

External Review of Governance for The De Montfort School

Reviewer: (name)	Carole Gregory Ken Bush	External Review of Governance at: (name of school)	The De Montfort School, Evesham	
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Date of inspection (if review recommended by Ofsted)		Date reviewer appointed:		
Date of planning meeting(s)		Date of external review:	13 th July 2017	
Background and context of school		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is an average-sized secondary school. • Just under one in five pupils are of minority ethnic heritage, which is a little below average. • A little over one in 10 pupil speak English as an additional language, which is similar to the National average. • The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. • The pupil premium provides support for a quarter of the pupils. This is a little below average. • The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum 		

	<p>expectation for pupils' progress by the end of Year 11.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 attend South Worcestershire College for one afternoon each week. • In August 2014, The Simon De Montfort Middle School and Evesham High School amalgamated to form The De Montfort School.
<p>Issues identified by Ofsted in May 2017 inspection</p>	<p>Comments from the Ofsted Report in relation to governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over time, the governing body has not held leaders to account well. In recent years, too many disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have made slow progress. In addition, Year 6 pupils have significantly underachieved for the past two years. • Governors have not made sure that the school's performance management policy has been implemented well this year. They have agreed to some teachers receiving pay awards even when their work has not had a positive impact on pupils' progress. • The school has a significant deficit budget. The local authority is supporting governors in managing this. However, this is taking up much of the governing body's time. Governors have, to some extent, being preoccupied with managing this situation at the expense of holding leaders to account for improving outcomes for pupils. • Governors have made sure that they are informed at appropriate points throughout the year about the impact of the significant additional pupil premium funding. They are aware that they are not fully securing good value for money because the funding is not having as much impact as it should. • Members of the governing body have a variety of skills that complement one another. Each governor is linked to a subject and/or a year group in the school.

	<p>Governors have a programme of school visits and the 'link reports' which arise from these visits ensure that all governors are able to maintain their strategic overview of the school's work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The governing body fulfils its statutory duties, including those which relate to safeguarding. Governors ensure that the relevant policies, checks and training take place so that pupils are kept safe.
<p>Process of the review</p>	<p>Key activities: 13.07.17 Analysis of documentation and website compliance. Full Review including meetings with the Headteacher, Chair of Governors, new governor, Clerk, and one more experienced governor.</p>
<p>Summary of findings: strengths – what the governing board does well</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors are keen to be involved in the life of the school. • The governing board is almost at full complement. • Governors are appointed based on the identification of skills. • The website is largely compliant in relation to governance. There are a few areas that need to be rectified. • There is growing strength in the financial monitoring of the school budget. There is an increasing focus on the impact of spend. • There are some systems in place that help support the work of the governing body. These need to be developed further to be fully understood and used by all. • The Clerk has taken advice on board from previous training, regarding the format and structure of a range of key documentation. • The governing board has begun evaluating the effectiveness of its own work. This needs to be considered as part of its strategic planning. . • The brief given to the parent governor (to be a point of contact for parents during this

