for a year before being appointed as head in 2007. The school now has relatively young, keen and

committed staff. It is very strong on extra-curricular activities such as sport and creative arts. Its big agenda is learning; both enquiry- and project-based.

The governing body is very skilled. Governors are professionals or ex-professionals, having worked, for example, in education or for the National Health Service or KPMG. The chair has a background in educational leadership, networks across the region, is a member of a government bureaucracy reference group and is a national leader of governance. He joined the governing body in the late 1980s and has been chair of governors since the early 1990s.

The local authority provides a training course on headteacher performance management for governors, which the school's governors attended and found worthwhile. They felt that just knowing a little bit more made them more confident. Governors also use the National Governors' Association website.

The external advisor was a local school improvement partner for a year and was asked to become the school's external advisor as there is no longer a direct reporting link to the local authority and she works for the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL). There were also close working links with the head, as they worked together on a NCTL project and she was the head's local authority mentor. Other important strengths of the external adviser are that she:

- was head of a language college and understands large secondary schools and language colleges;
- has an up-to-date, NCTL background and understanding of cutting edge issues;
- is the lay person who challenges;
- can discuss the bigger picture;
- is very objective and expects to see and read all documentation.

The performance management cycle and use of results

The whole process is considered as close to 360 degree as it is possible to be. The head asked for this when he was first appointed. As deputy, he had been accustomed to getting honest feedback from the previous head and as a new headteacher he was unsure about his performance. The head views the headteacher performance management process as an opportunity to get a view from all stakeholders of how they feel he is performing and regards it as the highlight of the year. He indicated that he prepares harder than for an Ofsted inspection, viewing the process as a validation of the direction he sees himself going in, as it is possible to track improvement, year on year. It is also the only time that he gets feedback and is able to focus on himself.

Initially, all governors were asked if they wanted to be part of the performance process. Six governors, all of whom are professionals, volunteered and their roles were agreed at a full governing body meeting.

The initial meeting, in September, starts with a results review and topics are then circulated and agreed. An agenda is set. The governors then work out which stakeholders they want to speak to. The sample includes: a random sample of parents (interviewed over the phone) and pupils (selected by the learning co-ordinator). The head does not know who they are.

The questions are informed by the headteacher standards and cover the:

- core purpose of school
- biggest impact the head has had
- extent to which the head inspires trust.

The availability of the governors is given to the head's personal assistant who sets up the interviews, which run over a three or four week period. Each of the six governors comes back with the key issues that have been raised. They do not use government guidance but do use statistics including data from RAISEonline, the Sutton Trust and the Fisher Family Trust.

Further data considered includes:

- hard data from the transformation plan;
- students' progress data;
- key stage two outcomes raw scores; 8 best scores for 16 +;
- data for A-level, destinations and similar items.

The data are then collated to draw out the issues. Mixing hard data with soft data ensures culture and climate are considered and feedback from data is remarkably consistent. Occasionally, interview data highlight specific items that governors were not aware of and a surprising number of items can come from pupils.

Two or three governors come together, without the external advisor, to decide on key issues. The governing body then meets with the external advisor who acts as a critical friend. The governors and external advisor then hold a three-hour meeting with the head and go through previous targets and present evidence for whether targets have been met. The governing body provides the head with feedback on its latest data collection and analysis, and then raises and revisits school values and discusses:

- school achievement;
- the achievement agenda;
- curriculum reform;
- stakeholder engagement.

After exploring where the school is and key performance indicators, objectives are set. The external advisor guides them through the process. The head commented that there is a 'massive' investment of time by the governors, that it is 'tremendous'. Part of the head's performance review is published in the headteacher's report. Most of the feedback is positive but any negative feedback is taken straight to the senior leadership team. Nothing is confidential.

The process includes a mix of accountability and development and is linked to pay, as it gives the governors an objective measure of the head's performance. The targets, however, are school targets, not the head's targets, for example: to eliminate inadequate teaching, or reduce the attainment gap of free school meal pupils. In terms of staff, headteacher performance management is closely linked to their performance. The head monitors staff performance, moves key personnel around and has been running a programme to convert satisfactory teachers to good teachers. There is evidence that headteacher performance management is having a strong impact on staff development and performance.

Data collection is ongoing, throughout the year, to establish progress. For example, the special interest governor for key stage three monitors the progress of the targets, visiting the head of key stage three who feeds back data in detail, with a review process each term. They look at individual students, interventions, curriculum developments and parent involvement. The review committee meets termly and gets more formal feedback. They are getting better at being information-rich, as data is usually talked about.

The head and the chair of governors monitor performance, with the chair of governors acting as a sounding board and confidante. However, there is no quality assurance of the process; this is an area they may wish to explore.

Challenges

It has proved difficult to identify professional development, particularly for the head's needs. The chair would have recommended the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) if it had still been available. The governing body is considering looking at business school programmes to ascertain whether they might be appropriate.

Key challenges for governors were identified as:

- always knowing about trends in education and keeping up to date;
- understanding why a head would choose a particular element of development;
- developing an understanding of collecting relevant data objectively and ethically. In this school's case, they have been able to do this with the support of the chair of governors who was a university professor.

All interviewees wondered if their process was transferable to all schools as it was highly dependent on the head and governing body's relationship and on the skills and abilities of the governing body. It was suggested that governors from some smaller schools were willing, but some were themselves unemployed, and most knew virtually nothing about the headship role or management. "Headteacher's salary can seem like a fortune to them. These schools need a lot of support". It was suggested that training should go back to basics, so that governors would understand why they had to do headteacher performance management. Suggested areas to be covered were:

- including headteacher performance management as part of school performance management
- what to expect from the headteacher
- advice on targets and what is appropriate
- examples from other schools
- legal implications
- statutory process: what and why
- ideas of how headteacher performance management might be more informal
- the use of questionnaires etc
- confidence in conducting discussions
- building capacity to give feedback.

Training in the school was also seen as important, for example, one-day sessions exploring things the school would like to do and what it sees as important.

It was suggested that the external advisor's role is very important and all governing bodies should have someone from outside who is part of the process, otherwise there might not be a fair process and it might be open to abuse if left to an internal governing body.

Highlights

- The head has been a key driver of the process and, along with staff and governors, is entirely committed to headteacher performance management, regarding it as a highlight of the year as it is the only time that he gets feedback and is able to focus on himself.
- An external adviser who is trusted by the head and who is very experienced in the role is important in developing commitment to the process.
- Performance management documentation is very clear. The headteacher receives clear objectives and is given very detailed information on whether an objective was achieved and if not why not.
- This school uses an unusually broad range of data. It makes good use of the opportunity to get a view from all stakeholders of how they feel the head is performing. Data is collected at the beginning of the process and throughout the year to establish progress. This ensures that the school and the governors have a good idea of whether the targets are being met.
- Including the data and the targets in the school's action plan ensures that there are data that can be benchmarked, year on year, to establish whether progress has been made.

Case Study Sp6:

An ‘outstanding’ special school in the south west which demonstrates coherent integration of headteacher performance management with ongoing monitoring of school performance

Introduction

This outstanding special school has a long-serving head and governors who have been involved with the school over a long period. Governors’ management of headteacher performance is considered an essential part of maintaining the school’s high standards and of supporting the continuing ambition and motivation of the headteacher. It represents a mature system which benefits from excellent and open relationships which have matured over time.

