



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

Effectively managing headteacher performance

Annexe B – vignettes

January 2014

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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 vignettes of important research themes contextualised in specific school settings.

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.

Vignette A: Stakeholder engagement and headteacher performance management at a secondary school (P12)

Sometimes governors have to take decisive action when school performance diminishes. At P12, the school had received a 'satisfactory' Ofsted report, it had then been amalgamated with another school, and the head had retired. A new headteacher was appointed to the school, and a return Ofsted just before she arrived said that the school now 'requires improvement'. The new head was experienced, and the new chair of governors was keen to focus both governors and the staff on moving forward and developing. This is how they went about the process to engage everyone involved.

The chair worked with the governing body (GB) to appoint several new members and drew on these governors' own professional expertise to move the GB and the school forward. For example, one new governor was a retired college principal. The chair of governors was previously a senior leader elsewhere in the public sector, and she felt that as part of the governors' development in 'robustly challenging' the senior team, they had to introduce a new process for the head's performance management, which involved and challenged all stakeholders. In particular, she drew on her work in peer appraisal in her previous role. As part of this, the governors introduced a rigorous 360 degree assessment for headteacher performance management last year. The process took place over two days. It involved the school's previous school improvement partner being employed and tasked to involve a variety of stakeholders. The school improvement partner spoke to the senior team, key governors and staff and students. Objectives were drawn up from this process. The reason for this 'sledgehammer' as one informant put it, was to assure the governing body that school improvement was on track, and to give them confidence both in the new head, and also in their own governance, which had been challenged by the Ofsted judgement. The school improvement partner has been further employed to continue to support the school during the period when the school is in an Ofsted category.

The governors used this in-depth headteacher performance management process as part of the overall plan to improve the school. Although they have reinvigorated the governing body through structural changes, and some personnel changes, in essence this is the same governing body which had not provided effective ongoing monitoring of the school, and had belatedly realised that the information management contribution of the former headteacher had been less than realistic about the school's progress. The 360 process was 'not cosy' according to the chair of governors. All the interviewed governors felt that the monetary investment in this

process was an added value to the task of school improvement. It showed that the perspective of all stakeholders, including students, were treated seriously by all parties involved, and carried out rigorously, with thorough preparation of evidence to inform performance review. It was an open process and a report was written and shared with the head. There was a frank pay discussion post report in terms of progression. Relationships between head and governors appear to be excellent, with a clear commitment to the improvement process. They have realised that their former ways of working were unacceptable and headteacher performance management was part of a programme of training and development so that they can be critical friends - questioning and challenging of the head and the senior team. This has also meant learning about effective use of data, and also a clear focus on their own working relationships.

The intensive 360 process itself may only be a one off, and as the governors develop their skills, and their good relationship with the new head, they are looking to move to a scaled down version of the first year, because the process also needs to be effective in terms of relationship building, and the governors also strongly felt a 'duty of care' to the head. The chair of governors, in particular, is acutely aware of the need for the head to balance her work and home life, and this forms part of the regular discussions.

As well as the improvement focus, this new way of working means that the governors are now basing their headteacher performance management on a training and personal development model, as well as ongoing monitoring of the head's outline objectives with feedback. The chair of governors is crucial in a situation like this. Other governors confirmed her effectiveness, 'she keeps people well-informed, and has total respect for the head'. Clearly, the 360 process enabled the governors to develop a realistic and clear knowledge of the school and became part of a detailed plan for moving the school forward.

- A negative Ofsted judgement was used to prompt decisive action to rapidly improve the rigour of headteacher performance management and the work of the governing body.
- 360 degree assessment provided honest feedback on performance of the school and of the headteacher, involving interviews with key governors, staff and students.
- Improvements to the rigour of headteacher performance management were combined with other improvements to the structure and functioning of the governing body to improve their ability to monitor all aspects of the school's performance.

- Very good relationships and leadership by the chair of governors has underpinned the rapid improvement in the quality of headteacher performance management and governance at this school.

Vignette B: Best practice in applying a standard process for headteacher performance management at an ‘outstanding’ primary school with an experienced headteacher (P4)

An experienced head and governing body at this outstanding primary school in the north-west of England regard the leadership and management of headteacher performance as an essential element in the process of continuing to raise standards and in supporting the development of staff. The process is used to ensure that the governing body, head and staff have a clear, shared, focus on the learning and progress of the individual child.

The head at this award-winning school views the governing body as: ‘the group of parents, local people, staff and business members who formulate school policy’. For a number of years, the school has enjoyed stability in terms of the quality of the contribution and structure of the governing body and several of the members have been closely involved with the school for more than ten years. These governors have been strategically involved with changes in the school over time, notably the move towards academy status. Several governors bring with them relevant professional expertise from business and other sectors that they are able 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 reporting back to the full governing body. Governors visit the school frequently and appropriately and are closely involved in its activities.

The panel responsible for headteacher 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. This has helped bring about a consistency of approach and a fuller understanding of the head’s operational and strategic management. Governors believe that the high level of skill and insight into judging performance in another role, either outside or within education, is essential for headteacher performance management.

The current head was appointed to this school as deputy over twenty years ago and, after three years in that 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.

Process of review and monitoring the work of the headteacher

The school's performance management process is set out in an agreed policy that is reviewed by the governors annually. Governors appoint members of the appraisal panel in the summer term and the formal visit by the external adviser takes place in September or October. 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.

Before the formal meeting, the head prepares a detailed commentary and self-reflection on progress towards meeting the previous year's objectives and this is shared with the external adviser and members of the appraisal panel.

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. On the basis of this commentary, the external adviser writes a preliminary report based on 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. This is sent to the head and to members of the appraisal panel about two weeks before the visit. The external adviser visits the school for a whole day in order to gather evidence, which may include carrying out lesson observations for the governors in a similar way to the role of a school improvement partner.

The head's 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's task is to probe the evidence about achieving the targets. The process is repeated in a second meeting between the members of the appraisal panel and the external adviser.
- The head receives preliminary verbal feedback on progress in meeting his previous year's objectives. He is also given an indication of the strategic areas that require particular attention as performance management objectives. These areas are discussed and agreed during the course of this meeting.
- Following the visit, the external adviser produces a draft of the performance management statement. This draft includes a review of

the achievement of the previous year's objectives and objectives for the forthcoming 12-month period. The statement is sent to the chair of the appraisal panel and following circulation to other members of the appraisal panel and amendments, the statement is finalised between the external adviser and the chair of the panel and given to the headteacher for signature.

- Monitoring of progress is not conducted formally through dedicated meetings. However, the head's termly reports to all governors are written to show where there has been progress towards objectives, although only those governors on the appraisal panel are aware of this. 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.

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. Decisions regarding pay 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.

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 governors at this school show significant insight and awareness in discussing the direction of the school and performance objectives, which she believes is an outcome 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 appropriate procedures were followed.

