

National Assembly for Wales
Enterprise and Learning Committee

The Role of School Governors

July 2009



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Report of the Enterprise and Learning Committee on the Role of School Governors

Introduction

1. During our recent inquiry into the “Implementation of the Teacher Workload Agreement” and our subsequent report published in February 2009, the Enterprise and Learning Committee identified a range of concerns in relation to the role of school governors.
 - The relationship and communication between governing bodies and their local education authorities and communication between governing bodies and the Welsh Government
 - The relationship between school governors and their head teacher
 - Training for governors and whether it should be mandatory
 - Vacancy rates and the reasons for vacancies.
2. In order to explore these issues further, we took oral evidence on 21 May from the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and her officials; from Governors Wales; and from the Association of School and College Leaders and the National Association of Head Teachers. We held a further session on 18 June with the Welsh Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Education in Wales and Estyn, which is responsible for carrying out statutory inspections of all schools in Wales.
3. The written evidence from those bodies is included in Annex 1, and the transcripts of our meetings are included in Annex 2. We wish to thank all the witnesses for the information they provided. This report summarises the main issues we examined and proposes recommendations.

The role of school governors

4. There are more than 23,000 school governors in Wales,¹ a “tremendous volunteer workforce.” School governors have a wide range of duties and powers all geared towards promoting high standards of educational achievement. They are responsible for:
 - **The strategic direction of the school**, by setting aims and objectives; policies to achieve the aims and objectives; and targets to achieve the aims and objectives²
 - **Scrutinising its performance**, by monitoring and evaluating progress towards the school’s aims and objectives and reviewing the strategic framework the governors have created
 - **Good governance**, including compliance, the budget and staff.
5. School governors are not responsible for the day-to-day management of the school. Internal organisation, management and control of the school and the implementation of the governing body’s strategic framework are the responsibility of the head teacher.

Legislative background

6. Governing bodies’ current role originated in the Education Reform Act 1988, which introduced the concept of the locally managed school. The Act gave greater power to governors to make decisions on the basis that decision making at local (school) level led to better standards of attainment than decisions made at local education authority level. Subsequent Acts - the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the Education Act 2002 - built on the same school governance model.
7. The Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005 set out arrangements for the constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools in Wales.

Current performance

8. Estyn inspects each school every six years and the information it collects from those inspections provides an all-Wales view of standards in education, including a focus on how the work of governors contributes to the leadership and management of a school.³
9. In relation to the performance of school governors, Estyn inspectors make judgements about the extent to which they help to set the school’s strategic direction; regularly monitor the quality of provision; and meet regulatory and legal requirements.
10. Estyn’s most recent inspection indicates that three quarters of governing bodies across Wales meet their responsibilities well; and in over one in

¹ Minister’s written evidence, Annex 1 para 2

² Minister’s written evidence, Annex 1 paras 6-7

³ Estyn’s written evidence, Annex 1 para 3

every ten schools, governors are doing outstanding work. Only a very few governing bodies (12 in fact) have serious shortcomings, as follows:⁴

- in three schools for failing to help set the provider's strategic direction
- in six schools for failing to regularly monitor the quality of provision
- in nine schools for failing to make sure that legal and regulatory requirements were being met.

11. Estyn's inspection revealed that while monitoring and evaluating a school's performance is one of the most important jobs of a governing body, the work of governors in monitoring the quality of provision has shortcomings in almost a third of schools. The school governing bodies identified either:

- failed to realise that monitoring and evaluation are important parts of their role, usually because they have not kept up with developments in the ways that governors are required to operate, or
- believed they have been monitoring and evaluating the school's performance, but were not, in fact, doing that effectively.⁵

12. **We welcome the Minister's undertaking to provide further guidance to school governors in response to Recommendation 6 of our report on the Teacher Workload Agreement.⁶ We agree with the teaching unions, however, that it is also appropriate to produce guidance on how governing bodies can provide an effective governance role rather than the 'leadership role' currently envisaged.**

13. In those primary schools in which Estyn identified serious shortcomings, the failure of governors related to not having all the policies or action plans that are statutory requirements in areas such as equal opportunities and racial equality; or having only limited information and content in the school prospectus and annual report to parents.