	<p>time of school re-organisation as part of the parent voice) has been useful to date. There is a need to ensure there are clear Terms of Reference for this as it is distinctively different from a parent governor role. A constitution for this group may be required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board of governors are beginning to ask more challenging questions of the Headteacher (HT) and senior leaders. • The relationship between the HT and Chair is productive as is the relationship between the Chair and the Clerk.
<p>Summary of findings: areas for development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the school is mainly meeting requirements on the publication of specified information on its website, this needs to be more accessible as some information is not easy to find. • The governing board should make more effective use of the school website in communicating their work to the community. • Governors need to be more proactive in accessing information about the school from the school website. This is to inform their knowledge and understanding of the school. • Governors need to take more ownership over the business of the governing board. • Governors have been too reliant on the Headteacher to lead the development of the governing board. • Governors have reviewed their committee structure several times but this has led to some confusion. Governors need to be clear about their committee structure and review this as a matter of urgency before the start of the academic year. • Governors need to plan strategically the work of the governing board, holding the school to account and linking it closely to the School Improvement Plan. • Governors and staff need to develop a clearer knowledge and understanding of the role and responsibilities of the governing board. • Lines of communication within the Governors and between the school needs clarification. Clear protocols for lines of communication need to be developed and understood by governors and staff alike.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of the Clerk and the Chair needs to be developed. • Governors need to be clear about the role of the Clerk and make more effective use of this role to ensure the board is more efficient and effective • As part of the Clerk’s appraisal, it is recommended that the Chair meets the Clerk half way through the year to check on progress. • On behalf of the FGB, the Chair needs to hold the Clerk to account for the quality of the minutes and other functions. • The governing board needs to develop a Governor Induction Policy and take ownership of governor induction. • Consideration needs to be given to governor succession planning for key roles on the board. • Reports from the HT and senior leaders to governors need to be written in a more accessible format. • The Governor Visits Policy needs to be reviewed, known and understood by all governors and staff. • Governors need to monitor the robustness and rigour of Performance Management for all staff.
<p>Conclusions and key areas for action</p>	<p>Strategic development of the governing board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the structure of the GB. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consider streamlining the committee structure to two or three: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Resources</i> (Premise, Finance, Staffing); ○ <i>School Improvement</i> (Teaching and Learning, Standards and Progress) ○ <i>Inclusion</i> (Behaviour, Attendance, Pupil Premium, SEND, Safeguarding etc). Some of the areas within Inclusion could always sit within the FGB e.g. Safeguarding and Pupil Premium as they are of such a high profile. ➤ Re-introduce the Strategic Committee made up of the Chairs of each committee

and the HT to support the strategic direction and priority foci for the FGB and committees.

- **Develop clear Terms of Reference for the FGB and Committees, including the Strategic Committee.** These need to be known and understood by all governors and staff.
 - Record the named members of each committee ensuring that there are odd numbers to be quorate (i.e. 2/3rd attendance for named members)
 - Record voting rights given.
 - All meetings need to be professionally clerked.All of the above information needs to also be on the school website.
- **Develop an Annual Calendar for the work of the governing board.**
 - Ensure this records the dates of all meetings, including FGB and Committees.
 - Ensure that the planning of meetings is linked to key dates in the school's calendar to ensure there is timely reporting on key issues to the FGB.
- **Governors need to decide the content and format of the HT report.**
 - Agree a format which enables the HT to report on progress against the key priorities- to be determined in consultation with the HT.
 - Ensure that the report provides a commentary of the HT's view of the school linked to data.
 - Add a question box, as a visual management tool, for governors to strategically hold the HT to account.
 - Questions can be submitted in advance of the meetings for the HT to consider prior to the meeting. The governor password protected portal would be a good place to site these questions.

- **Ensure the content and format of staff reports to governors are written in an accessible way.**
 - The HT should advise staff of the format for staff reports to governors, ensuring that the information is easily accessible.
 - Reports need to focus on progress against the priorities. When data is shared, it should be succinct and supplemented with a brief commentary reflecting the school's view.
 - Senior Leaders responsible for Teaching and Learning, and Standards and Progress, should consider creating joint reports for governors. This would highlight and make links between the impact of Teaching and Learning on Standards and Progress.

- **Ensure clear delegation of governor responsibilities.**
 - Use the Statutory Policy matrix to delegate the approval of policies to individuals, committees or FGB.
 - Appoint a named governor for Safeguarding and Pupil Premium.
NB For succession planning, it is recommended to appoint a deputy for each of these roles to ensure that there is someone else who has the same detailed knowledge and understanding of these areas.
 - Review the role and remit of governors linked to faculties and year groups. Ensure there are clear terms of reference for these roles that are understood by all staff and governors.

- **Develop the leadership role of the Chair**
 - Plan into the calendar of work, focused meetings between the Chair and the HT;

Clerk, HT and Chair to set agendas for these meetings.

- Develop the Clerk's appraisal further by introducing a 6 monthly review of progress against targets set.

N.B. It is the Chair who holds the Clerk to account for the effectiveness and efficiency of the clerking role on behalf of the board.