Highlights

The headteacher performance management process at this school is highly effective because:

- it provides an excellent opportunity to help unify the governing body and the school workforce in their key task 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 excellent and the result of 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.

Vignette C: Maintaining very high performance from a long-standing and effective headteacher (P18)

By regularly changing the membership of the appraisal panel and the external adviser the governors at this school are able to keep the performance management process fresh and to provide SMART objectives for a long-standing and highly effective head.

This is a larger than average Roman Catholic primary school, which was voluntary-aided before converting to an academy in 2012. When inspected by Ofsted in 2012, it was judged to be 'outstanding' for all aspects, having been deemed 'good' in the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is three times the national average. The governing body is strong, proactive and positively supports the school and its development by providing strategic direction. They have achieved the Governor Mark accreditation. Both the chair of governors and the vice chair have been in post for a long time. There is full (or almost full) attendance at meetings and clear expectations of all governors. Governors bring management experience from outside education combined with a deep knowledge of the school and long-standing relationships with the head, who has been in post for 24 years.

Process for headteacher performance management

Even though the head is widely respected and has been in post for 24 years, coming to the school from a previous headship, his performance management is treated seriously by all parties involved. The external adviser calls the approach 'exemplary'. It is carried out rigorously, with thorough preparation of evidence to inform performance review. To keep the process fresh, of the two governors carrying out headteacher performance management, one will have done it the year before but the other must be new and have done recent governor training in headteacher performance management. Other governors have also done the training and so could step into the breach if necessary.

The external adviser is called the 'external facilitator'. The person in this role changes regularly to bring independence and a fresh perspective to the process. The formal review takes place in November. After reading documentation, the external facilitator has a brief conversation with the head about likely areas, meets the appraisal panel where they discuss progress and targets; then they all meet with the head and come to an agreement. The head has four SMART objectives with clear success criteria. Many objectives, particularly about pupil progress, take time for

the impact to be seen and the timetable for meeting a target may be a three year period with progress seen after one. An example would be improving the writing results of year 6 boys who are in receipt of free school meals. Termly reviews provide the appraisal panel with clear indicators of what is being done towards the objective. Decisions about pay are separate to headteacher performance management. The appraisal panel makes a recommendation to the finance and staffing committee who make the decision about any pay increase.

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.
- Objectives are SMART and have clear success criteria
- 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. Governors play an important role in ensuring that teachers' pay progression is linked to rigorous performance management systems.
- Relationships between governors and the head are excellent, with open, honest communication and frank discussions. Governors are challenging.

Vignette D: The role of the external adviser at a mixed, 11- 18 academy (S13)

This large secondary academy and community college consider the specialist knowledge and expertise of an external adviser (EA) invaluable in supporting a robust and mature process for headteacher performance management. Although governors are knowledgeable, skilled and experienced, they and the head believe that the input of an experienced educationalist is needed to sharpen the interpretation of performance information: 'they know how to probe, but the external advisor shows them exactly where to probe'.

The school is a large, mixed, secondary school and community college, with a sixth form, which converted to academy status in 2012. The current head has been in post since 2007. There is a strong community college ethos and philosophy, with responsibilities for adult learning as well as for school students, resulting in additional challenges for its leadership. Governors are alert to their own performance in fulfilling their monitoring and accountability role and to the need to be proactive in achieving a good understanding of, for example, the quality of teaching and learning at the school. The most recent Ofsted inspection, in 2012, found the school to be good, and the report noted 'particularly accurate evaluation of the college's effectiveness as judged against the current inspection criteria. This uncompromising analysis and diagnosis has helped to raise standards and achievement over the last three years'.

The governance of the school is supported by the committee structures and active involvement from all twenty members as 'liaison governors' for areas of the school who make at least one, but often more visits during the course of the year. This work adds substantially to governors' knowledge of the school and its staff. The four governing body committees each meet regularly during the course of the year and have comprehensive information to inform their work. The chair of governors meets the head 'at least once a month' and for an extended session each term. Although unstructured, these regular meetings are 'event-driven, wide-ranging, open and frank' and enable issues to be talked through. The vice-chair meets the head at least termly, to go through strategic and finance issues in detail. The appraisal panel is led by the chair of governors, 'because the chair knows the head most'. He is a local businessman, has been a governor for seven years and chair for five of these. The other two members of the panel are selected every year – 'we don't want it to turn into a cabal' - and the professional skills of governors from other roles enable them to contribute effectively.

There is mutual trust between head and governors which enables frank discussion and this relationship has been worked at by both sides, to increase transparency and candour. There is a common purpose about the work of the senior leadership team and the governors to achieve the community college vision.

The performance management cycle and the role of the external adviser

Performance management at this school follows the same model as when first introduced, although the chair of governors believes that the relationship has become increasingly open over time. The external adviser initiates the formal review process, by liaising with head and governors and arranging a meeting late in the autumn term. Prior to the meeting, the head sends his self-evaluation on progress towards the previous year's objectives to the external adviser and members of the appraisal panel. 360 degree feedback has been used to provide additional feedback. The head meets the external adviser, then the external adviser meets the governors prior to being joined by the head to agree a statement, with objectives for the coming year. Agreement of objectives is considered less important than the discussion around the process through which they will be achieved. Governors will take a steer from the head about the shape of the objectives, which 'sometimes will turn out a bit different as a result of the discussion'. The statement is written up by the external adviser. There is no mid-year review or explicit monitoring of progress towards objectives, but the formal process is underpinned by detailed monitoring through the work of the three governing body committees. Committees receive comprehensive information from the headteacher, including self-evaluation indicators on measures such as 'quality of teaching and learning'.

The current external adviser formerly worked for the local authority as the school improvement partner and knows the school very well from his experience in this role. Governors and the head value the educational knowledge, headteacher experience and the objective view provided by the external adviser. They consider it essential to have support from someone who 'knows the territory' and is able to support the governing body in interpreting information. The head says: 'they know how to probe, but the external advisor shows them exactly where to probe.'

However, the external adviser is now retired and, if it were necessary to find another one, this might be a problem as the knowledge of the school held by the current external adviser might be hard to replicate. The chair of governors believes that an appropriate process might be to form a shortlist and then interview.

Highlights

- External adviser support is considered to be invaluable.
- It is essential that the external adviser knows the school well and is able to ask probing questions based on analysis of the full range of information provided.
- If it were necessary to replace the external adviser then accessing the appropriate quality of support may be a challenge.

Vignette E: headteacher performance management when the headteacher has a wider role (P9)

The headteacher role for many heads has developed in recent years with a number of opportunities put in place to enable them to work as consultants to other schools to help those schools to improve, and to work outside the school in other ways. The situation at P9 illustrates the complications that can result for headteacher performance management when the headteacher has a 'wider role' of that kind.