14. In the secondary schools where governors were failing, Estyn found this was mainly because they have not ensured that their schools met legal and regulatory requirements, such as the lack of a daily act of corporate worship or non-compliance with some aspects of national curriculum provision, for example, in Welsh or religious education.⁷

15. **We agree with Estyn⁸ that if school governors are to make a positive contribution to discussions about the national curriculum, they need to have a sound understanding of national initiatives and the wider educational picture, for example, issues such as child poverty. We**

⁴ Estyn's written evidence, Annex 1 para 13

⁵ Estyn's written evidence, Annex 1 para 18

⁶ "We recommend that the Welsh Government, in consultation with Governors Wales, issue guidance to governing bodies on the role of the Chair of Governors, and survey the current use of mentoring to support and develop head teachers."

⁷ Estyn's written evidence, Annex 1 para 14

⁸ Estyn's written evidence, Annex 1 paras 25-26

recommend that best practice be copied so that governors participate in shared training sessions with school staff, and that named governors develop strong links with subject departments to specialise in specific areas of the curriculum.

Information and communication

16. Good governor – parent relationships are crucial to good school performance and successful schools tend to be well supported by parents. The law requires governing bodies to publish an annual report; hold a parents’ evening; offer parents a home-school agreement for their child; and publish a procedure for dealing with complaints.⁹
17. We have a sense that schools need to be better connected to the wider community and to offer information that is more accessible. **We recommend that best practice guidance should be given to school governing bodies on how they can engage more effectively with their local communities – such as through linking statutory reporting with events, concerts or displays that will be more attractive to their audiences.**
18. In turn, it is also important that governors are well informed and involved in, for example, the consultative process for new initiatives. We heard from Governors Wales that communication can be “patchy and perhaps does not always happen as well as it should”.¹⁰ **We recommend that communication with governors be improved to ensure that all 23,000 of them in Wales know what they should be doing.**

Chair of Governors

19. As in our previous report on the “Implementation of the Teacher Workload Agreement” we believe the role of chair of governors is crucial in whether a governing body acts as a critical friend, and fulfils the role of governance as opposed to one of leadership.
20. While we appreciate the difficulties involved in encouraging people to come forward as chairs, we agree with Governors Wales¹¹ that it should not be left to chance as to whether governing body chairs have the skills to function effectively. The Welsh Local Government Association told us that training for chairs and vice chairs was an important but different issue from training more generally for school governors (see paragraphs 27-35).¹² **We therefore recommend that consideration be given to the introduction of an element of compulsory training for chairs - and possibly vice chairs who also play a key role - with bodies such as Governors Wales, Local Governor Associations and local education authorities working closely together on recruitment and training.**

⁹ Minister’s written evidence, Annex 1 para 9

¹⁰ Record of Proceedings column 99, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 21 May 2009

¹¹ Governors Wales written evidence, Annex 1 para 10.1. See also WLGA’s para 6

¹² Record of Proceedings column 10, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 18 June 2009

Support for School Governors

21. The Welsh Government and local authorities provide support through a variety of means.¹³
22. The Welsh Government funds Governors Wales to provide independent support and advice for all governors. Governors Wales runs a confidential helpline during office hours and evenings. It also publishes a wide range of guidance documents and fact files, freely available from its website,¹⁴ including its “Handbook for Governors of Schools in Wales”. It is engaged in building grass roots networks of governors, has formed local associations, and holds several regional conferences as well as a national conference.
23. The Welsh Government is revising the “Governors Guide to the Law” for publication in summer 2009 to complement Governors Wales’s Handbook. It also funds a termly newsletter for governors, “Cadwyn”, edited by the Swansea Centre for Governor Research and Training. The Centre provides governor training, produces training materials for local authorities to use in governor training programmes, and undertakes some research for the Welsh Government.
24. Local authorities employ governor support officers who provide advice and support for governing bodies and liaise through an Association of Directors of Education in Wales group. The group meets termly and is attended by Welsh Government officials, Governors Wales and the Swansea Centre to promote the exchange of ideas and experience.
25. From our questioning of Governors Wales,¹⁵ we established that the level of support varies across Wales from one local authority to another. **We recommend that levels of support for school governors across Wales should be monitored closely and aligned where necessary.**

