



Thought Piece: Working Together



Working Together

The beginning of a new term is a great time to review our expectations of each other as governors/trustees, headteachers/CEOs and clerks/Governance Professionals. The context for this review is:

- DfE Governance Handbook and competency frameworks (sections on behaviours)
- [The NGA briefing note on what to expect from each other \(2019\)](#)
- Your Governance Code of Conduct (which should be adopted annually)
- [The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- The role of the Accounting Officer in an academy trust

The focus of this Think Piece is what should headteachers reasonably expect from their governing boards (whether they are governors or trustees) and suggests some actions to help focus on the second core function on accountability. The 25 points below can be used as a quick checklist, a simple reminder or for further discussion around how the activity manifests itself in practice.

Headteachers and CEO (as well as other executive and senior leaders who regularly report to and work with boards) should reasonably expect governors and trustees to,

1. Actively be present – the board cannot carry passengers
2. Appreciate the work of all school staff not just those who attend meetings
3. Ask questions if they do not understand something
4. Be advocates and champions for ALL pupils
5. Be friendly and approachable but not over step the mark
6. Be prepared for meetings by reading documentation in advance and preparing questions; stick to the agenda and set a time limit for meetings.
7. Be professional in their behaviours
8. Challenge respectfully and support appropriately
9. Engage positively in meetings and avoid confrontation where possible
10. Ensure meetings are purposeful, planned and positive even when the subject matter is complex, challenging and difficult. Conflict does not have to be negative.
11. Ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and engage with any CPD and training provided
12. Listen to and consider the advice of the clerk/Governance Professional and ensure that they are remunerated appropriately
13. Make appointments to speak to leaders
14. Remember the work/life balance of leaders and staff when asking for information – asking themselves why they need the information
15. Respect confidentiality but understand whistleblowing
16. Respect the staffroom and staff spaces
17. Respond to emails regularly and send apologies in advance
18. Sign the annual code of conduct and adhere to it when governing
19. Undertake any actions attributed to them and be honest if they cannot do something
20. Undertake Headteacher/CEO appraisals in a timely fashion including appointing external advisor and ensuring mid-cycle review
21. Understand and respect the strategic/operational boundary
22. Undertake the training required of them with a minimum expectation of safeguarding, finance, data, use of Pupil Premium and SEND
23. Use social media wisely – make sure governors and trustees understand the boundaries; listen to parents and stakeholders and adhere to the appropriate policies

24. Wear their ID at all times, especially when talking to pupils and young people
25. Work together as a Team, collaboratively, for the benefit of the school community.

This list is not exhaustive and there will be other expectations related specifically to your school setting or board.

If you think your board would benefit from an External Review of Governance please contact Entrust Governor Services in the first instance. Former National Leaders of Governance, amongst others, are also available to support your chair if needed; again please contact Entrust governors@entrust-ed.co.uk who will be happy to signpost you further.