Background

P9 is an outstanding primary school, with, by all accounts, an energetic, highly regarded and well-organised head, who undertakes consultancy work with other schools as a local leader of education (LLE) and also undertakes school inspections for Ofsted. There are two kinds of leaders of education – national (NLEs) and local (LLEs). They are excellent headteachers/principals who use their expertise to support and improve schools experiencing significant challenge of some kind. According to the DfE: 'In addition to leading their own schools, NLEs work to increase the leadership capacity of other schools to help raise standards' (DfE 2013:1). The numbers of both NLEs and LLEs are set to increase in the coming years.

Clearly, both the NLE and the LLE roles require the headteacher at the school to spend time out of the school, which was the case at P9, for which there is remuneration. Commissioning bodies, for example the local authority in the case of an LLE, typically negotiate and may pay the costs of the LLE and NLE deployments. For headteachers who are NLEs, the school governing body decides whether the headteacher 'is rewarded financially for his or her individual work on the deployment.' (NCTL, 2013 p 6). Governing bodies thus have quite a challenging task in managing the headteacher's performance in the context of this wider role – and this again was the case at P9.

These 'outside activities' have the potential to enrich the headteacher's professional work. Indeed, according to one of the performance management experts we interviewed, in the corporate sector allowing CEOs to engage in such 'job enrichment activities' was often used as a reward in place of remuneration. Further, the headteacher being successful in applying to become an LLE for example is a considerable accolade that reflects well on the school and there was a sense of that at P9.

Outside activities as leaders of education can also add to headteachers' ability to undertake their own role. They can learn about the role through the work and gain a deeper understanding of headship, which has the potential to make them more effective. Some external activities, such as training for and undertaking school inspections, very obviously add to the headteacher's expertise and professional capability. Again, the developmental aspect of this outside work was evident at P9. The head's work as an Ofsted inspector had clearly provided insights into inspection requirements and processes.

However, there is a question of the balance of the headteacher's time out of the school engaged in external activities and the attention they then give to their own school, and the point at which undertaking too much outside work impacts on the headteacher's capability to undertake the role. Although there is potential for that to happen, it wasn't an issue at P9, although the head was very appreciative of the work of the deputy in ensuring the school was run effectively during any times of absence on external activities.

External activities are typically remunerated, which then calls up the question of whether the headteacher receives the money, which is in effect for work that arguably enhances job satisfaction and capability. This raises a number of questions: Should any fee income associated with external activities go to the school, for example to support the headteacher's functions whilst absent? Or should it go to the headteacher for the additional work undertaken? Although under the arrangements for NLEs and LLEs, it is for the governing body to decide on the remuneration arrangements, those decisions can be complicated and difficult to manage. The head at P9 bemoaned the lack of clear guidance. The issue was a concern for the P9 governing body. Those we interviewed had a range of views. When we undertook the case study, the governing body was scheduled to discuss the matter in the near future.

Highlights

- HTPM of headteachers who engage in external activity to support other schools is complicated and there is no clear guidance.
- Although there are personal benefits for the headteacher in engaging in external activities and also benefits for the school as a whole, it may be difficult to make decisions about whether such activities should be remunerated.

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<http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/index/support-for-schools/national-leaders-of-education.htm>

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Vignette F: Establishing objectives (S10)

This voluntary-aided comprehensive school in one of the nation's most deprived wards is on an accelerated track to improve, under the leadership of an ambitious and experienced headteacher and an energetic chair of governors. They have established and refined a coherent system of setting objectives which are clearly tethered to the school development plan. The challenge now is selecting and prioritising the objectives considered crucial to the work of the headteacher.

Background

This Church of England, voluntary-aided comprehensive is much smaller than the average secondary school, with 400 11 to 16 year old students. Prior attainment of pupils at the school is very low. Most of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with nearly two-thirds speaking English as an additional language, and the proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. 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. The chair of governors is an experienced educator and joined the school governing body shortly before the appointment of the head, in 2008.

The path to improvement

The school went through a 'massive' restructuring from 2010 to 2012 in response to falling rolls and priority areas identified by the local authority. The school improvement adviser, who was trusted by the local authority and the school, laid out 17 priority areas including improving the quality of teaching and accelerating the already good progress that students made at the school, from a very low base. The school was already engaged in a major relaunch, shedding its sixth form, restructuring staff, and renaming the school. With a new set of school objectives, the governing body had to decide how best to integrate these with its new approach to headteacher performance management.

The performance management cycle is described in greater detail in case study S10. In brief, the chair had restructured the governing body with three main committees: finance, premises and resources; teaching and learning; and pastoral. The governing body hosted a meeting between staff and governors at the beginning of the school year to review the priorities handed down by the local authority and to agree on specific school objectives that would form the foundation of a school development plan. The staff and governors did this by deciding on which local authority priorities

would be 'owned' by the governing body committees and then breaking out into these committees to work on specifying objectives.

Following this whole-school meeting, the head and the chair met with the school improvement adviser, who was also serving as the governing body's external adviser for performance management. For 2011-12, the head agreed to take on all 17 objectives that had been defined from the priority areas. The chair, an experienced educator, advised against this, but neither the head nor he could see how she could do less and still maintain the school in good standing.

Although he viewed the number of objectives as excessive, the chair remarked that their accomplishment in that year was to make a clear connection between school development priorities and the head's performance objectives. When the chair first became a governor, the school had three different forms of development plans in circulation - that of the head, that of the local authority, and that of the governing body - and none of the specific objectives used for the performance management of the head had a clear relationship to any of these. Moreover, performance management was viewed as an exercise required by outside authorities, not a means of making a difference within the school.

That year, the head made remarkable progress against the entire slate of objectives but clearly at a pace that was not sustainable over the long term. The governing body had remained vigilant, with each committee chair taking his or her responsibility seriously and tracking how the head and her relatively inexperienced senior leadership team were doing against the objectives they had set at the beginning of the year. The external adviser helped them complement qualitative observations of progress with all available data from the teachers themselves as well as RAISEonline, Fischer Family Trust and the DfE. Each committee issued termly updates that were consolidated by the external adviser and used by the governing body to question the head and the leadership team.

The school celebrated its accomplishment at the end of the year. But the head, external adviser and chair knew that they needed to sharpen their approach to setting the head's objectives. The energy and well-being of the head was at stake. Moreover, she was preparing to retire in two years' time, and all knew that she needed support in exploring what this might mean to her after a career spent in helping turn around schools in challenging circumstances.

In the performance management round for 2012-13, the governing body again went through its beginning of the year exercise amongst governors and staff to discern priority areas for school improvement that would be honed by each committee into specific targets. This year, however, the head, chair and external adviser worked to

identify one objective from each of the committee's targets that was to receive priority attention from the head. From 17 in the previous year, the head now had a core of three objectives. In addition to these, the head added an objective focused on cultivating middle leaders in the school, as a leadership and management objective. Finally, with encouragement from the governing body and external adviser, she added an objective about seeking opportunities to plan for her time beyond retirement, such as training as a school inspector, the cost of which the governing body agreed to cover.