Training

26. The Welsh Local Government Association stated that there is a correlation between the highest attending governing bodies and an excellent school inspection.¹⁶ We were therefore concerned to learn from Governors Wales that a few governing bodies are still unaware of their statutory duties in relation to compliance issues.¹⁷ Training is therefore important for school governors to be competent in their role – not just generally but in terms of fulfilling individual, specific roles on the governing body.
27. Since school governors are also busy people in their broader lives, we wished to ensure that appropriate training should be delivered in a way that is suitable and accessible for them, such as through online services. We were keen to establish whether training should be competency based with some form of assessment or even certification, particularly in the

¹³ Minister’s written evidence, Annex 1 paras 11-15

¹⁴ <http://www.governorswales.org.uk/>

¹⁵ Record of Proceedings columns 101-102, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 21 May 2009

¹⁶ WLGA written evidence, Annex 1 para 21

¹⁷ Governors Wales written evidence, Annex 1 para 7.2

roll-out of the 14 to 19 learning pathways, which will require governors to acquire new skills regarding the collaboration agenda and being able to think strategically about different approaches to learning. The Minister appeared open to discussion on these issues.¹⁸

28. Local authorities are required by law to provide governors with information and free training so that they can carry out their duties effectively. Local authorities run training programmes using a mix of their own officers and contracted trainers. We also heard from the Minister¹⁹ that Governors Wales is now working on a regional basis, bringing together local education authorities' associations of governors to ensure the delivery of specialist training to a wider critical mass.
29. We agree with Estyn²⁰ that the best governing bodies make sound decisions and make a positive contribution because they have had a good grasp of school development planning from appropriate training and have been helped by head teachers to understand what is involved. **We recommend that appropriate training be focused on those governing bodies where statutory obligations are not being met. We also recommend that the regulations that the Welsh Government has developed to enable the governing bodies of schools and further education to collaborate and work together in delivering the 14 to 19 learning pathways settings be used to deliver a more strategic programme for governor training.**
30. We acknowledge that there are different views on whether there should be compulsory training for governors. While Governors Wales was in favour of compulsory training at the induction level,²¹ the Welsh Local Government Association expressed the view that compulsory training may act as a barrier that would inhibit people from becoming governors.²² **We recommend that serious consideration be given to compulsory training for all school governors at the induction stage, particularly within whole governing body groups, which was recommended to us as an effective way of doing things, or through the regional consortia.**²³
31. We also agree with Governors Wales²⁴ that there is merit in considering the accreditation of governing bodies (as opposed to the accreditation of individual governors, which might be divisive). We heard that a quality mark system is being considered for the training of whole governing bodies, based predominantly on self-review.²⁵ We heard also from the Association of Directors of Education in Wales²⁶ that good governance can be facilitated not so much through discrete training packages, but through engaging the governing body as a whole in self-evaluation sessions. The Association of School and College Leaders and the National

¹⁸ Record of Proceedings column 20, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 21 May 2009

¹⁹ Record of Proceedings column 19, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 21 May 2009

²⁰ Estyn's written evidence, Annex 1 para 24

²¹ Governors Wales written evidence, Annex 1 para 10.2

²² Record of Proceedings, column 9, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 18 June 2009

²³ Record of Proceedings column 134, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 21 May 2009

²⁴ Record of Proceedings column 72, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 21 May 2009

²⁵ Record of Proceedings column 74, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 21 May 2009

²⁶ Record of Proceedings column 12, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 18 June 2009

Association of Head Teachers agreed that accreditation on a modular basis for those involved with governing bodies should be considered in order to provide a national view of how schools are funded, human resource considerations, and so on.²⁷ They believed it would allow for some specialism, and could also result in the awarding of a certificate that would be valued by others. Compulsion and cost were the two main concerns, however.