- Make use of the Clerk's Competency Framework document for the Clerk's appraisal.
- Introduce an annual 1:1 meeting with each governor to discuss how they have contributed to the work of the board which will enable her to evaluate where governor skills are best utilised.
- Review how the board communicates with its stakeholders.

NB The Chair could write a letter on behalf of the governors to stakeholders regarding the work of the governing board, the achievements and what the board will be focusing on next. This could be a joint letter from the Chair and the HT, sited on the school website

- **Develop the Role of the Clerk**

- The clerk should take more ownership over her role and become more proactive. This will be easier once everyone understands the role of the Clerk and the process and procedures for working with the Clerk. The Clerk could draw up these protocols and share with the board for approval.
- Draft agendas should be drawn up by the Clerk in consultation with the Chair and HT. Good practice is for the Clerk to inform all governors that the agenda is being prepared and if they have any items for consideration to submit them to the Clerk by a specific date. This will reduce the need for A.O.B's.

- Add additional columns to the agenda – who the item is led by; supporting documents circulated; bullet points under the items to identify the focus of the discussion.
- All supporting documentation to be discussed at the meeting should be sent out 7 days in advance of the meetings. This applies to FGB meetings and committees.
- Draft minutes (watermarked in draft) should be sent out within a few days of the meeting to the Chair and HT for initial consultation. The draft needs to be returned by them before the end of the week with any comments in order that the Clerk can make any necessary changes prior to circulation to all governors within a few days. It is the responsibility of the Clerk to proof read these thoroughly before circulation as the Clerk is professionally responsible for the quality.
- Minutes must reflect the salient points discussed, the decision made and the action to be taken, by whom and when.
- Agendas for all Committees should ideally be sent out via the Clerk in order that they know what is happening.
- Only the Clerk can convene meetings. As these will be planned into the Annual Calendar, this should only involve the panels as and when required.
- The clerk must circulate all governance alerts to all governors from Babcock Prime. These can be sited on the governor portal.
- The Clerk needs to remind governors of any outstanding actions and track the progress of the actions.
- **Improve lines of communication within the governing board and between the school and the governing board**
 - It is important to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of the different

lines of communication.

- The clerk works on behalf of the FGB. All correspondence regarding governance should be through the Clerk. All staff need to ensure that reports are sent via the HT to the clerk in advance, and all governors send documentation to the Clerk, ready for circulation 7 days in advance of a meeting.
- It is the responsibility of the HT to 'chase' staff for reports for the board of governors, not the Clerk, as the HT is the line manager and holds the staff to account for having reports available on time.

- **Develop the intranet further**

- Develop the FROG' platform to be more user friendly for governors. This is a password-protected site for governors only.

NB Governors need to be able to access all forms of documentation easily without having to download documents to read them. Developing this will reduce the bureaucracy enabling the FGB to be more proactive and less reliant on the Clerk and the HT resulting in a more efficient and effective governing board.

- **Succession Planning**

- Governors need to manage succession planning. Governors are already aware of some significant changes on the board and need to train governors to have the confidence and ability to take on these key roles.

- **Develop a Governor Induction Policy.**

- The governing board needs to develop a Governor Induction Policy and take ownership of governor induction. This could include a meeting with the Chair, Clerk and HT to discuss the key priorities in the SIP, procedure protocols etc. and have a tour of the school

The clerk should ensure the governors have a password for the Babcock Prime website, and

key governance documents i.e. Governance handbook; Governance Competency Framework.

Holding the School to Account

- **Ensure staff have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the FGB**
 - The 'Link Governor' Terms of Reference should be shared with staff to ensure they know and understand the role of governors in monitoring the work of the school.
 - The Headteacher needs to remind staff of the role of the governors especially when making governor visits as part of this 'link governor' role. The link governor visit is not an opportunity for staff to 'hijack' governors in becoming involved in the day to day operation of the school. The HT is the line manager for staff.
 - Governors also need to be clear about the boundaries and signpost staff to their own line managers to raise operational issues. This needs to be included in the protocols for governor visits.
 - Staff and governors should be familiar with the Governance Handbook and the Competency Frameworks for Clerks and Governors in addition to the Ofsted Inspection Handbook.
- **Ensure all governor hold each other to account.**
 - All governors need to take an equal share of responsibilities. Governors need to ensure they all take ownership and carry out the work behind the scenes in preparation for the meetings and visits. It is important that all governors attend all FGB meetings and committees to which they are assigned.
- **Ensure Performance Management is robust and rigorous.**
 - Governors need to ask questions of the HT, to be secure in the knowledge that rigorous objectives have been set for staff. Governors can ask to see anonymised

examples of objectives to check that they are 'SMART', fair and consistent.