Over the 2012-13 school year, the ongoing fortnightly conversations between the chair and head to keep track of progress against objectives proved much more manageable than in the preceding year. It was also far easier for both the members of the performance review panel and the head herself to keep clear records of her achievement against the objectives they had agreed.

Highlights

- Determining priorities for the school development plan, which is the basis for headteacher objectives, is a shared process amongst all governors and staff in an annual workshop, as well as through ongoing conversations.
- The governing body has recently introduced an additional process to prioritise and refine objectives for the head from the school development plan, which has made headteacher performance management more manageable for all.
- The governing body is effective in holding the head to account, supported by well-organised work of committees, detailed termly reports from the school improvement adviser (also the external adviser) and frequent informal visits to the school.
- Relationships among the head, the chair, vice-chair and school improvement adviser are excellent, with frequent updates and challenging conversations.

Vignette G: Governors' involvement in the performance management of senior staff as part of headteacher performance management (S11)

This outstanding converter academy and teaching school, led by a national leader of education (NLE), has adopted an interesting approach to the performance review of the headteacher and senior staff. A team approach to performance review is reflected in performance management process throughout the school.

Background

It was the head's idea to involve governors in the performance management of senior staff and the process was introduced in the mid-2000s by the previous chair of governors who was also the chair of the performance management group (PMG) - to be renamed soon as the appraisal management group (AMG). Three governors have always been responsible for headteacher performance management at the school and the panel usually includes the chair, the vice-chair and the chair from the finance or staffing committee. The current members of group have had training in their own fields – all have experiences from elsewhere either as reviewers or reviewees. The PMG has always involved an experienced and senior governor with succession planning in mind although as the head said 'if the three (PMG members) were to go we'd have to train up others rapidly'.

A strategic committee of the governing body consisting of the chairs of the five committees was set up in 2013 and the three PMG/AMG members will in future be selected from this group with one committee chair acting as chair of the appeals panel. The school governing body's pay policy document (2013) clearly spells out the delegation of powers to this group for pay decisions from the head through to the unqualified teacher pay range. Advice is also offered on upper pay scale and threshold decisions.

The governing body's approach to headteacher performance management involving senior leadership team (SLT) members has continued under the current chair who has served as a governor for seven years (initially as a parent then as a community governor) with three as chairperson. The performance management process has been streamlined to ensure it is time efficient for busy governors and valuable for SLT participants. According to the head, the new chair 'brought a new refreshing clarity to what we did – his incisiveness - we learned from him and his role in undertaking performance management as part of his day job'.

The head's objectives, which like SLT colleagues, now consist of no more than 4-5 in number, were often evidenced through other members of SLT so their input was needed for headteacher performance management. For example, the effectiveness of the team has remained a key objective for the head as has an objective concerning attainment and standards. Regarding the latter objective, the deputy head responsible for standards gives evidence on the head's behalf.

The governors are supportive of the head in the performance management process of all SLT members including decisions regarding their pay. Involving SLT was now seen to be an essential part of the process of headteacher performance management at this academy. It was felt to be useful on many fronts but mainly because it:

- informs governors of the detail of what is going on in each key aspect of school life;
- gives SLT members experience of doing a formal presentation to the panel (they greatly value this experience although some find it stressful);
- helps SLT to know how to hold others in the school to account.

The review process begins with a meeting with the head in the autumn term after the exam results have been analysed. Members of the PMG are given a pack of evidence compiled by the head on how well the objectives have been met. There are no constraints or restrictions on the areas chosen as objectives for the head or SLT members. The objectives usually evolve from previous ones or are redefined/amended if the direction of the school has changed slightly. Objectives are 'rarely completely new or out of blue' and often based on the school's development plan. They tend to focus on pupil outcomes, sustained performance, school management, the external face of the school and the head's own professional development.

The head's evidence base or pack is distributed a week before the date of the review meeting with an analysis provided on how well the head has done against each objective. It includes impact measures and where other members of the SLT are involved in their successful achievement. SLT members do not provide evidence as such but are expected to give a presentation to the PMG.

Involving SLT members – there are currently 11 – in their own performance management as well as that of the head is recognised as “no mean feat” and seen as creating extra demands on a small group of committed governors. Their work is supported by the chair of governor's employer permitting five days leave per year to undertake school governance. In 2012 the SLT review took place over two sessions on two separate dates in November and December with a further date arranged to

review the pay awards for the year. In these meetings, the head updated the PM group on her activities over the course of the year and how these mapped to her objectives. In 2012 the PMG agreed that 'each of the objectives had been met and in many instances exceeded'. Additionally: 'In each review, the individual members of the SLT presented retrospectives of their performance over the year, demonstrating how they had met objectives set and dealt with other objectives tackled during the year' (PMG notes, 2013). In this way the governing body gained a very good picture of how the school was run.

Each SLT member has a 20-25 minute slot with the PMG to present their objectives from the previous year and how well they'd been achieved. They also present the new ones which have previously been agreed with the head and/or respective line manager. These were further reviewed by the PMG. The line manager for each SLT member was also in attendance for the performance review. The head remarked that it was "Quite a formal affair, friendly but very professional – they give a PowerPoint presentation to the three panel governors".

The panel used to receive an evidence file for each objective but the 5-7 objectives have now been streamlined to 3 or 4 at most. The chair was 'flabbergasted that when I started here the HT (headteacher)/SLT had 15-20 objectives each – this was crazy so we soon changed this. You couldn't see the wheat from the chaff – now they have 3-4 objectives'.

The notes from the autumn term PMG meeting state that it was:

felt that the presentations made by each member of the SLT was impressive and confirmed the continued quality and strength of the SLT. The PMG agreed that objectives set for the SLT had been achieved successfully and thanked each member for their performance over the year.

The head and the SLT were congratulated for their achievements – for their personal achievements, for what they had done for the students and the school in general, with another excellent year of exam results.

Each SLT member was given direct feedback by their line manager in the form of an oral summary and more detailed, written points handed over at the end of each review. The detailed points were accompanied by the formal notification of salary review. Following the SLT performance review sessions, the head updates the PMG and makes initial recommendations in relation to the SLT pay awards. The PMG discusses the relative performance levels of SLT and then considers appropriate increments to existing spine points as well as a review of their respective individual salary range (ISR).

The chair felt that the performance management process should echo the overall support and challenge relationship that is found on the full governing body:

Nothing should be taken for granted (e.g. pay rise) and seeing the SLT perform as a body at the review meetings is a very good indicator of how well the head is doing. You're asking good probing questions and I see it as an iterative process – a well-oiled machine – a good job done – it's rigorous not soft soap or cosy!

The head remarked that 'people really value the (SLT review) day and take it very seriously'.