- 32. We agree that a quality mark could provide a good opportunity for governors to look at their own strengths and weaknesses and to identify areas where further development and training may be needed. We encourage the Welsh Government to proceed with piloting the idea in a few schools.**
- 33. We also believe that it would be worth exploring the idea of finding a training partner that could deliver flexible, gold standard training to governors. We recommend that the Welsh Government explore options with potential partners for delivering a Welsh governor training programme.**
34. Similarly, we heard from Estyn that it is “absolutely essential that authorities provide induction training for head teachers on working with governors.”²⁸ **We recommend that training and support for head teachers be considered within the National Professional Headship Qualification (NPHQ).**

Expert Advice

35. From our scrutiny of witnesses it was clear that many school governing bodies lack specialist expert advice, particularly in areas such as Human Resources (including employment law) and procedural guidance, especially through the medium of Welsh.²⁹ Human resources expertise is critical for chairs of governors, for example, given their role in the Teacher Workload Agreement and in supporting the head teacher.
36. The Association of School and College Leaders and the National Association of Head Teachers brought to our attention that in some cases, head teachers and governors have been given erroneous advice which if followed would have had legal consequences. It was argued that the move towards a corporate structure within local education authorities has resulted in the loss of education human resources teams with specialist knowledge of the legislative framework relating to schools. The Welsh Local Government Association argued that there needs to be a joined up approach between the governor support department and the department providing Human Resources advice to schools to ensure specialist advice is available.³⁰
- 37. We recommend that specialist expert advice, including Human Resources expertise, be made available to all school governing**

²⁷ Record of Proceedings column 131, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 21 May 2009

²⁸ Record of Proceedings column 75, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 18 June 2009

²⁹ ASCL/NAHT written evidence, Annex 1 and Record of Proceedings columns 139-143

³⁰ WLGA written evidence, Annex 1 para 26

bodies, in both the Welsh and English languages. We envisage the local education authority playing a key role in offering or brokering expert support to governors, especially on behalf of smaller schools.

Relationships with School Heads

38. Head teachers are automatically governors unless they choose not to be.³¹ Governors should take advice from their head teacher but in turn, they should also provide support and constructive criticism, and ask challenging questions about school performance, planning and financial management. The relationship should not be cosy but one of “critical friends”.³²
39. Anecdotal evidence from the Association of School and College Leaders and the National Association of Head Teachers suggests that in the majority of schools of Wales the relationship between governors and school leaders is positive and effective in ensuring that students experience education of a high standard. Where the relationship is difficult or does break down, those bodies consider that the problem may lie with the actions of the school leader as much as with the governing body. The Welsh Local Government Association told us that this may be because the parties do not always understand their respective roles.³³ The Association of Directors of Education in Wales told us that when a head teacher does not get off to the best start in his or her relationship with the governors, particularly the chair, that will often have consequences further down the road.³⁴
40. There are concerns, however, about how much time head teachers have available for leadership and management and about their work-life balance.³⁵
41. Anecdotal evidence submitted by Governors Wales³⁶ suggests that in some cases head teachers have only been able to fully implement planning, preparation and assessment time for teachers by themselves undertaking class cover. We are concerned that even if this has only happened rarely, it underlines the critical need for full funding to maintain the Teacher Workload Agreement.
42. We heard from the Association of Directors of Education in Wales that it was important for head teachers to involve their deputy heads in the governance of the school for succession planning purposes.³⁷ Yet in the context of curricular changes and the predicted budgetary constraints we anticipate that school governing bodies will face difficult choices. We are concerned that some schools will reduce the size of the leadership team in order to make financial savings which will have a potentially higher cost in the longer term in terms of increasing the workload of the remaining members of the team. In a few schools, the process is resulting

³¹ Minister’s written evidence, Annex 1 para 4

³² Record of Proceedings column 40, Enterprise and Learning, 18 June 2009

³³ WLGA written evidence, Annex 1 para 4

³⁴ Record of Proceedings column 15, Enterprise and Learning, 18 June 2009

³⁵ Governors Wales written evidence, Annex 1 para 3.2, ASCL/NAHT written evidence, Annex 1

³⁶ Governors Wales written evidence, Annex 1 para 9.2

³⁷ Record of Proceedings column 16, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 18 June 2009

in the abolition of all deputy head posts, which could have serious implications on the head teacher's workload – a point made also by the Association of School and College Leaders and the National Association of Head Teachers.³⁸

