

# Guidance on Headteacher reports to governing bodies

## Introduction

The new Ofsted inspection framework and recent government White Paper both highlight the key role played by governors in improving schools. Of particular importance are:

- how effectively they shape the direction of the school
- how rigorously they challenge and support leaders – holding them to account for tackling weaknesses
- how well they fulfil their statutory responsibilities.

In order for governors to know their school's strengths and weaknesses and to be effective partners in strategic leadership, they will need to be actively engaged in a series of monitoring and evaluation activities throughout the school year. These will be an essential part of the school's annual self-evaluation cycle.

However, in addition, it is also vital that school leaders regularly provide governors with clear, concise and accurate information about the performance of the school so that they have a thorough grasp of the complete picture – ie what is going well, what needs to improve and what is being done to address areas of weakness.

A key document in this process is the Headteacher's report to governors. In recent years, many Heads have used a format which reflects the sections of the SEF, and this has proved to be a very useful model. With recent revisions to the SEF, it is recommended that Heads now review the format of their report with the Chair, to ensure that it provides the governors with all the information they need, in a style they can engage with.

The requirement that Headteachers should report regularly and appropriately to their Governing Bodies is set out in the terms and conditions of employment for Headteachers. To maximise effectiveness, there are four key things to consider:

### **1. Style and Content:**

Clarity of language and data. Education jargon and acronyms should be avoided if possible, and care should be taken to use clear and unambiguous language that can be readily understood by governors who are not education professionals. Further, there is a temptation for Headteachers to overwhelm governors with data which tends to 'muddy the waters'. It is therefore important that the report is written in a clear and concise way.

Children's names should not be included in the HT's report and no staff member should be identified where there may be performance/disciplinary issues. For example, when reporting on the quality of teaching and learning, the evidence base should be outlined (eg number of classroom observations, work scrutinies etc), the overall findings (areas of strength, areas for development) and improvement actions being undertaken summarised.

As a guide, the following is suggested:

***Items which should be reported on 3 times a year:***

- progress being made by pupils in each year group in comparison with targets, age related expectations, Fisher Family Trust estimates etc
- progress on school improvement priorities
- attendance and behaviour/exclusion data including trends, year group analysis etc
- outcomes from self-evaluation activities and School Improvement Plan core visits – Self Evaluation Form updates including pupil outcomes, quality of teaching, leadership and management, EYFS, 6<sup>th</sup> form etc
- any changes in pupil numbers/inward or outward mobility
- Equalities reporting

***Items which should be included at least once a year:***

- end of Key Stage attainment data broken down by subjects, gender, ethnicity and other groups relevant to the school
- end of Key Stage progress data – overall and broken down by subjects and groups
- summary of end of year attainment and progress data for other year groups, again broken down by subjects and groups

***Items which may occur on an occasional basis:***

- staff changes, vacancies
- staff professional development
- new national or local requirements of schools
- admissions issues
- curriculum developments, events

**2. Frequency of reporting:**

Governing bodies should take into account the work life balance of the Headteacher when considering the nature and frequency of reporting arrangements.

### **3. Wider Reporting Structures:**

Almost all governing bodies have committees to deal with specific areas of activity. Some governing bodies may request that the Headteacher reports on particular aspects of the school's work to a committee rather than the full governing body.

Committees are there to help the governing body cope with the wide range of duties and responsibilities by spreading the workload, and allowing issues to be expanded in detail. The governing body sets the terms of reference for each committee and agrees the recording and reporting arrangements.

Whatever committee structure your school has there should be clear procedures for reporting back to the whole governing body and to regularly review committee arrangements every year to make sure they are working effectively and efficiently.

Further, reports should always be circulated ahead of meetings, so that governors can read the report in advance, and meetings can focus on questions/issues arising.

### **4. Format:**

It is suggested that the new SEF provides a helpful framework upon which to style the Headteacher's report. The key sections would therefore be:

- Pupil outcomes – attainment, progress, behaviour
- Provision – teaching, curriculum, care, guidance and support
- Leadership and Management – of teaching and learning, engagement with stakeholders, partnerships, equalities, safeguarding, community cohesion, value for money
- Early Years/6th Form – outcomes, provision, leadership and management

Whatever format is used, it is important that the report clearly indicates:

- which items are for information
- items where governors need to make a decision, including, where appropriate, an indication of possible options that governors should explore.

### **Conclusion:**

By ensuring that governors have this clarity and range of information regularly presented to them throughout the school year, they will be able to effectively fulfil their roles and responsibilities and help to secure further improved outcomes for all pupils.