Background

This special school caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, physical disabilities or autism, with pupils aged from 8 to 16. There are specialist facilities for vocational learning and pupils from other local mainstream schools attend for vocational courses. The headteacher described the education of pupils as ‘three pronged’ with equal value given to academic excellence, personal and social development and vocational education. The most recent school Ofsted report, from October 2010, found the school to be outstanding, with ‘inspirational’ leadership from the headteacher. He joined the school as deputy twenty-two years ago and was appointed as head three years later.

As an outstanding special school, the school has been used to considerable autonomy and the recent change to academy status was considered ‘seamless’ by governors. National policy and expectations of Ofsted are part of an external environment which, in the view of the head, needs to be interpreted and applied in accordance with the needs of the pupils of this special school. National expectations of pupil progress are extremely challenging, but the school is aiming to meet these.

The governing body is experienced and skilled, with several members having relevant professional knowledge from roles in the business sector and many being involved with the school for more than ten years. Governors visit the school frequently and are closely involved in its activities, including the interviewing for new staff. Committees are assigned responsibility for monitoring aspects of the

school's work in detail and reporting back to the full governing body and, as a result, chairs of committees form close professional relationships with the head.

The panel responsible for headteacher performance management has had the same three members for a number of years and is chaired by the chair of the personnel committee, who has prior experience as a senior executive in a multi-national company. The chair of the finance committee is also a member. Members of the panel had not attended formal local authority training, but appreciated the mentoring provided by the external adviser, particularly in ensuring that procedures were followed. All have substantial experience of performance management from other professional roles and they believe that this is essential for ensuring understanding.

The panel chair commented that training 'for a few hours' could not offer sufficient preparation unless the governor has some experience of judging performance from another role.

The quality of respect that informs relationships at this school is evident from the terms used in interviews. The chair of the appraisal panel believes that the head has done 'a stunning job' and finds that he is open-minded and receptive to suggestions from governors. The external adviser describes the governors as 'insightful' referring to their professional skills, long-standing relationships with the head and their knowledge of the school that has matured over the years. He believes that the quality of discussion has always been very high, but has continued to improve during the time he has been involved with the school: 'sometimes the discussion gets quite animated and very frank, neither governors nor the headteacher are afraid to say exactly what they think'.

The current external adviser now works part-time as an independent consultant, but has been headteacher of a highly successful special school, a national leader of education (NLE) and a school improvement partner. The head selected their current external adviser from a shortlist provided by the local authority and recommended him for selection by governors, because of his experience and understanding of the context in which a secondary special school works. They were keen to have someone who 'understood the territory' and who could question and challenge and 'he has been quite challenging'.

The performance management cycle and use of results

The formal annual performance management cycle for the head centres on a visit to the school by the external adviser, scheduled for the end of October or beginning of November. In the view of the head, this visit is too late. He would prefer his

performance management meeting to take place in September, so that it would be more manageable to use the outcomes to inform the performance management of the rest of the staff. Prior to the visit, the head completes a commentary and reflection on progress towards the previous year's objectives which is shared with the external adviser and members of the appraisal panel. The commentary draws on a file of evidence which is maintained by the head during the course of the year, as well as on his termly reports to governors. The head makes sure that his performance management objectives are covered in the termly report that he gives to all governors, although the governors are not aware that this is the case unless they are part of the appraisal panel. He says: 'Then I use the termly reports to include in my performance review commentary – to do two jobs at once'. The external adviser constructs a preliminary report from the evidence he has been sent and his own background knowledge of the context and the school. The report also includes some suggested 'starter' areas to prompt discussion 'although this is not at all intended to be prescriptive'.

On the day of the visit, before meeting the appraisal panel, the external adviser has an initial meeting with the head to discuss the preliminary report, the commentary and evidence related to the previous year's objectives. The external adviser will question evidence and probe what has been said about achieving objectives and will discuss possible objectives for the coming year.

In their meeting with the external adviser, governors go through the report and ask questions, using the external adviser as 'a sounding board' to give professional advice. The head then joins the meeting for further discussion and to 'firm up' objectives for the coming year, based on priorities for moving the school forward. The performance management statement is drafted by the external adviser and sent to the chair of the appraisal panel to be finalised with the head. The rigour of the formal process was valued by the head:

For me it's good to sit down with governors once a year and to reflect on progress in terms of my performance Without that system, the governors wouldn't really have a way to see how the school's got on. I wonder if that (the ongoing challenge) is what makes it (the school) continue to be outstanding? ... I think it provides quite a meaningful opportunity for us to put the day to day business aside and focus on performance really. I mean, it's a bit of a pain isn't it, to get all your papers together? But, on the other hand, it does make you stop and think 'well have we done that?' and if we haven't to think 'well why haven't we done it if that was our aspiration twelve months ago?' and it gives me a chance to say 'well we've only partly done that because something changed, the government's changed or something.' So I think it's a good chance to share information.

Monitoring of progress is not conducted formally through dedicated meetings. However, the termly reports to all governors are crafted to show where there has been progress towards objectives. The various committees of the governing body indirectly monitor progress towards the head's objectives through their scrutiny of various aspects of the school's development; and informal monitoring is supported through the very frequent visits made by individual governors to the school.

Headteacher objectives, particularly those that involve pupil performance, inform the performance management objectives of senior staff and thence the objectives of the rest of the school staff. Both the head and governors provided specific examples of how performance management objectives had been used to inform the development of the school. For example, the head described how, following a period of indecision about whether or not the school should seek academy status:

...so we set a target that I would produce a report within 3 or 4 months and so I did the research and got other people involved. For example, we went to other schools that had become academies, visited the academy show. I got a teacher governor to interview a teacher in an academy and two of our governors interviewed governors in other academies, and then we came back to the governors and we made our decision.

Similarly, the opening of a sixth form from September, the development of a second international link and the opening of a community café were given by the head as indication of outcomes directly related to performance management objectives. Pay decisions for the head do not depend solely on the performance management review, although the pay committee, which considers salary issues for all staff, takes place after the annual statement has been agreed.

Challenges

Both the head and the governors suggest that the process of using performance management objectives to maintain challenge and sustain excellence for an experienced head in an outstanding school is necessarily different from what would be the case for someone relatively new in post or in a different kind of school. They agree that for a head with less experience objectives would be used more to inform personal development as well as supporting the needs of the organisation. The experience and record of the head also means that national standards for headteachers are no longer relevant to his performance management.

The chair of the panel believes that they may now consider some change: 'it's got stuck in a little bit of a rut, we've all got very comfortable'. One possibility that will be

explored in the future may be a change in external adviser, not because of dissatisfaction, but to bring a fresh perspective. The head agreed that 'a fresh pair of eyes' is helpful. He would also like to consider timing the performance management meetings for September, to give a better opportunity for using them to inform the performance management of the rest of the staff.

Highlights

- The head and governors interviewed emphasised strongly that the formal appraisal process takes place against a background of ongoing monitoring of the school's work by the full governing body, supported by reports from its committees. Termly headteachers' reports are crafted with reference to the year's performance objectives and contribute to the evidence base for formal review. Governors visit the school frequently.
- The formal headteacher performance management process is taken seriously and conducted with rigour. The head takes time to prepare and maintains a file of work which contributes to the performance management objectives, for example, outcomes of the consultation on opening a sixth form. Governors consider that the evidence they are given is 'very comprehensive' and they are left in no doubt about whether objectives have been achieved or not.
- There are very good relationships, characterised by mutual respect, trust, open communication and a willingness to challenge and be challenged. 'Governors are not afraid to say what they think'.
- The external adviser was specifically selected for his relevant expertise and experience and is used effectively. For example, he makes sure that procedures are followed and provides guidance on the interpretation of data and contextualising this. The external adviser describes his role as 'acting as a lens', bringing his knowledge and experience of the role of the head and special school education to make sure that governors fully understand the information provided and that messages are clearly communicated.
- Governors believe that the experience they bring of managing performance in other sectors is essential and that it would be almost impossible for a governor without this background to be sufficiently prepared by training alone. The external adviser agrees that the professional qualities of governors at this school enable a particularly insightful and imaginative approach to discussion and allow for sensitive handling of more difficult issues.