- Governors need to ask questions and triangulate information regarding pupil outcomes and performance related pay.
- **Ensure all governors use the information received more effectively.**
 - Governors need to make more effective use of the website to inform them of the work of the school and gather information to prepare for school visits.
 - Governors need to read, digest, analyse and annotate the documentation received, to plan ahead for the questions that they need to ask at the meeting.
 - A procedure can be developed to enable questions for the HT/ SLT to be submitted in advance of the meeting. This will enable the HT/SLT to access additional information for the board in a timely manner. The portal is a good place for this (The HT would have to forward these questions to staff who are not governors)
 - A 'Governor Question box 'should be inserted into the format of all reports to governors from the HT and staff.
 - All paragraphs should include reference numbers for ease of reference.
 - There is no need for governors, staff and HT to read through reports. They should identify the key points they need to elaborate on, sharing the key messages, outcomes and impact. It should be assumed that all governors have read and analysed the information prior to the meeting. This will make the meetings more efficient and effective.
- **Ensure the FGB strategically plan to monitor the School Improvement Plan including all action plans.**
 - Insert a column for governor monitoring in the School Improvement Plan and other plans.

- Record the name of the governor monitoring alongside the specific priority detailing how they will monitor, e.g. Accompanied Learning Walk with a staff member / 1:1 meetings with HT, SLT, Faculty Lead etc. / Accompanied Class Visit with a staff member.
- Record this summary of visits on the Governing Body Annual Calendar.
- Ensure that the HT's report details the progress of the School Improvement plan.
- Ensure that governors take ownership of their governor action plans. This report will help to create and update the current document
- **Review the Governor Visits Policy to ensure there is a clear understanding of the purpose of visits in holding the school to account.**
 - Create a policy that is agreed and understood by governors and staff.
 - Ensure the policy has a clear rationale linked to the 3 core strategic functions.
 - Link all visits to the SIP and the Annual Calendar so they have a clear focus.
 - Consider introducing a 'Pre-visit request form' which clearly identifies the purpose of the visit, its link to the SIP and the preparation required by a governor before the visit takes place.
 - Decide who is best placed to authorise this visit on behalf of the FGB – The Chair, the HT or another governor.
 - Develop a protocol so that all written reports to the FGB are proof read prior to circulation, ensuring governors do not make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning.
 - NB In the majority of cases, a governor should be accompanied on a visit by a member of staff. This provides a greater opportunity to hold the school to account by asking questions and receiving answers in a timely manner. It will also prevent a

governor making a judgement.

Financial Management

- **Allocate a budget for Governor Training.**

- Although there is a limited budget, governors need to be mindful that the 'governance handbook' recommends that governor's budget for governor training. Governors highlighted their lack of skills knowledge and understanding in some key areas. Consideration needs to be given to this.
- It is recommended that all new governors attend the New Governor Induction Training course.
- During Finance meetings, all governors need to focus on the impact of the amount spent.
- It is a good idea to identify a governor with responsibility for analysing the impact of training on skills development. This would fit well with the governor monitoring the skills audit.
- . More governors need to develop a better understanding of finance to also be able to challenge effectively.
- IA Governor Training Feedback form should be introduced for governors to complete, following attending a training course. This should be submitted to the Clerk for circulation to all governors. This will assist governors by keeping them up to date with key messages and inform the board of future actions.

Compliance

- Ensure the website is compliant at all times. Introduce clear protocols for forwarding

	<p>information to the website administrator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure all documentation for FGB meetings and committees are circulated to all governors at least 7 days in advance in accordance with statutory regulations.
Date for progress and impact review	3 month review