

Busy Governance Guide to The Headteacher's Report

The Governance Handbook says: *“The governing body agrees with school leaders on how data will be provided, which will help it stay focused on its strategic functions while being mindful of the impact on workload and identifies ways to validate and cross-reference the data provided by the executive leadership.”* So, what do governors and trustees need to know on a regular (termly) basis?

1. It's all about school improvement. The headteacher's report is 'management information' not a newsletter and would therefore need to be forward looking and link with the priorities identified in the school improvement or development plan and the strategic plan. Risk management plans or registers can also link into the headteacher's report as these plans are part of a continuous cycle that helps ensure strategic priorities and improvement plans for schools and trusts are maintained or met.

All schools have different school improvement plans, but are likely to need information and data on the following to facilitate their role of holding the headteacher to account.

2. Pupil learning and progress. Analyse School Performance (ASP) is the key document for school data in the autumn term, but schools will be generating data on pupil progress throughout the year, most likely termly. This information can be anonymised (remember not about individuals, all about groups) and used to regularly inform governors about the progress of groups and interventions when and where needed.

Governance guides are clear on the need for accurate data. The board must have access to objective, high quality and timely data if it is to create robust accountability and know the questions that need to be asked of the executive leaders. Whilst not all governors will understand all of the data, it is essential that every board has at least one person with the skills to understand and interpret the full detail of the educational performance and the financial data available. These individuals should make sure that the board has a correct understanding of the school's performance and finances as presented and explained by executive leaders. They should understand the limitations of the performance data, including being clear about what can be inferred from it and identify from the data the issues that need to be discussed and addressed as a priority. Others on the board should learn from them and undertake training where this is needed to improve their confidence and skills in looking at and discussing issues arising from data.

3. Pupil applications, admissions, attendance and exclusions: Pupil numbers now more than ever dictate the budget, schools should look forward three years to assess their likely future pupil numbers. Only headteachers can exclude, but exclusions are governor business; boards need to know how many, how often and the duration. Remember, attendance is judged by Ofsted and the 'acceptable' levels of absence do change, make sure the board know how well their school is doing against local and national targets. Behaviour and attitude is also a key focus for Ofsted.

4. Staff absence, recruitment, retention, morale and performance: Not about individuals, but an overview indicating that performance management including classroom observations are taking place and that financial implications around employment and pay are under review. Note changes

in allocation of responsibility and significance with regards to teaching and learning and actions or proposals to address any issues that have arisen.

5. The quality of teaching and learning: Not about individuals, but what percentage of the teaching and learning in your school is effective and what is the evidence? What is being done to support any that is not. Governors are not qualified to judge teaching in class, but does the data on progress and attainment support the classroom observations about where effective learning is taking place? How about external views of the teaching in school, or schools, does the board see these reports? How inclusive is the learning in your school, does it create a supportive environment for all learners, including those with SEND?

6. School estate: Health and Safety incidents and audits, Environmental Sustainability and school estate management and development.

7. Safeguarding: Information on procedures, processes, CPD, trends in incidents, risks and reports. Number of incidents and number of pupils receiving support.

8. Stakeholders: Pupils, parents/carers and staff surveys, engagement, incidents and complaints.

9. Questions and challenge: It is essential that the report is circulated with paperwork 7 days prior to the meeting (14 days in advance for academies) and a reasonable amount of time is allocated on the agenda for questions and discussion. The length of headteachers' reports vary, but four A4 pages is a reasonable size for what is a summary document to facilitate discussion. Ensure governors understand what questions to ask and that this discussion is minuted to provide evidence of challenge. Once the report is circulated consider asking governors to provide the clerk with questions for the headteacher in advance of the meeting, this will ensure that the clerk has all of the questions for inclusion in the minutes and that the headteacher has time to find the answers and bring them to the meeting. Remember to make use of Part II for confidential items. See also the [Busy Governors' Guide to Challenge](#).

10. Internal and External Data: Whilst it is the headteacher's job to provide their board with the information it needs to do its job well, this cannot be the board's only source of information about how well the school is doing. If it was, then it would be impossible for the governors or trustees to hold the headteacher to account properly. Governors need to make sure that they see objective national data so that they are empowered to ask pertinent and searching questions.

11. Workload Considerations: Boards should ensure that they review and monitor the data requests they make of executive leaders and staff to avoid creating unnecessarily burdensome procedures. It is important that data is collected in a manner consistent with the principles in the [Reducing Teacher Workload](#) guidance.

12. Boards and Headteachers working across more than one school: With schools working within Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) and federations the written reporting can look quite different. Much will depend on how the MAT or federation is structured along with agreed schemes of delegation. The workload considerations still apply and it is vital that the information being reported to the board is concise and streamlined across the trust. This may require a different approach by headteachers, SLT and boards and it may require additional support or training in report writing and risk management documentation.