This governing body felt it to be necessary to involve the SLT in HTPM as they were an integral part of the head's objectives; at least two objectives in 2012 directly involved members of the SLT. But the governors were not appraising the SLT per se but rather seeing that the head's direct reports were feeding into the objectives. There were clear linkages between the two sets of objectives – those of the head and senior colleagues.

Plans to have a mid-year update had been deemed unrealistic as 'we couldn't do all of SLT' yet the process was felt to be more than just a day event. The head and chair believed that performance management was happening all year:

they're doing it through regular reports from SLT, through committees, via presentations to the full governing body – because of the information governors have about all of my team it helps them with monitoring and keeping them informed

(Head)

At this academy the headteacher's report to the governing body was referred to as the 'senior team's report' and the governing body was used to asking questions of the whole SLT, with all SLT members expected to attend meetings of the full governing body. Presentations at full governing body meetings will also include coverage of head and SLT objectives. The process involving SLT was agreed to be a good way for the governors to get a real sense of the things that are happening in school and the impact they are having.

The process and the impact measures associated with each objective were said 'to give it an edge' and was useful for governors to know in-depth what is happening. Importantly, it also gave them a clear idea about the effectiveness of each member of the SLT as they had to present individually and directly to the PMG.

This team approach was reflected in the school's wider PM processes where the head and the SLT met with staff and reviewed and previewed their performance. For example, the senior lead on geography would sit with the head of geography and

oversee the PM of all the department staff. This approach to performance review with a clearly thought through school pay policy was said 'to stand the school in good stead for PRP' (head).

Highlights

- Governors' involvement in the performance appraisal of all members of the SLT enables an in--depth knowledge of what is happening in the school and its impact.
- Presentations from members of SLT provide evidence on the achievement of the head's objectives.
- Individual presentations by each SLT member to governors is considered valuable and helps to show how to hold their own team members to account. It allows for celebration of successful achievements and contributions to the school.

Vignette H: Cascade process of performance management across a rapidly improving primary school (P20)

Alignment of performance objectives across all staff has been particularly important in a school that has needed to improve rapidly and is growing in size. Formal review of headteacher performance and objective setting takes place in September. This gives clarity across the year, allowing for milestones to be set and allows for setting of priorities for both the short term and the long term. It gives time for the head's objectives to inform those of senior leaders and, through a cascade process, those of middle leaders teachers and support staff.

Background

This mixed, community primary school with a nursery was formed from the amalgamation of neighbouring infant and junior schools in 2011. It serves an area of very high deprivation and predecessor schools had falling rolls and a history of poor performance. However, under the leadership of the current head, children's progress is now good from their starting points and the amalgamated school was judged 'good' by Ofsted in the early part of 2013. The report says that 'the headteacher is an inspiring presence around the school. She makes clear to everyone her burning desire for pupils to succeed...'. The head values the support of her governors and says that they have a very good relationship, 'but they are not afraid to be challenging and to hold me to account'. Rather than working through several committees, full governors' meetings have a focus, on say, 'finance' or 'pupil performance'. The head believes that all governors need to be kept fully informed 'everyone needs to know about everything' and they receive detailed information, supported by performance data (such as RAISEonline) and finance data. The head's reports are very detailed and are provided prior to each meeting. Governors also receive copies of external monitoring reports, such as those from the external adviser in his monitoring role and from a specialist early years' adviser: 'They are very well informed and they ask lots of questions'. The only committee is for finance and salaries, to go through the detail of the budgets and set pay, including that of the headteacher. The chair of governors will visit the school 'at least once a week' and both she and the vice-chair are 'very hands on'. Governors are often involved in staff interviews, and always for senior staff. Link governors regularly visit the school and report back.

The appraisal panel consists of the chair and vice-chair of governors, both of whom were previously employed in the school, one as a teacher and the other as bursar.

They are very experienced as governors and as members of the appraisal panel. They are aware of possible succession issues in relation to HTPM, but believe that there are other governors on the governing body who could step in if required, although training would be needed.

Performance management process

Since the head has been in post, major school development issues, such as bringing the junior school out of an Ofsted category and then handling the amalgamation with the infant school, where a number of weaknesses were addressed, have meant that headteacher objectives have been very largely determined by urgent, major issues in the school improvement plan. The drive to improve has been based on shared expectations and shared accountability for all staff and governors and 'everyone needs to know about everything'.

The performance management cycle begins early in this school, with the external adviser visit in September. Having headteacher objectives agreed early helps to give a clear focus for the school year. This allows for the head's objectives to be used in setting objectives for deputies and, subsequently, phase leaders and all other staff.

Rather than producing a formal written self-evaluation focused just on her performance objectives, the head ensures that her twice-termly reports to the full governing body provide comprehensive data and sufficient detail to show progress in meeting her objectives and key objectives for the school as a whole. She has very frequent informal contact with both the chair and vice-chair (the members of the appraisal panel), so that they are up-to-date with relevant issues.

The school's external adviser works for the local authority and his services are bought back by the school to provide validation of their own evaluations. He makes five visits per year to the school, in addition to his visit as external adviser. He knows the school, its head and the governors very well and his objective judgement, based on very good knowledge, is highly valued by both governors and the head, who describes his contribution as 'highly significant'.

At the annual HTPM meeting, governors meet together to discuss relevant issues. The external adviser draws on his knowledge of the school collected from local authority monitoring visits to support his discussion with the head to review the previous year's objectives and to discuss priorities which might inform objectives for the coming year. The external adviser will then meet governors for 'frank discussion', which is maintained when the meeting is joined by the head. Notes are written up by the external adviser, who sends them to the chair of governors to be finalised. Objectives agreed for the head are then used to inform the performance

management of the senior team, and through a cascade process, that of all members of staff, including all support staff. Impact of the headteacher's performance management may be seen in the rapid improvements in the school and the rising attainment of its pupils.

An informal mid-year review takes place between the appraisal panel and the head around Easter, with discussion that is informal but where governors are not afraid to ask challenging questions about the evidence of progress. As well as the mid-year review focused specifically on the head's objectives, the chair and vice-chair have periodic meetings together with the head to discuss issues and progress. This is in addition to the very frequent visits they make individually to the school, when they may discuss any topical issues for discussion at full governors' meetings. The appraisal panel is responsible for discussing and determining the head's pay and for making a recommendation to the salaries committee and they usually discuss it openly with the head.

Highlights

- The timing of formal review in September enables a clear focus and milestones for the coming year and enables the head's objectives to be used to inform those of all staff in the school.
- Impact of HTPM may be seen in the rapid improvements in the school and the rising attainment of its pupils.

Vignette I: Managing marginal headteacher performance in a multi-academy trust (MAT-A)

This multi-academy trust sets clear expectations through a coherent educational model. It employs close monitoring and individualised support to strengthen headteacher performance in struggling schools within the trust.