43. We heard that following discussions in England last year about the effectiveness of governing bodies and concerns about the workload of school leaders the Association of School and College Leaders, the National Association of Head Teachers and the National Governors Association published a guidance paper entitled "What Governing Bodies should expect from School Leaders and What School Leaders should expect from Governing Bodies".³⁹ A similar guidance paper has been drafted for Wales following consultation with Governors Wales and other unions, although its publication has been delayed until the Welsh Government publishes its revised guidance on the law for governing bodies. **We recommend that the Welsh Government publish its revised guidance on the law for governing bodies as soon as possible.**
44. We appreciate that while governors may strive to limit and monitor the burdens imposed on head teachers and senior leaders, ultimately it is the head teachers that determine their own work-loads. We heard as much from the head teachers who attended our evidence session with the teaching unions. Nevertheless school governing bodies' statutory responsibility for improving the work-life balance of head teachers and dedicated headship time needs to be complied with more effectively. **We recommend that all governing bodies take steps to minimise the workload of head teachers by scheduling meeting dates and times to suit the head, by reducing the number of written reports required wherever possible, and by exploring other ways of increasing administrative support for members of the school leadership team in line with their needs. Governors Wales, in partnership with the teacher associations, should consider writing again to chairs of governing bodies to reiterate good practice in this area.**

Role of the clerk

45. All governing bodies must appoint a clerk.⁴⁰ The clerk's role is not only to act as secretary to the governing body - preparing agendas and taking minutes - but also to provide procedural and legal advice (as opposed to guidance on the governing body's decisions). It is an important job that needs to be well supported. In particular, the clerk ensures that governors fulfil their legal duty of care towards school leaders regarding compliance with the Workload Agreement. The clerk may be provided either by the school or by the local education authority, and the role may be split between different people. We heard from Governors Wales that they thought it better if the clerk were not employed in the school, although that is not always possible (in rural areas for example), and there are huge variations in the levels of support offered by different local

³⁸ Record of Proceedings column 126, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 21 May 2009

³⁹ Included in ASCL's and NAHT's written evidence, Annex 2.

⁴⁰ Minister's written evidence, Annex 1 para 4

authorities.⁴¹ In some school catchments it has been known for a clerk to service all the primary schools in that area. Some local authorities do not operate a clerking service at all and schools can experience problems in recruiting clerks to governing bodies.⁴²

46. **Given the crucial role that clerks have to play, we recommend that their performance in fulfilling their functions appropriately and to a sufficiently high standard should be reviewed, and innovative ways of providing training and support explored.**
47. The Welsh Local Government Association felt that if the role of clerk were to be developed into a suitably qualified role, it should be professionally paid, which would require appropriate resources from the Welsh Government and an alternative way of working for small schools.⁴³
48. We were interested to hear⁴⁴ that for the first time Governors Wales was funded this year by the Welsh Assembly Government to arrange an award for an outstanding clerk in Wales, which has been widely welcomed. **We recommend that the Welsh Government continue to fund an annual outstanding clerk award.**

Federation

49. The Welsh Government is in the process of producing draft regulations that will enable the governing bodies of two or more maintained schools to “federate” under a single governing body. The Minister informed us that the final regulations are expected in September 2009.⁴⁵ We believe that they will play an important role regarding the future of rural schools in particular but we were concerned that various stakeholders are unsure about their role in the federation process.⁴⁶ **We feel that there are all sorts of governance issues associated with consortia working that have yet to be teased out and the specific role of governors in the process of federating both governing bodies and schools is not clear. We recommend that the Welsh Government clarify the role of school governing bodies in the federation process and ensure that governors are supported in using their powers positively within the new regulatory framework.**

Recruitment and vacancies

50. The Minister’s written evidence⁴⁷ illustrates that governor numbers in primary schools have declined, although this happened because schools have closed. The number of vacancies has fluctuated but the most recently recorded level of 6.2% is within the normal range.

