

## **Effective Governance for Good Schools**

*The National Governors' Association (NGA) has very recently produced a list of "Twenty key questions for a school governing body to ask itself". These questions, reproduced below, are the result of a wide consultation by NGA with its members and we believe that they could, and indeed should, be considered by every governing body in the Borough – possibly as agenda items at full GB meetings or in some less formal situations. They are intended to challenge the existing practice of every GB and, conceivably, might lead to making changes where felt necessary. They are not attempting to cover every aspect of effective governance nor to provide answers, nor indeed to replace the good guidance that already exists. Given that Ofsted are intent on making a closer examination of school governance in inspections from September 2012 onwards, we would commend these questions to you.*

### **Right Skills: Do we have the right skills on the governing body?**

1. Have we completed a skills audit of our governing body?
2. Do we appoint governors on the basis of their skills, and do we know how to find people with the necessary skills?

### **Effectiveness: Are we as effective as we could be?**

3. Do we understand our roles and responsibilities?
4. Do we have a professional clerk and run meetings efficiently?
5. What is our training and development budget and does every governor receive the support they need to carry out their role effectively?
6. Do we know about good practice from across the country?
7. Is the size, composition and committee structure of our governing body conducive to effective working?
8. Does every member of the governing body make a regular contribution and do we carry out an annual review of the governing body's performance?

### **Strategy: Does the school have a clear vision?**

9. Have we developed long-term aims for the school with clear priorities in an ambitious school development plan which is regularly monitored and reviewed?
10. Does our strategic planning cycle drive the governing body's activities and agenda setting?

### **Accountability of the executive: Do we hold the school leaders to account?**

11. Do we understand the school's performance data well enough to properly hold school leaders to account?
12. How effective is our performance management of the head teacher?
13. Are our financial management systems robust and do we ensure best value for money?

**Engagement: Are we properly engaged with our school community, the wider school sector and the outside world?**

14. How do we listen to and understand our pupils, parents and staff?
15. How do we report to our parents and local community regularly?
16. What benefit do we draw from collaboration with other schools and other sectors, locally and nationally?

**Role of chair: Does our chair show strong and effective leadership?**

17. Do we carry out a regular 360 degree review of the chair's performance?
18. Do we engage in good succession planning?
19. Are the chair and committee chairs re-elected each year?

**Impact: Are we having an impact on outcomes for pupils?**

20. How much has the school improved over the last three years, and what has the governing body's contribution been to this?

*We recognise that there are some magnificent governing bodies but that some, whether locally or nationally, are still working in isolation without a good understanding of what constitutes effective practice or success. It might help governors to realize that Ofsted has already stated that where school inspections have graded schools as "satisfactory" there is a high likelihood that the quality of governance is mediocre – not our words but those of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools.*