Case Study PFed7:

An urban primary school federation whose success has been supported by coherent systems for headteacher performance management and staff performance, with a common focus on raising the achievements of pupils

Introduction

Throughout the federation, objectives for the executive headteacher, school heads and all members of staff are focused on supporting everyone doing their utmost to help pupils make a great deal of progress. There is an ethos of social responsibility across the whole federation for the pupils in all schools and a powerful culture of distributed leadership and collaboration.

Background

The executive headteacher (exec HT) leads a federation of five primary schools in areas of deprivation across two London boroughs. He is also on secondment for four days a week as exec headteacher to a federation of two other primary schools in another borough and is a national leader of education. He became a head at 30 (he's now 42), turning round a failing school (A) and while maintaining its success gradually supported four other schools (B, C, D, E) in difficulties. Of the five schools in the federation, four are deemed by Ofsted to be outstanding and the most recent addition good with outstanding features. One of the schools (D) was shortlisted for the prestigious 'TES Primary School of the Year' and 'Pupil Premium' awards.

School	EAL	FSM	Joined federation	Previous inspection	Latest inspection
A	26%	31%	2002	Special measures 2006 Good 2009 Outstanding	2013 Outstanding
B	41%	29%	2008	Special measures	2011 Outstanding
C	34%	30%	2009	Notice to Improve 2010 Good	2013 Outstanding
D	45%	35%	2011	Special measures (for 6 years) 2012 – satisfactory	2013 Outstanding
E	60%	48%	2012	2012 Special measures	2013 – Good

Performance management cycle

The task of appraising the exec HT, including the setting of objectives, is delegated to a sub-group consisting of two members of the governing body, usually the chair and vice-chair. The external adviser is a senior adviser with the local authority. There are no formal reviews mid-year: 'We don't have formal punctuations of frequent reviews but we have thorough updates at governing body meetings' (chair of governors).

- There is absolute transparency about headteacher performance management and how it matches teachers' performance management. Everything is detailed in the 'Federation Teacher Appraisal & Talent Management Policy'. The wording of the title is deliberate and important. A decision was made not to use the DfE model policy, although it is fully compliant with legislation. Capability is not part of the policy; it is deliberately treated separately. No use is made of headteacher standards although the policy refers to the national teachers' standards.
- The exec HT sees headteacher performance management as an ongoing process of challenge, not a one off event, which he takes seriously. His objectives are on an A4 sheet stuck into the front of his diary as a constant reminder.

Objectives

The term 'targets' is used instead of objectives. These are organised under four headings:

1. pupil attainment
2. inspection performance
3. quality of teaching and learning
4. professional development

The first three are the same for the five heads and all the teachers, though they will do different things to contribute to their being achieved. Thus, everyone's objectives rely on everyone doing their utmost to help pupils make a great deal of progress. There is an ethos of social responsibility across the whole federation for the pupils in all schools and a powerful culture of distributed leadership and collaboration' so for instance teachers plan weekly in year groups across all the sites. Teachers belong to federation subject/aspect teams and leadership positions are federation-wide eg the creative arts leader works with a team of eight teachers from all five schools.

Professional development (PD) is the only different objective. The exec HT is on the national leaders of education [Fellowship Programme](#). Part of this is to take part in a

Singapore exchange to look at how they narrow achievement gaps. He is excited at the prospect because he is keen to look afresh at everything.

The exec headteacher's targets are on an A4 sheet stuck into the front of his diary, are very ambitious, eg:

- pupil progress - all year 6 pupils achieving level 4 in English and mathematics; 75%-85% of year 6 pupils in schools A, B and C, 50% in school D and 30% in school E achieving level 5 in English and mathematics
- quality of learning and teaching – 100% satisfactory and 90% good or better

This is triangulated through typicality of provision through lesson observations, weekly scrutiny of pupils' recorded learning, weekly planning scrutiny, regular learning walks, in-house pupil tracking data as well as pupil progress review meetings.

They relate closely to the 'Federation Learning & Development Plan'. Expectations of pupils' progress (and ultimately cumulative key stage 2 attainment) are equally high for all pupils across all schools regardless of starting points or perceived barriers, because the federation strives to ensure that pupils' key stage two progress and performance remains in the top one per cent of primary schools nationally. There is equity for all schools.

There is an explicit link to pay for the exec HT, the five heads and all teachers. The exec HT said:

Every year except one I've got two increments as a result of outstanding achievement. One year I only got one increment because there was one target I didn't meet. I was happy about that because it shows the rigour of the governing body.

Pay recommendations are made by 31 December for the exec HT and the heads of the five schools and by 31 October for other teachers.

Headteacher performance management at this school is highly effective because:

- The governing body is strong, proactive and positively supports the federation and its development by providing strategic direction.
- Governors bring valuable experience from outside education eg chair of governors in finance; vice-chair is a senior civil servant.
- Relationships between governors and the exec headteacher are excellent, with open, honest communication and frank discussions.

- The objectives do not change, even though new opportunities and challenges arise such as the exec headteacher being seconded four days a week to lead two other schools: 'We don't change direction: anything new has to be achieved as an extra'.

Challenges

The chair of governors spoke of being keenly aware of the need to keep the exec HT happy and healthy – and in post (others would want to headhunt him) after 12 years of headship.

The exec HT spoke about his own work-life balance, wellbeing and resilience as being huge challenges, particularly because of a particularly unpleasant scenario at one of the schools he's seconded to. It has been very stressful:

When it hits the fan, I'm in the frontline ... I thought I was going to have a stroke at the weekend [he's 42] ... I oversee seven schools, but I'm still just one person. I struggle professionally". He has a coaching session once a month: "It's really professional therapy, which keeps me vaguely sane.

Challenging someone who is already highly effective: 'I don't want to sound arrogant but it could be seen as hard to challenge me'. He challenges himself all the time so is headteacher performance management necessary for him?

Yes. There's everything to achieve, everything to do, but performance management sharpens the focus.

There is a danger in the exec HT becoming removed from children, parents and staff in his schools, which he has resisted. He is very hands-on in schools every day: 'I keep it real'. He still teaches occasionally, which he loves.

I'm keen to maintain a shred of credibility in classroom practice. If I was selfish, I'd teach more.

Highlights

- Phenomenal success in turning schools round and sustaining improvement;.
- Transparency about headteacher performance management and how it matches teachers' performance management with an excellent written policy that fully matches practice.
- Governors bring valuable experience from outside education.
- Challenging and keeping a high-flier.

- Professional development - the national leaders of education [Fellowship Programme](#).
- Evidence for reviews of performance is triangulated and ongoing rather than at formal points. Collective objectives feed into the federation and school ethos.
- Impact from professional development for 'collegiate intelligence' – everyone's learning needs to have an impact on other staff for the benefit of all the pupils across the five schools.

Case Study S10:

A secondary school in challenging circumstances and under pressure to improve uses headteacher performance management to focus its governing body on pressing priorities

Introduction

This small secondary school is successfully responding to challenges of falling rolls, increased competition from other schools and the need to improve the quality of its provision. The chair of governors and the head, supported by an experienced and trusted local authority school improvement adviser, have worked in partnership to introduce necessary changes quickly. Headteacher performance management is part of renewed systems and processes for establishing shared ownership and accountability for school development priorities among all staff and governors.