⁴¹ Record of Proceedings column 89, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 21 May 2009

⁴² WLGA written evidence, Annex 1 para 15

⁴³ WLGA written evidence, Annex 1 para 16

⁴⁴ Record of Proceedings column 90, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 21 May 2009

⁴⁵ Record of Proceedings column 15, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 21 May 2009

⁴⁶ Record of Proceedings columns 47-54 and 79-84, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 21 May 2009

⁴⁷ Minister’s written evidence, Annex 1, paras 17-19

51. Governor numbers in secondary schools have increased but peaked at 4,253 in 1999/2000 as the number of schools has fallen slightly. The vacancy rate is usually lower than in primary schools and was 5.6% in 2007/08.
52. Governor numbers in special schools have fluctuated slightly, with little change in the number of schools. Vacancy rates are usually slightly higher than in primary or secondary schools but in the latest data are 4.8%.
53. School governance is based on the principle that the governing body should be representative of the school and the wider community the school serves. All governing bodies must therefore draw from parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, the local education authority, and (apart from voluntary aided schools) the local community.
54. We are not alarmed by the national rate of vacancies provided that those rates can be controlled and are generally continuing in a downward trend. However, we were concerned to learn that in more urban areas such as Cardiff where there is a dense concentration of schools, there are wide variations. As a general rule it is easier to recruit governors in relatively affluent areas but where there is significant economic deprivation, that is not the case, particularly for parent governors. The irony is that it is very often those schools where greater community involvement is needed.⁴⁸
- 55. We recommend that governor vacancy rates should continue to be monitored closely and that local education authorities ensure that places are filled to better reflect the full diversity of interested parties, particularly parents who provide the link between school, home and the local community. This may usefully be achieved through local council members actively recruiting in their localities.**
- 56. We heard from the Minister that in England, the Department for Children, Schools and Families has set up a working party to look at making governing bodies more effective. We recommend that the Welsh Government examine the work of that group, especially with regard to considerations about the size of governing bodies and good practice in recruitment.**

Conclusions

57. An effective governing body helps shape the future direction of the school. It has a clear vision that emphasises the school's distinctive character and ethos, and it engages in robust and challenging conversations about how to deliver high standards of pupil achievement and excellence for all.
58. In the vast majority of cases in Wales, school governors are being effective and efficient in their scrutiny and accountability roles. The challenge is how to address the minority of schools where the governing body is not performing as well as it should. We trust that the

⁴⁸ Record of Proceedings column 19, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 18 June 2009

recommendations we have set out in this report, if implemented, would go some way to redressing the imbalance.

59. We are under no illusions as to how many responsibilities and how much of a workload governing bodies already have. It is a huge challenge for volunteer governors to fulfil all their roles, and the degree of responsibility they bear is substantial. However, we would argue that if we are putting trust in school governors, we expect them also to deliver.
60. If governing bodies are indeed fulfilling their duties to best effect, then we would expect that to manifest itself in the educational achievements of their schools. **A nation-wide and long-term improvement in the performance of pupils will be the real test of the effectiveness of school governors, and we recommend that the Welsh Government scrutinise that relationship to ensure a strong correlation between good governance and educational attainment.**
61. Finally, as stated in paragraph 9, Estyn inspects schools and their governing bodies every six years, although we were told that the system is due to be improved in 2010.⁴⁹ **We are concerned that significant changes can happen during the six years between school inspections, and recommend that the local education authority have an enhanced responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the work that goes on in its schools, perhaps through the role of governing body clerks, and that sufficient funding be made available for this.**

⁴⁹ Record of Proceedings columns 93 and 98 Enterprise and Learning Committee, 18 June 2009

Summary of Recommendations

We welcome the Minister's undertaking to provide further guidance to school governors in response to Recommendation 6 of our report on the Teacher Workload Agreement. We agree with the teaching unions, however, that it is also appropriate to produce guidance on how governing bodies can provide an effective governance role rather than the 'leadership role' currently envisaged.

We agree with Estyn that if school governors are to make a positive contribution to discussions about the national curriculum, they need to have a sound understanding of national initiatives and the wider educational picture, for example, issues such as child poverty. We recommend that best practice be copied so that governors participate in shared training sessions with school staff, and that named governors develop strong links with subject departments to specialise in specific areas of the curriculum.