This national multi-academy trust has developed a strong vision of education that all schools within the trust are expected to follow. The vision includes broadly held educational precepts, such as high expectations for pupils' progress and high aspirations for university entrance. There is a common approach to curriculum provision, including adoption of particular literacy methods and commitment to a longer school day and mandated extra-curricular activities for pupils. There is a strong emphasis on fidelity to the trust's core principles across all participating schools.

Vertical accountability

The organisation of the trust is explicitly hierarchical. 'We think of ourselves as a single organisation and much of what happens above school level we think of as management not governance,' a senior officer of the trust emphasised. The board of the trust retains all statutory responsibility for academies that comprise the organisation. A local governing body at each school has some responsibilities, including taking part in performance management of the principal of their academy, but the local governing body serves a solely consultative role. The principal of each academy is line managed by the director of education, who holds primary responsibility for managing the performance of all principals.

The director of education and other members of central staff maintain a regular schedule of school monitoring visits, which happen frequently for schools that are cause for concern. In addition to showing up in person, the central office has a school assessment system that gathers extensive tracking data from all schools. The centre is able to generate high quality reports that have a standard format for all of the trust's schools and that include comparisons of pupil progress and attainment in schools across the trust.

The trust-wide assessment reports serve to validate the model because they offer clear evidence of rapid improvement in a wide variety of school contexts. In so doing, principals are not able to use the unique circumstances of their contexts to justify their school's underperformance. The senior officer remarks, 'We rapidly expose

heads to an educational model and highlight what's good without slamming them in the face with what they're doing wrong.'

The core educational elements and tracking data offer a clear framework of where all schools need to be along with clear progress expectations that are sculpted to each school. Performance management is crucial to implementing this framework in schools. The core elements are translated into school objectives which are then translated into objectives for the principal and other members of staff. The senior officer notes:

These targets help crystallize where somebody just isn't doing it. You have to be explicit. It's often quite difficult. People are reluctant to say anything against the head. You need some hard yardsticks that say, actually if you look at progress of every other school... We have to be able to judge when a colleague is doing well enough in a school and when they're genuinely not.

As improvements begin to show results, central staff put considerable work into making certain that principals aren't 'just gaming the system'. Competition with other schools is also used as a "constructive dynamic" and is viewed as 'useful motivation' for the kinds of competitive, focused principals this trust seeks to cultivate. There is no automatic progression and the evaluation of performance serves as the basis for all determination of pay.

Horizontal development

MAT-A complements its tight vertical structure of accountability with a wide variety of personal and professional development opportunities for principals. First and foremost among these is a robust network among the school leaders in the trust, which cultivates a sense of collective responsibility for all schools within the trust. According to the senior officer, a clear structure of vertical accountability combined with collective responsibility actually relieves principals of the need to focus on any matters other than improving their schools following the template laid out by the trust. 'Collective responsibility makes the job as easy as we can so people don't have to do any more work than they absolutely should have to get results.'

The trust has a broad portfolio of professional development opportunities that encompasses school-based individualised training delivered by staff in other schools as well as consultants, online self-paced and self-led learning, and annual events that offer opportunities for networking and participating in workshops.

The broad support of a wide network and the precise support of specific opportunities for professional development address two central challenges that the

trust faces. Those challenges have to do with the diverse range of leadership experience and skills with which principals of struggling schools enter the trust, as well as their lack of familiarity with the model. Performance management serves to identify precise objectives that are clearly tethered to school objectives and to overall elements of the educational model of the trust. The broad array of personal and professional development opportunities ensure that principals of struggling schools have the means to master the educational model for their school and reach those challenging objectives.

Highlights

- Performance management is used as an important tool for orienting schools and school leaders to the educational model put forward by the trust.
- An integrated system of monitoring performance includes school visits of central staff and a robust data-tracking system and also provides evidence of efficacy by offering detailed data on a wide range of successful schools.
- Connections across schools serve as both 'stick', in that they promote competition, and 'carrot', in that they offer support for diverse circumstances.
- An overarching managerial frame allows leaders to focus on specific matters and receive individualised support for core issues of teaching and learning without the need to attend to many other facets of school operations that might require attention in a struggling school.

Vignette J: Developing governing body capacity for headteacher performance management in an all-through special school. (Sp16)

A newly-arrived and experienced headteacher (HT) of a small, rural, community special school arrives to find a governing body (GB) in disarray and lacking confidence after the tumultuous exit of her predecessor. Together with a newly-appointed chair and a challenging external adviser (EA), she works to restore the governing body to its proper role of her oversight.

This rural community school serves 72 pupils of a wide range of ages, from 5 to 20. The children, predominantly white British boys, all have statements that aim to address severe or profound learning disabilities, coupled with complex needs. The headteacher arrived at the school a year ago at a time of upheaval. Unknown to the governing body, her predecessor had badly mismanaged the school's financial affairs, a matter that came to light after a highly-negative Ofsted inspection that placed the school on 'notice to improve'. As one parent governor said: 'I thought the (former) chair was competent and thought the (former) headteacher knew what he was doing.' She and other parents were dismayed to find out that, on both counts, she and other governors were mistaken.

The school was fortunate to recruit a highly experienced headteacher at such a tumultuous time. The headteacher had successfully led a number of special schools over her career and was approaching retirement. She was excited to take on this one final challenge in a part of the country to which she and her husband planned to retire. One of the aspects that most convinced her to take on this position at a lower salary than she had held previously was the tremendous spirit she witnessed among all staff, who had worked extremely hard and successfully to keep the outer turmoil from affecting the lives of the children. The headteacher felt confident that their commitment would enable the school to find its way to rapid improvement.

When she arrived, she worked with an LA-appointed and experienced school improvement adviser, who also served as the governing body's external adviser. The headteacher established a good relationship with an external advisor that she describes as appropriately challenging. The external advisor has been a frequent visitor to the school, visiting once a fortnight as school improvement advisor. The external advisor helped the headteacher work with governors to recruit and appoint a retired headteacher as chair. The three had at the top of their agenda embedding a process of headteacher performance management that would restore governors' confidence in overseeing the work of the headteacher and her staff.

The performance management cycle

The local authority had previously promulgated standard approaches to headteacher performance management in schools across its jurisdiction. The external advisor had been closely involved with this approach and worked with the new chair to put into place effective procedures based on extensive LA documentation.

The typical cycle of performance review at this school as in many others begins in early autumn and is closely connected with elaboration of the school development plan. Meetings with the chair, headteacher, external advisor and other governors review pupil data and school direction. As priorities in the school development plan are being worked out, the external advisor drafts a 'performance record' of the headteacher's progress against objectives of the preceding year. The headteacher then adds to this and sends the account with her further explanations to an appraisal panel comprised of the chair and one other governor. The headteacher meets with her appraisal panel later in the autumn, the results of which are documented in a consolidated final performance record done with the concurrence of the panel, the headteacher and the external advisor.