Background

This Church of England, voluntary-aided comprehensive is much smaller than the average secondary school, with 400 11 to 16 year old students. The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. Most of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with nearly two-thirds speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of students supported at school action and school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. There is a high proportion of both student and staff turnover. The school is located in one of the country's most deprived wards, but one in which million pound homes stand across from large council estates.

Competition with other secondary schools in the area is stiff and has been a major factor in the school's falling rolls. A multi-academy trust recently sponsored a new school nearby in an adjoining local authority. A number of other academy conversions and free schools with new or renovated buildings have opened within the local area. Higher income parents in the area send their children to primary school within the neighbourhood but then prefer to look for secondary schools elsewhere. Lower income parents tend to move outside of the area as their circumstances improve. The school had been scheduled for a building schools for the future rebuild under the previous government, but when this programme was cut in 2010, the diminished prospect of attracting new students forced the headteacher, the diocese and the local authority to take dramatic steps. Headteacher performance management was an unanticipated but crucial part of the revitalisation story.

The current head arrived in 2006, replacing a head who had been in the post for a long time. Aiming for retirement in 2014, she was drawn to this school by the possibility of overseeing the new building project and as the culminating position in a long and successful career working in voluntary-aided schools in very challenging circumstances. At the same time as the prospects of the rebuild disappeared, the long-time parish priest, also chair of governors, retired. The headteacher, in close consultation with the local authority, decided that the school would not survive without a dramatic restructuring of staffing and of the governing body.

The school disbanded its diminishing sixth form, consolidated classes and went from single sex to mixed. In 2012 it relaunched itself with a new name. The head also worked diligently to restructure the governing body to enable the school to meet the challenges it faced. She recruited an experienced educator and entrepreneur who lived in the community to join the board. In his first meeting, he recalls the clerk asking, 'Who wants to be chair?'. He assumed this meant to chair the meeting. When he queried, he discovered to his shock that the clerk was asking for a chair of governors. 'I could not believe that a public institution could be run like that,' he recalls thinking. After the meeting he told the headteacher that 'there's no way I want to contribute to failure' and vowed to take over as chair until a parish priest arrived later that year. At the second meeting he attended, he was appointed chair. When the parish priest arrived, he agreed to continue as chair with the new parish priest serving as vice-chair.

The year preceding the relaunch the head, together with a relatively inexperienced leadership team, took on a challenging set of objectives laid out by the local authority. The director of children's services, deputy director of schools and head of school improvement from the local authority met with the head and the chair of governors. They had in front of them a report on the school from an LA-appointed school improvement adviser, whom the school has also taken on as external adviser for headteacher performance management. The chair characterised it as, 'kind of like a court hearing... pretty tough stuff'. The local authority set specific targets for the improvement of teaching, student attainment and achievement, and for raising student numbers.

On many fronts, the school made remarkable progress in a short amount of time. An Ofsted inspection conducted in the spring of 2013 noted that although the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C was below the national average, their attainment represented 'good and often better progress from students' very low starting point'. Moreover, it noted that: 'The headteacher and all other leaders, including the governing body, are highly ambitious for the school and are working relentlessly to improve it.' Inspectors commented that 'the headteacher and

senior leaders have been unflinching in eradicating inadequate teaching, leading to improvements in teaching and achievement across many subjects.'

With regard to governors, inspectors wrote:

The governing body knows the school well, is very clear about the strategic direction that it wants the school to take and works systematically to ensure that all of the school's actions are well thought out and evaluated for their impact. Structures in the governing body are rigorous and much is expected of the chairs of the committees in accounting for outcomes in their area, which they base on information from reports, for example about the standards and progress of the students, from the school and from governors' first-hand knowledge following their visits to the school. Governors know about the pupil premium, its use and the impact it has had. Performance management arrangements are routinely reviewed and governors are committed to ensuring that judgments about the quality of teaching lie at the heart of any decision about rewards through pay progression. Governors have very effective oversight of finance and resources.

This represented a dramatic shift from only three years earlier. However, Ofsted inspectors graded the school as 'requires improvement' overall, due to the poor quality of maths teaching. This was a situation about which the headteacher and leadership team were aware and were taking steps to remedy, but their justification was not enough to sway inspectors' assessment of the gravity of the current situation.

The performance management cycle

Managing the performance of the head was a ritualistic exercise until the new chair took over. He drew on his experience of implementing performance management in his own business and worked with the head to develop an approach that was tightly integrated with development of the school overall. The new approach gave specific committees of the governing body responsibility for overseeing progress against particular school objectives.

The elaboration of objectives in the school development plan happens in a meeting between the staff and governors that takes place at the beginning of the school year. Over a 'nice spread of food', staff and governors review all available information - reports from the school improvement adviser, directives from the local authority, school priorities from the preceding year - and break out into the three committees of

the governing body who 'own' particular domains of the plan: finance, premises and resources; teaching and learning; and pastoral. Specific priority areas and targets are then elaborated.

Through a series of meetings with the head, external adviser and chair, priorities in the school development plan are fashioned into specific performance objectives for the head. These are complemented with other goals, including leadership and management priorities as well as personal objectives that are not part of the school development plan. Progress against these objectives is gauged in a series of termly updates as well as ongoing informal meetings between the headteacher and chair.

The annual cycle of managing the headteacher's performance includes:

- A meeting between the school improvement adviser/external adviser to review progress against priorities in the preceding year's development plan;
- The external adviser's preparation of a summative report about progress against school development priorities for the full governing body in September;
- A meeting of the external adviser with the chair and two other members of the head's review panel (chairs of teaching & learning and finance, premises and resources);
- In October, an appraisal meeting with the head and the three members of the review panel;
- A report of the meeting prepared by the external adviser.

The process of ongoing monitoring of the head's individual objectives is closely integrated with monitoring of school progress against school development plan priorities. The chair developed a termly 'self-evaluation form' that is used by the chairs of each committee to register progress against the agreed-upon priorities that their committee oversees. Each term these are updated and sent to the school improvement adviser/external adviser for his review.

He integrates these into a termly report that goes to the full governing body that runs to six sides of A4, updating data from other sources as appropriate. The report includes information on student progress in each year group, attendance, behaviour and exclusions, staffing, teaching and learning in terms of levels, and staff turnover (which is a major concern in this school). The termly reports are discussed at meetings of the full governing body.

Alongside this process of termly updates on the school development priorities is a series of ongoing conversations between the chair and the headteacher and the

chair and the vice-chair. The chair visits the school at least fortnightly and a frequent feature of these conversations is touching base on where the headteacher is in relation to where she intends to be, especially on the developmental priorities that she has set as part of her performance review. The chair says that he asks, 'What's happening, what's going well. Have you booked that course yet? Quite informal, but me adopting more of a sort of inquisitorial or part inquisitorial/part coaching style simply asking open questions. What are *the* goals, how real are they, what are options, and how determined is she to make them happen?' The chair notes that this sequence follows the GROW model (Goal, Reality, Obstacle/Options, Way forward).

The chair sums up his journey with headteacher performance management:

As I've grown into the role as chair, I've felt more ready to adapt and make the process our own. I've spoken to governors at other schools and found out how they've done it. It's given me confidence to try to come up with a holistic and very, very clear system.

Challenges

The integration of the performance management cycle with the cycle of monitoring the school development priorities has not been without its challenges. The head was initially resistant to the chair's 'assignment' of responsibility for particular objectives to committee chairs. This created a situation in which chairs of committees would approach relatively inexperienced assistant heads and ask them to justify why they had not made adequate progress against particular goals, which the headteacher characterised as 'mini-Ofsted's'.