We recommend that best practice guidance should be given to school governing bodies on how they can engage more effectively with their local communities – such as through linking statutory reporting with events, concerts or displays that will be more attractive to their audiences.

We recommend that communication with governors be improved to ensure that all 23,000 of them in Wales know what they should be doing.

We recommend that consideration be given to the introduction of an element of compulsory training for chairs - and possibly vice chairs who also play a key role - with bodies such as Governors Wales, Local Governor Associations and local education authorities working closely together on recruitment and training.

We recommend that levels of support for school governors across Wales should be monitored closely and aligned where necessary.

We recommend that appropriate training be focused on those governing bodies where statutory obligations are not being met. We also recommend that the regulations that the Welsh Government has developed to enable the governing bodies of schools and further education to collaborate and work together in delivering the 14 to 19 learning pathways settings be used to deliver a more strategic programme for governor training.

We recommend that serious consideration be given to compulsory training for all school governors at the induction stage, particularly within whole governing body groups, which was recommended to us as an effective way of doing things, or through the regional consortia.

We agree that a quality mark could provide a good opportunity for governors to look at their own strengths and weaknesses and to identify areas where further development and training may be needed. We

encourage the Welsh Government to proceed with piloting the idea in a few schools.

We believe that it would be worth exploring the idea of finding a training partner that could deliver flexible, gold standard training to governors. We recommend that the Welsh Government explore options with potential partners for delivering a Welsh governor training programme.

We recommend that training and support for head teachers be considered within the National Professional Headship Qualification (NPHQ).

We recommend that specialist expert advice, including Human Resources expertise, be made available to all school governing bodies, in both the Welsh and English languages. We envisage the local education authority playing a key role in offering or brokering expert support to governors, especially on behalf of smaller schools.

We recommend that the Welsh Government publish its revised guidance on the law for governing bodies as soon as possible.

We recommend that all governing bodies take steps to minimise the workload of head teachers by scheduling meeting dates and times to suit the head, by reducing the number of written reports required wherever possible, and by exploring other ways of increasing administrative support for members of the school leadership team in line with their needs. Governors Wales, in partnership with the teacher associations, should consider writing again to chairs of governing bodies to reiterate good practice in this area.

Given the crucial role that clerks have to play, we recommend that their performance in fulfilling their functions appropriately and to a sufficiently high standard should be reviewed, and innovative ways of providing training and support explored.

We recommend that the Welsh Government continue to fund an annual outstanding clerk award.

We feel that there are all sorts of governance issues associated with consortia working that have yet to be teased out and the specific role of governors in the process of federating both governing bodies and schools is not clear. We recommend that the Welsh Government clarify the role of school governing bodies in the federation process and ensure that governors are supported in using their powers positively within the new regulatory framework.

We recommend that governor vacancy rates should continue to be monitored closely and that local education authorities ensure that places are filled to better reflect the full diversity of interested parties, particularly parents who provide the link between school, home and the local community. This may usefully be achieved through local council members actively recruiting in their localities.

We heard from the Minister that in England, the Department for Children, Schools and Families has set up a working party to look at making governing bodies more effective. We recommend that the Welsh Government examine the work of that group, especially with regard to considerations about the size of governing bodies and good practice in recruitment.

A nation-wide and long-term improvement in the performance of pupils will be the real test of the effectiveness of school governors, and we recommend that the Welsh Government scrutinise that relationship to ensure a strong correlation between good governance and educational attainment.

We are concerned that significant changes can happen during the six years between school inspections, and recommend that the local education authority have an enhanced responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the work that goes on in its schools, perhaps through the role of governing body clerks, and that sufficient funding be made available for this.

Annex 1 – Written evidence

Association of School and College Leaders and the National Association of Head Teachers

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=129008&ds=5/2009>

Estyn

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=129066&ds=5/2009>

Governors Wales

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=128975&ds=5/2009>

Welsh Assembly Government

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=129316&ds=5/2009>

Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales (joint submission)

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=132561&ds=6/2009>

Annex 2 – Transcripts of Oral Evidence

21 May 2009

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=131058&ds=5/2009>

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