The headteacher is working towards comprehensive integration of teacher and other staff performance management with her own headteacher performance management. She has already put into place systematic performance reviews of all teaching staff and intends to introduce performance reviews of other staff in the near future. She aims to integrate all staff, including support staff, into performance management, on the back of recent changes in pay policy. Her plan is to reach agreement across all staff on one objective around pupil progress that all will incorporate into their individual plans in the upcoming round of performance management. In this way, performance management across the organisation helps everyone take responsibility, 'for their part in moving the school forward', she says.

The headteacher and chair have had to work intensively with parent governors, in particular, to help them distinguish between serving as a governor and serving the interests of their children. The chair attributes this to the legacy of 'wool pulling' that parents experienced with the preceding head. The chair believes that the governing body has come a long way from only two years ago in having the skills and the right kinds of questions that enable them to hold the headteacher to account for the whole school.

The school community was buoyed by a recent Ofsted inspection that graded the school as good with outstanding in pupil behaviour and safety. Inspectors praised both leaders and governors for the work they had done. Of the leadership, the inspection report noted:

The new headteacher and senior team have significantly improved the school since the last inspection, including students' achievement and the quality of teaching. There is evidence the school will rapidly improve further.

For the governors, inspectors had this to say: 'The governing body is supportive of the new headteacher and is becoming increasingly effective in providing appropriate challenge and support to the school.'

The LA has taken advantage of the arrival of this highly-experienced headteacher and now asks her to consult with other schools around effective approaches to staff development, including performance management.

Highlights

- The advent of a new, experienced headteacher led to the institutionalisation of performance management throughout the school as a key management tool.
- Underpinning this use of performance management was the coherent view of its potential by the headteacher, chair and external advisor, as well as a governing body eager to take on responsibility after realising that they had relinquished their duties under the preceding headteacher.
- Existing standards promulgated by the LA around headteacher performance management helped implement the process rapidly.
- Reward for the headteacher is not solely based on remuneration but on an opportunity to make good use of her experience in a new place. The school lacks the budget to match her previous salary but, through the LA, can offer her opportunities to make good use of her skills.

Vignette K: Using results from headteacher performance management to inform decisions about pay

The linking of performance with pay is one of the most sensitive, challenging and controversial issues within headteacher performance management. Governors use a variety of approaches in determining headteachers' pay, with examples from three of the schools visited provided here.

Schools have a variety of mechanisms for making headteacher pay awards. In some larger schools, the appraisal panel sends its assessment of performance to a separate committee for the financial aspects to be considered, after which a recommendation is then made to the full governing body.

Example 1: A large secondary academy where governors consider the performance and pay of the head and all eleven members of the senior leadership team

At a large secondary academy, the appraisal panel consists of three governors; usually the chair, vice-chair and chair from the finance or staffing committee. The current members of the group have had training and experience in their own fields of work. The appraisal panel discusses the relative performance levels of the head and all eleven members of the senior leadership team (SLT). They consider appropriate increments to existing spine points as well as a review of their respective individual salary range (ISR). Interestingly on this occasion, salary increases were awarded for each SLT member except one with spine points being increased from one to three. A new ISR range is being put in place for six members of SLT as well as the head.

Example 2: Secondary co-headship

One secondary school has had a co-headship model for three years; one head is at retirement age, the other is a younger man who was the deputy. The two heads are treated as one unit, having the same objectives, so both are responsible for making sure, as a pair, that they are met and they are equally accountable. 'They're our targets, not your/my targets: that helps because it's not personal and it makes it easier for open accountability.' Thus, headteacher performance management is seen as one headship shared between two people. The co-head who was the original headteacher has a long history of supporting other schools and is the executive head of a struggling school within the local authority. Both co-heads now do outreach with other schools eg through PiXL, which they see as excellent professional

development as well as raising the status of the school: 'To a degree, the more we give, the more we get'.

There is an established 'pay and performance committee' consisting of the vice chair (a local authority adviser who is also an external adviser for other schools) and two others (one has a background in further education, the other in human resources and recruitment). The external adviser, an ex-headteacher, does freelance work for the local authority and knows the school well. He's 'very useful, gives the governors confidence'. But in this school, the external adviser 'acts more as the fourth member of the committee' rather than a completely independent external adviser.

All headteacher performance management meetings happen with both heads present. They then go to the chair of governors when everything is finished. The committee makes a recommendation to the chair of governors and governing body about whether they think the head's performance merits a pay increase. The co-heads are on different pay but both are beyond the top of the national ISR (individual salary range). The increase is applied equally; both get x%.

Example 3: A primary school

The head meets for about half an hour with the external adviser who scrutinises the robustness of the evidence. They then meet with the appraisal panel. The governors ask the external adviser for her evaluation of the head's evidence that he has achieved the objectives set the previous year. The external adviser is not involved in recommendations on pay. If all objectives are met one increment is awarded. However, the head was awarded two increments for an outstanding inspection grade.

Issues about pay emerging from the research included:

- Some governing bodies may 'over pay', because they fear that their headteacher might be 'poached'.
- Governors can feel pressurised into having a more positive view of the headteacher's performance in order to make a pay award.
- Insufficiently challenging objectives are agreed, to avoid conflict over the headteacher's appraisal; or the review is insufficiently candid, because the headteacher does not want to put their pay at risk.
- The lack of pay awards may have a negative effect on motivation.
- Some headteachers now have responsibilities beyond their own school, for wider system leadership. While there is specific funding for both the national leader of education (NLE) and local leader of education (LLE) roles, governing bodies have to decide the allocation of this funding between the headteacher personally and their school.

On the one hand, the school may wish to be compensated financially for the loss of their headteacher's time. On the other hand, such outside activities have the potential to benefit the school, and to improve both the headteacher's performance and their motivation.

In a competitive market for high quality leaders, the quality and sophistication of performance management processes in retaining successful individuals are important. Several chairs of governors mentioned the difficulty of retaining a highly effective headteacher at a time when they could be 'poached' by other schools offering higher salaries. Some governing bodies therefore gave their headteachers pay awards that might appear generous, especially at a time when teacher salaries were frozen. There is a particular risk that the school might over-pay, because governing bodies do not have information about how much other schools' headteachers are paid as a benchmark. Chairs of governors identified the availability of suitable access to benchmarks as one of the changes most likely to improve the quality of their headteacher appraisals. Unsurprisingly, one commented:

Governors can be 'pressurised' into having a more positive view of the headteacher's performance in order to make a pay award.

The effects of pay on motivation are also a challenge for governors. In one instance, the headteacher was annoyed that he had not been awarded a pay increase owing to what he felt was an unrealistic interpretation by the panel of a very demanding objective on which he considered that he had made important headway. Even when he was awarded two pay points the following year, the previous pay decision still rankled. On the other hand, an executive head of a federation expresses the following point of view:

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's process.

The connection between pay and appropriate, mutually understood objectives is extremely important. There is however a significant risk that either insufficiently challenging objectives are agreed, or that the review process is insufficiently candid. One chair considers:

Currently, headteachers are less likely to be frank and honest if their pay would be adversely affected by a 'confession' that they could have done better.