Conversely, the chair also found that he had to encourage the head to loosen up her oversight of her leadership team. He had asked the head's permission to hold 40-minute interviews with members of the leadership team. He typed up his notes from these conversations and gave them to the headteacher and the external advisor only. The most prominent finding was that members of the leadership team felt the head was being too directive.

Both the head and chair acknowledge that the situation facing the school had made relationships much more fraught and focused on 'hard' objectives than would be the case under normal circumstances. Both took these challenges as 'part of the territory' to some extent, acknowledging that the other was acting in the best interests of the school as seen from their perspective.

Highlights

- The school benefits from two highly-experienced educators in the roles of chair and head. Both share a vision of where the school needs to direct its energies and also hold strong views on how best to arrive there. There is adequate space in the relationship for resolving disagreements and moving to more productive ways of working for all.
- The integration of headteacher performance management with the monitoring of progress against school development priorities has engaged the governing body fully in taking on its responsibilities of oversight.
- Both school leadership and the governing body are able to look beyond the unexpected inspection grade of 'requires improvement' to see clearly what has been achieved and what they need to do to continue making progress.
- Both the governing body and the head have had to adapt a more flexible approach to negotiating their separate interests, a process that negotiation around headteacher performance management appears to have facilitated.

Case Study P12:

Managing the performance of a new headteacher in a small community primary school

Introduction

Governors at this small community primary school have built up an effective relationship with a new headteacher, based on trust and a mutual emphasis on progressing the school and the pupils within it. This school carries out its headteacher performance management efficiently, using external adviser expertise to prepare supporting information, and links it to whole school and personal development.

Background

The school is a smaller than average primary school, which has had a recent change of headteacher, and is still part of the local authority. The school has a higher percentage of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) than the average school in Cambridgeshire. It was inspected the same month as the case study visit, and had retained its inspection grade of 'good', under a new Ofsted framework. Their recent Ofsted notes that the school governors are very capable in working with the headteacher to improve the school, and realise the importance of the good management of staffing, and staff performance. The governors have been actively trying to improve all aspects of the school, including headteacher performance management, especially as the head is only in his second year in post. He was previously the deputy for 10 years. The governors who carry out headteacher performance management have experience of this process either through professional work, or previous governing experience.

Process for headteacher performance management

The process of headteacher performance management at the school is carried out with clear procedures in place, and events booked in advance. The chair of governors drives the process. Governors proactively consider who should be on the headteacher performance management panel including continuity and succession planning. They use the LA paperwork which they find effective.

In July they decide at the full governing body meeting who will be on the headteacher performance management team, and begin to think about objectives. They previously used their school improvement partner (SIP) to help with preparation for the initial meeting, in particular to prepare a data digest for governors. The

governors see it as important to turn data into information, with a trustworthy person taking the lead, although they do sometimes use raw figures, if applicable. When the recent external adviser became unavailable, it was not an easy task to find a suitable replacement. The chair feels that: 'it's a big issue for governors - finding someone whom they can trust to know the school and understand the governor perspective'. As she noted: 'governors need a trustworthy person to produce information - governors are busy people'. A future squeeze on budgets could jeopardise this extra expertise in smaller schools. This is especially problematic for LA primaries as it is still a requirement for them to have external advice.

At the same time, the role of the chair is crucial. The school has a very experienced chair who drives the process. Her governing experience is extensive, and not confined to just one school, so she has informed views on how effective governance can help support and develop an inexperienced headteacher.

headteacher performance management is not seen as a 'one-off' process, and during the year governors have milestone meetings to review progress with the head, and check that objectives are still the most useful ones for the school, as 'events make priorities change' (governor). The whole process appears to be one that is holistic, has built in fluidity to react to events, and utilises the experience of governors in performance management, as the other two members of the committee also have outside experience governing in business contexts.

The same group of governors do not form the pay committee. This is a separate group, and the headteacher performance management governors make a recommendation to them. They are working on developing their skills in the link between headteacher performance management and pay, which they feel is important to get right. They have become more proactive with a new head, and discussions about pay will have 'the development of the school and the head the primary reason for any increases'. As a small school, they have less flexibility here than many larger primaries.

Headteacher performance management objectives are used by the head to feed down into staff objectives, and this allows focused ideas for school improvement.

Relationships

The relationship between the head and the governors who form the committee is good. One governor characterised it as 'professional, and not antagonistic, but not cosy either. You need to ask the right questions in the right way'. One interviewee suggested that there may be a difference between this in primary and secondary

schools as most primary heads are used to interacting with parents, staff, governors on a daily basis and are easier to see and support.

There is a good deal of trust evidenced in the carrying out of headteacher performance management at this small primary. The head noted that: 'Relationships are very important, and knowing people, that they want to help you through'. The smallness of the school can actively contribute to these good relationships, or conversely could make difficult situations even more intense. Governors suggested that the relationship aspects should be emphasised in any governor training, not just an emphasis on the process, as trust was a key part of making any such process work well. How to prevent loss of trust, and what to do when the process goes wrong could also be extremely helpful to governors, they suggested.

Development of the headteacher is very important to the governors, and this was also emphasised by the head. It was noted that: 'You need to progress the process and the person'. The chair of governors noted the importance of governors attending to the developmental aspects of headteacher performance management, and not just to whole school performance objectives. She feels this is as important to other heads, for example to assist heads coming towards retirement, to ensure they don't have a decline in performance, as it is to new headteachers. Other schools may want to note how this small school actively blends the developmental aspects of headteacher performance management with whole school development, in order to help a head new in post develop his own leadership capabilities. The headteacher finds the process effective, and noted that he would 'resent as a waste of time meetings for the sake of meetings, but governor involvement is very important.'

It seems that headteacher performance management at this school is highly effective because:

- The governors are utilising it to develop a new headteacher in his personal and professional development, and very effectively tying this into their overall plans for school improvement. headteacher performance management is based on a training and personal development model, which sees the head's own wellbeing and personal development as a crucial part of headteacher performance management, as well as seamlessly blending this with the governing body's overall objectives for the school.
- Headteacher performance management and the progress of the school generally are monitored in a series of 'milestone' meetings throughout the year, that take into account changing internal and external issues.
- The chair of governors is highly experienced as a governor, and before her retirement was actively involved in national governance policy making.

- The relationship between the head and the governors is professional and friendly, yet rigorous in the school as a focus of discussions. The new head finds this very helpful in planning and moving forward.
- All parties have a high level of trust in each other.
- The school uses an external adviser/SIP in order to save the governors' time and energy in pulling together all the information, not because they don't understand the issues, or are unwilling to do so.
- Because the chair is so experienced, she has been able to streamline the process, and augment the LA paperwork so it is tailored for the school.
- The model they use seems very fit for purpose for a small community primary school.

Case Study S15:

A very large, 'outstanding', 11- 19 school in the south- east where the senior team is appraised as a whole by governors

Introduction

Governors at this 'outstanding' academy have overseen significant changes to the approach to leadership within the school as a whole. A culture which promotes shared responsibility and accountability is modelled in their approach to headteacher performance management, in which the 'headship group', comprising the head and his two deputies, are appraised together.

Background

This 11-19, mixed school and sixth-form centre has more than 2000 pupils and is both expanding further and oversubscribed. It converted to academy status in February 2012. About half of the students in the very large sixth form come from other schools, to attend the academic A level provision in which the centre specialises. Formerly a grammar school, pupils in years 7 to 11 now include those of all abilities and socio-economic backgrounds, with less academic students transferring to vocational provision at local colleges at age 16. The school has worked hard, under the leadership of the current head, to ensure high-quality provision to meet each student's needs. Judged outstanding in 2011, Ofsted noted that 'the headteacher and his very effective senior and middle management teams are united in their commitment to helping all students in their care to achieve their best'. Before the appointment of the current head in 2002, interviewees described the school as 'insular', with a 'top-down, controlling' approach to leadership and in competition with other providers, particularly at sixth-form level. They are proud of the way that the culture has gradually shifted to one of shared responsibility and accountability, based on shared values, with high expectations of all students and staff and commitment to providing the best possible education for each of their students. Many of the staff at the school, including members of the senior leadership team, have been in post for many years and the head says that the successful change in culture is based on continuous, well-informed discussion and decision making, focused on critical examination of data and the needs of students. He has worked at building confidence and open, trusting relationships of mutual respect, which include staff, students and their parents. Responsibility now extends to the local community as a whole and partnership work with other schools and colleges has increased, for example in ensuring a full range of 14-19 provision in the area.

Several of the governors have been involved with the school for many years with some originally joining as parent governors. They recruited the current head, 'taking a risk', because they wanted to shift the direction of the school, 'to become an inclusive, fully comprehensive school for the area', and they have been supportive of the change to a more inclusive ethos and greater distribution of leadership. There is a high degree of professional expertise within the governing body, from areas outside education. Some are also governors at other local schools. Overview and scrutiny of school performance is supported by a committee structure with responsibility for designated areas of the school improvement plan.

Each of the three committees is linked to one of the members of the headship group, comprising the head and two deputies. They are provided with comprehensive information and data to inform their work and report back to the full governing body. There is regular contact between the committee chairs and the linked member of the headship group, with 'at least weekly' visits to the school by one or other of the chairs. The chair of governors meets with the head one-to-one, with meetings in the calendar, 'at least once a month'. All of these meetings, together with others, such as meetings of the academy company board, are used by either school leader or governor to raise issues and share information. Governors take part in the interviewing of senior staff and are linked, via senior leadership members, to departments. Since about a year ago, they have visited the school to accompany the senior leader on learning walks to see classroom practice and to discuss issues with middle managers. The head says that, when he took up post, governors had been used to needing to challenge the previous head to get information and that they, as well as his staff, have been on a journey towards seeing themselves as part of a partnership with shared accountability in all aspects of the school. Involvement in the monitoring of teaching and learning is still developing as an integral part of governors' engagement with the school.

The appraisal panel consists of three governors and is led by the chair of the personnel committee, with other members being the chair of the finance committee (who has recently become chair of governors) and a member of the teaching and learning committee. The chair of the panel has led headteacher appraisal for more than five years, but other members of the panel, although all experienced governors, have fulfilled this role for a shorter period of time: "we try to slot new people in to spread the expertise". Governors are attentive to capacity issues, ensuring that there are always three members so that suitable dates can be arranged even if one member has to drop out. All have substantial experience of a performance culture from their wider professional roles and the 'slotting in' process enables new members to learn the specific requirements of headteacher appraisal. The panel chair believes that "confidence" is an essential attribute and that the professional

experiences of the members of the panel, and of other members of the governing body, enable them to feel confident both in challenging where necessary and in judging the quality of information provided by the school. Unusually, the external adviser works for the National Health Service in a senior role in which she led cultural change. She has been involved since the team approach to performance management was introduced and governors and the head value the expertise that she brings in team appraisal. In a very large school, the head believes that his key task is similarly that of leading the culture of the school, in which all staff and students can perform.

The performance management cycle

What is unusual about this school is the 'team' approach to performance management for the headship group, comprised of the head and his two deputies. The head has worked to develop distribution of leadership, led by a headship group which holds shared accountability, with the head being the 'first among equals'. The individual appraisal of the head seemed to run counter to this approach and so, with the agreement of governors, the team approach was introduced in 2009, to model the shared approach to leadership which was being fostered throughout the school.

Governors appraise the performance of the three members of the headship group together. The size of the school means that the two deputies carry significant responsibility and governors believe that deputies should share accountability with a headteacher, 'who could not possibly do it all himself in such a large school'. Before introducing this system, the chair of the panel had spoken to both of the experienced deputies, to confirm that they would be comfortable and feel able to contribute in an honest and open discussion. There had also been considerable discussion among the headship group, where they talked about how they might deal with issues of differing performance among the three.

The process is centred on a visit from the external adviser in late December, preceded by a written evaluation and self-reflection from the leadership team. This is itself preceded by individual self-evaluation shared within the headship group and discussed to provide a joint document. Governors also receive notes of supporting evidence 'he (the head) makes sure we have lots of homework, it's a comprehensive document to support our evaluation and setting of targets for the coming year'. The external adviser meets the headship group initially and then the meeting is joined by the members of the appraisal panel, so that they can discuss, all together as a single group, the evidence for achievement of the previous year's objectives and to agree targets for the team as a whole for the coming year. Objectives will align with school priorities and be built on evidence. For example, student data from July of that year will be used to prioritise actions for further progress. Objectives are usually

suggested by the headship group, but governors will challenge these: 'we do have a very good discussion about the thought processes that go into the objectives' and 'it gives a chance to hear three different perspectives'. Governors will ask, for example 'WHY is that a priority for this year? How will we know when it has been achieved?'. It is during this meeting, with all present, including the external adviser, that the wording of objectives for the coming year is agreed. Notes of the meeting, with the objectives, are written up by one of the governors. Although these objectives are shared, the nature of the objective will lead to different implications for the different roles within the headship group. One of the three objectives is always to ensure achievement of the school improvement plan, so this can be used to inform the performance management of other members of staff, which has already taken place by the time the panel meets. Other objectives will be related to the strategic development of the school, for example in developing 'something cultural' and something which is often about a response to national policy shifts.

The appraisal panel meets to agree the head's pay following the appraisal meeting and then takes their recommendation to a separate pay committee, with different membership. It is as part of the pay 'package', rather than through objectives, that personal development needs are discussed. For example, the head is currently undertaking a research degree funded by the governors. The personal development objectives of the deputies are discussed individually with the head at separate meetings.

The complex dynamic of discussion with three senior leaders and three governors rests on the trust and good relationships that have been established. These are such as to allow for high quality discussion and rigour, kept at a professional level: 'I don't socialise with my governors, they are here to do a job'. The rigour of the discussion is supported by a strong sense of shared values.

Relationships with all three members of the headship group are reinforced by the committee structure where chairs of committees work directly with the deputies, who represent the school at these meetings. One of the deputies took up post in September 2012 and, to give chance for trust and confidence to develop, he will not be included in the shared appraisal until autumn 2013. The experience of the governors, and their deep knowledge of the school '... means that we have established decisional capital. You can get to issues quicker'.

Formal monitoring is through an interim review meeting in June, attended by members of the appraisal panel and the headship group and this is a relatively unstructured discussion of how the strategic priorities, included in the team objectives, are progressing. However, monitoring is ongoing through the year: 'we keep an eye on what's going on in the school'. The current panel has membership

from each of the committees, so that they may ask questions which are related to the objectives, and may include these on committee meeting agendas (although not explicitly labelled as such). Opportunities are taken informally, through regular meetings and also when governors meet for other reasons, such as for pupil discipline. A couple of weeks before each full governors' meeting, the head meets with the chair of governors, the vice-chair and other chairs of committees, to discuss the agenda and to talk through any issues. Visits are made by governors to departments in pairs, to link with senior leaders and heads of department for a 'learning discussion' to see what is going on in classrooms and to talk to students. 360 degree feedback, using a purchased instrument, was used 'about two years ago' and the chair of the panel reports that 'we are not averse to using these sorts of methods' to seek information.