Some headteachers now have responsibilities beyond their own school. Paying people for system leadership roles is a growing issue, on which governing bodies require greater guidance. While there is specific funding for both the national leader of education (NLE) and the local leader of education (LLE) roles, these do require

the headteacher to spend time out of their school. Governing bodies decide whether the headteacher 'is rewarded financially for his or her individual work on the deployment' (NCTL, 2013 p 6), and this raises the question of how the fee income for the additional work should be allocated between the headteacher personally and their school.

On the one hand, the school loses some of their contractual access to their headteacher's time and services, and may wish to be compensated financially for this. On the other hand, however, such 'outside activities' have the potential both to enrich the headteacher's professional expertise, and to bring valuable external influences to the school in return. Further, to have a headteacher who is either a NLE or LLE is a considerable accolade that reflects well on their school. Governors may want to recognise this in their headteacher's pay.

In deciding the right balance, it is nevertheless worth taking into account that headteachers may place a non-financial value on the challenges and professional recognition gained through 'outside activities'. Indeed, one of the performance management experts we interviewed told us that, in the commercial sector, allowing CEOs to engage in such 'job enrichment activities' is often used as a non-financial reward.

Vignette L: An outstanding, mixed 11-18 academy with exemplary processes for ongoing monitoring of performance (S8)

Governors at this 'outstanding' school have introduced rigorous systems and processes, both formal and informal, which ensure that they are always fully informed about school and headteacher performance. An annual programme for headteacher performance management and for reporting to committees is supported by very frequent, more informal meetings. Governors at this converter academy work hard, taking their responsibilities very seriously. They are not complacent and are always seeking to improve their ways of working.

Partnership working is a key feature of this 'outstanding' school, which leads a teaching school alliance, and is a member of a school-centred initial teacher training provision (SCITT)} and of a sixth-form consortium. The head, in post since 2005, is a national leader of education (NLE) and the chair of governors is a national leader of governance (NLG). Governors are committed to this partnership work and consider the needs of pupils in ways that go beyond pupil performance and Ofsted criteria. In the words of the head, 'they are able to see the big picture'. The change to academy status is thought by the chair of governors to be positive in focussing the attention on governors' shared responsibility and accountability, with the head, as co-directors of a company. The governing body has taken a highly professional approach to putting systems in place which ensure it is always aware of performance and of any issues in the school or its partnerships.

Monitoring performance is one aspect of the work of a governing body which is notable for its planned, thorough and rigorous way of working. The high expectations that the school holds for its staff and pupils also apply to the governors. Every new governor meets with the head and the chair of governors on appointment and expectations about training, attendance at meetings and other expected involvement are clarified. Governors evaluate their own performance regularly, and, where required, external training is supplemented by bespoke sessions within the school. The governance of the school is supported by clear structures and documentation, governors visit the school frequently and are pro-active in building a detailed knowledge of the school. The external adviser remarked that 'governors here do the extra work required for a school to remain outstanding'.

Process for review and monitoring of the work of the headteacher

Monitoring of the head's performance objectives is based on comprehensive evidence, including outcomes of a 360 degree appraisal and detailed self-evaluation. The head's self-evaluation of progress is completed and circulated to the appraisal panel before the formal external adviser visit in October, with further self-evaluation before a mid-year review, usually held in May. The head spends considerable time on his self-evaluation, using it as an opportunity for deep reflection on what has been achieved and in identifying evidence of impact. Governors spend time beforehand discussing the self-evaluation and preparing thoroughly for the formal meetings. The external adviser is a former headteacher and currently a local authority officer with a monitoring role and his input is valued, particularly for its objectivity and the perspective brought from knowledge of other schools.

Performance review is underpinned by extensive and detailed monitoring 'and encouragement' through the work of three committees. These each meet five times during the course of the year and work to an annual calendar, which is aligned to the school improvement plan and thus indirectly to the head's performance objectives. Committees have comprehensive data to support monitoring and are pro-active in seeking information. For example, the chair of the human resources (HR) committee (also chair of the headteacher appraisal panel) had analysed staff turnover data and tabled this for discussion. Link governors visit faculties at least twice a year to observe lessons and talk to staff and write a report which goes back to the school staff and to the curriculum committee. Members of the HR committee are involved in the recruitment of senior staff and conduct and report on exit interviews with staff leaving the school. Chairs of the committees, together with the head and deputies, meet as a strategic group each half term. Monitoring is further supported by regular weekly meetings between the head and the chair of governors, who is a member of the appraisal panel. These meetings are unstructured, but 'we both come with things we want to raise'. The head stressed the value of these as a way of maintaining governors' awareness of progress, standards and accountability. Weekly meetings can be 'formative rather than summative' in a way that formal termly meetings would not allow for. He values the ability of the governors to challenge and being 'not afraid' in raising potentially sensitive issues in a professional manner. The chair of the HR committee also stressed the importance of regular informal conversation with the head about 'how things are going' to underpin the formal process.

The process has evolved over time, with improvements to the structure of pro-formas being suggested by the head and alignment to changes in the performance management system throughout the school. The chair of the HR committee spoke of the need for trust which takes time to develop fully. The chair of governors noted

that it is important to 'keep dialogues open and keep talking round things, keep coming back to things' to overcome initial resistance while trust is being established. Both value the head's willingness to listen and reflect on challenge. Governors at this school are alert to ways of improving the process further and the chair suggested that all of the head's objectives may be shared with all the governors, to enhance transparency. Several interviewees mentioned the potential risk of close personal relationships hindering effective performance management and governors successfully manage the distinction between personal friendship and their professional relationship with the head. The external adviser said that 'I like the way they are not too pally, they keep the discussion professional'.

Highlights

Key features of headteacher performance management at this school that contribute to highly effective monitoring of the headteacher's performance.

- Formal headteacher appraisal takes place against a background of ongoing monitoring, particularly through frequent informal discussion that is 'formative rather than summative' and by the well-planned work of its committees.
- A wide range of evidence is used to inform governors' knowledge of the school's progress. This includes use of 360 degree feedback and information from staff exit interviews as well as detailed pupil performance and financial data.
- The formal headteacher performance management process is taken seriously and conducted with rigour. The head uses preparation for mid- year and end-of-year review as an opportunity for deep self-reflection.
- External adviser support brings additional objectivity and perspectives from other schools.
- Governors know the school very well. This means that the head does not need to spend time 'bringing them up to speed on an issue', for example with reference to a member of staff.
- There are very good relationships, characterised by mutual respect, trust, open communication and a willingness to challenge and be challenged.
- Governors bring extensive experience from other roles to headteacher performance management. However, they continue to seek ways to improve and are aware that 'things change'.



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

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Reference: DFE-RR334C

ISBN: 978-1-78105-339-3

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