Underperformance might be particularly sensitive with a team approach, but has not been an issue in an outstanding school. A previous deputy left for retirement and the head is of the view that the transparency of the accountability provided by shared appraisal helped to maintain high performance until the end of his tenure. Before moving to a team approach, there was extensive discussion to ensure that all participants felt comfortable with the open nature of challenge and shared accountability.

Highlights

- The headship group, comprised of the head and two deputies, is appraised as a team, rather than individually. Team objectives are set.
- Governors have very good relationships with all members of the headship group, so that each of these is able to be open in giving their different perspectives in frank and open discussion. Governors ask searching questions.
- Governors know the school very well. Several members of the governing body are very experienced, both in their role in this school and as governors of other local schools.
- The head and governors interviewed emphasised strongly that the formal appraisal process takes place against a background of ongoing monitoring of the school's work particularly through frequent informal discussion, the well-planned work of its committees and visits to departments, with a senior leader.
- A wide range of evidence is used to inform governors' knowledge of the school's progress. This has included use of 360 degree feedback, as well as ongoing monitoring.

- The performance management process is taken seriously and conducted with rigour. The headship group reflects individually and together to provide a written self-appraisal in advance of the formal annual meeting and this is accompanied by relevant additional evidence: 'he gives us lots of homework'.
- The school uses an experienced and knowledgeable external adviser, selected for her specific expertise in a team approach to evaluation and appraisal, who is able to support the governing body in their innovative approach to headteacher performance management.

Case Study P18:

Maintaining very high performance from a long-standing and effective headteacher

Introduction

How does headteacher performance management work for long-standing headteachers who are close to retirement? This case study explores the headteacher performance management of a headteacher in an 'outstanding' primary school, who has been in post for 24 years and was head of another school before that. Governors have also been involved with the school for a long time and have seen the school improve under his effective leadership. They have been successful in establishing a process for headteacher performance management which remains 'fresh' and motivating.

Background

This is a larger than average Roman Catholic primary school, which was voluntary-aided before converting to an academy in 2012. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is three times the national average. When inspected by Ofsted in 2012, it was judged to be 'outstanding' for all aspects; it was deemed 'good' before. The 16-member governing body is strong, proactive and positively supports the school and its development by providing strategic direction. They have achieved the Governor Mark accreditation. The chair of governors and vice-chair have been in post for a long time. There is full (or almost full) attendance at governing body meetings because there are clear expectations that this is required. Governors bring management experience from outside education. This is combined with a deep knowledge of the school and long-standing relationships with the head. Relationships between governors and the head are excellent, with open, honest communication and frank discussions. However, governors hold the head to account and scrutinise all aspects of the school's performance.

Even though the head has been in post for 24 years (and this is his second headship) and is widely respected, his headteacher performance management is treated extremely seriously by all parties involved. It takes place against the background of a well-established performance management system for everyone who works at the school – teachers and all support, administrative and premises staff. It is carried out rigorously, with thorough preparation of evidence to inform the performance review. There is no sense of a slackening off of rigour in light of the headteacher's longevity, even though this is a school with high levels of trust.

Two governors are on the appraisal panel and, in order to keep the process rigorous, one will have been on the panel the year before and the other must be new and have done recent governor training in headteacher performance management. The pairings change every year to keep the process fresh and to build capacity. Other governors are available to step into the breach if necessary.

The external adviser is called the 'external facilitator'. The person in this role is changed regularly to bring independence, rigour and a fresh eye to the process to avoid any risk of complacency or cosiness. This year's external facilitator came recommended by another school. He is a retired head and is very experienced having been an external adviser since the role's inception some 12 years ago. He supports headteacher performance management for many schools and has a strong reputation.

Performance management process and use of results

Evidence for the formal review provided by the head includes a range of detailed school data, such as SATs results, the Ofsted report, RAISEonline data, attendance data, LA statistical data and DfE performance tables. After reading documentation, the external facilitator has a brief conversation with the head about likely areas of focus, then meets the members of the appraisal panel to discuss progress and objectives; then they all meet with the head and come to an agreement. This happens in November and there are termly reviews of progress.

The head has four objectives: three clearly linked to the school improvement plan and one 'personal' one. The objectives are specific, relevant and time-bound with success criteria and arrangements for monitoring. Each is reviewed with a clear judgement eg 'excellent progress' and brief but pertinent comments. An example is given below:

Objective 1	In preparation for the school's next Ofsted inspection, undertake a programme of staff training to secure a clear understanding of the new inspection framework.
Success criteria:	All staff will have a clear understanding of their role within the inspection process.
Monitoring arrangements:	The appointed governors will ask the governors' curriculum committee to review progress through their termly meetings and report back to the whole governing body at the autumn term meeting 2012.
Review Comments	Excellent progress has been made towards this objective. All success criteria have been met. Governors have been kept fully informed through appropriate committees. The governor role in oversight was

	<p>enhanced through the gaining of Governor Mark accreditation. Staff including the leadership team received appropriate training throughout the year. The highly successful outcome of the latest Ofsted inspection (with the school being graded outstanding) bears this out. This objective has been met and exceeded.</p>
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Some objectives are related to managing significant change, such as:

Manage and coordinate possible moves to expand the school to four forms of entry (from two), with the introduction of a bulge class in September 2013, in liaison with the governors, LA and diocesan authorities.

One personal objective is set, which is not related to the school improvement plan. Here is an example:

Continue existing external support to other schools through the NCTL and diocesan inspection programme.

This relates to the head's role as a local leader of education (LLE).

The governors and head consider that the timescale for meeting objectives needs to be longer. Because headteacher performance management normally happens in November, there is limited time to implement changes required for many objectives about pupil progress such as improving the year 6 FSM boys' writing results – just six months before the key stage 2 tests. Governors now see objectives as being met over say a two or three year period, but with clear progress seen after one.

Decisions about pay are separate to headteacher performance management. The appraisal panel makes a recommendation to the governing body about whether they think the headteacher's performance merits a pay increase. This is far from automatic. The finance and staffing committee make the decision about whether there will be a pay increase and if so, how much. Governors also play an important role in ensuring that teachers' pay progression is linked to rigorous performance management systems.

Challenges

There have been few challenges in this headteacher performance management process, which the external facilitator considers to be among the best he has encountered. The governors consider that the head's role in supporting other schools during periods of difficulty is a good way to maintain his enthusiasm and provide new challenges. The timescale for meeting objectives has been extended. Governors now see relevant longer-term objectives such as pupil progress and

becoming a much larger school as being met over say a two or three year period, but with clear progress seen after one.

Highlights

- The composition of the appraisal panel changes each year, to keep the process fresh.
- The school uses an external adviser to bring rigour to the process, changing the individuals regularly to avoid any risk of complacency.
- Headteacher performance management takes place against the background of established performance management for all staff – both teachers and all support staff.
- Governors hold the senior leaders to account and scrutinise all aspects of the school's performance.
- Objectives are detailed and SMART, with success criteria

Case study P19:

An improving primary school with a new, first time head and experienced chair of governors which is using headteacher performance management as a vehicle to improve its collection and use of data and to develop the school's governing body

Introduction

This primary school has a head who took up a first post just before an Ofsted inspection in 2011, which downgraded the school from good to satisfactory. At that time, governors were unwilling to challenge systems, processes or the head. A new experienced governor joined the school at the invitation of the diocese and became chair of governors. This school has used headteacher performance management as a vehicle to improve its collection and use of data and to use this data to improve the school. The governors involved in the process have learned to be critical friends and ask awkward questions.

Background

This Catholic, primary, one form entry, voluntary-aided school serves approximately 200 mixed gender, 4-11 year old pupils. The school served a mainly White British community, but with a significant minority of pupils from other ethnic groups. This population is now increasingly black and middle-class. There is low uptake of free school meals. Only a few pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. The majority of children enter the reception class having attended various pre-schools locally. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.

The school is located in a local authority described as having 'gone into demise' and is shortly to become an academy in an umbrella trust of local Catholic primary schools. This has been enforced by the local authority and is not a voluntary change. The school is also scheduled for new build in 2014.

This is the head's first post which was taken up just before an Ofsted inspection in November 2011, which downgraded the school from good to satisfactory. The school narrowly avoided being put into special measures. There is a traditional staffing structure led by the head, deputy and one other senior leader. Teaching staff performance ranges from very good to satisfactory.

Prior to the Ofsted inspection, governance had been identified by the diocese as unsatisfactory and the current interim chair of governors joined the school at the request of the local archbishop. She has been a governor at the school for three years, originally as support between the local parish and the school. She has an education background in higher education and has been trained in 'appraisal and management performance'. A second governor is 'good at statistics', looking at data tables and asking probing questions. Previously, the governing body had hesitated to take on the role of critical friend, preferring to accept documents and suggestions brought before them. 'Nobody would ask critical friend questions. The first time I asked one I was rounded on by governors who told me I shouldn't ask those questions' (chair of governors).

The external adviser used to be the school's improvement partner and was known and trusted by the head, who was involved in the external adviser's appointment. She has been particularly robust in her questioning of the head's performance evidence.

The performance management cycle and use of results

The performance process was designed and given to schools by the local authority. It includes the government's pro-forma and sets targets to progress: attainment, personal professional development and the Ofsted action plan. The school has researched how other schools carry out the process and its own performance management process has been tweaked. The governing body would also have liked to have used details from NPQH and intends to look at the new leadership standards.

Three governors are usually appointed to oversee the process and the chair is always included, because of her particular relationship with the head. The structure of the process is that the head and external adviser meet and the appraisal committee reviews the previous year's progress. They carry out a SWOT analysis and develop an action plan. The external adviser is present to look at the head's evidence and provide an outsider's perspective. If there is a target that requires specific understanding of a new area, the governing body draws on specialist information. For example, one target was about supporting members of staff in terms of assessment, so they looked at a performance management cycle and how the performance cycle works.

The discussion between the adviser, the head and the governors is considered the most important element of the process. The head's objectives become something that can be used to start the discussion going. There were worries that, otherwise, the process would become a 'tick box' exercise and objectives would not be SMART.

Without discussion, issues such as the mobility of pupils during an academic year and any consequent impact on achievement of school attainment targets might not be picked up.

Previously the governors wrote the document. Now the advisor does this and the governors sign it. The three governors inform the governing body when headteacher performance management is being conducted and the final outcome is shared. The detail isn't shared.

The governing body oversees headteacher performance in a range of ways throughout the year:

- Through governors' visits and reports on visits;
- The head and the chair of governors sit on both committees and so have an overview of all governor activity;
- Data is collected throughout the academic year;
- The school dashboard is used and is considered governor friendly;
- One governor is good at statistics, looking at data tables and asking questions about the data;
- Qualitative data is collected in school by observing and talking with teachers, children and subject leaders;
- Parents' meetings are to be reintroduced so that they can be included in the process.

An interim review of the head's performance management is usually held in March. However, the chair of governors frequently sits with the head and discusses whether he is on target, and whether there is anything else governors can do in support. These informal discussions are considered important in establishing good performance and exploring any change of circumstances that might affect or invalidate objectives.

The head admitted that his own professional development was sometimes an area he didn't focus on and that he is now being encouraged to get out of the school more, particularly as this will be required of him when the school joins the umbrella trust. He is doing joint observations with other heads in other schools. He has also gone out to moderate for the local authority. This is helping him to validate his own judgement:

Really good experience going to other schools with for example, maths advisor and validating their work. Good bit of professional development because of professional discussions.

Previously headteacher performance was not well managed, being regarded as a tick box exercise to meet the requirements of the local authority rather than as a tool to change practice. There is now more evidence in the school about how well the school is performing. There is information about children across the school and detailed information about teacher performance. Previously, many teachers were considered satisfactory or inadequate; increasingly, more lessons are now deemed good or outstanding.

When the school becomes an academy and the head is away from the school more frequently, it will be more important that the head is willing to delegate and senior leaders are willing and able to extend their leadership role. The school has used headteacher performance management as a vehicle to improve its collection and use of data and to use this data to improve the school. There is still some way to go in terms of distributing leadership; however, there is clear evidence of improved teaching practice and records are now available to inform the school's development and action plan. The head commented:

Performance management does serve a purpose. Teaching staff know we are all put through it. All accountable. All accountable to the children. It's about giving the kids the best we can. It's all about the children. All links up quite well. I can see where the threads are now, much more clearly. With a good leadership team and there's a direction there, it's forward planning and keeping the momentum going.

The head values the chair's approach:

The chair is quite knowledgeable about schools and governance so I'm lucky she knows what questions to ask, what targets to aim for and how to achieve targets. She is empathetic in knowing why targets might not be met: a balance of critical friend and friendly guidance. She asks the right questions. She is free with her time. She comes in to monitor progress and then writes a report for the governing body saying she came in to talk to the headteacher. It's done in quite a sensitive way, not giving away anything you show her. It was a different experience this year to my first year. Governors didn't ask any questions and the advisor found it hard to get them to ask the questions. Training them up to ask the right sort of questions is tricky sometimes.

Challenges

There is concern that, as volunteers, the governing body can only operate at a certain level. Governors have been inclined to defer to the head and lacked critical thinking skills. This is gradually changing for those involved in the performance management process, however, the chair suggested that a key skill was critical thinking.

So that they can understand the difference between criticising and judging and asking questions which help move things on. It's a very, very subtle and high level thinking. And Governors sometimes haven't had those experiences. It can be a very steep learning curve for them. But that's more to do with educating rather than training...Where training courses have gone wrong. They've been very information and knowledge based, and not skills based. Both need understanding. Don't do enough about skilling up governors. You can give them proformas and all the rest of it...Takes more than a training session.

The school has bought into the local authority's governor training package, but there is nothing on headteacher performance management at all. The head said there is: 'no trickle down training or anything for the rest of us. You're kind of wandering around in the dark thinking 'where's the door?'. He has suggested asking colleagues what they are doing and calling the personnel committee together to agree, in principle, a draft policy for headteacher performance management.

Additionally, there is unease that understanding of objective setting is limited. The importance of coming into the school and having a professional discussion was highlighted in this context.

An evaluation process is not in place but the chair suggested they might introduce action research to explore whether changes are as a result of a developing governing body, or whether it is also affected by the performance management process.

Only the three governors who are directly involved in headteacher performance management are more aware of what is happening in the school and, without sharing sensitive material, this element needs addressing to increase awareness across all governors.

Highlights

- Improvements in the rigour of headteacher performance management have informed the collection and use of data throughout the school.
- The school benefits from the knowledge and expertise of a chair of governors who knows how to balance support and challenge and "is free with her time".
- Governors involved in headteacher performance management have also learned to be critical friends and ask awkward questions, hence building capacity in a governing body that had limited belief in its own abilities



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