

We have listened to recent feedback and would like to introduce you to our new monthly bulletin. Our bulletin has been produced with the aim of keeping governors and clerks informed of the latest educational developments as they happen. The most effective way of using this briefing is to have it as an agenda item as part of your governing body meetings.

### [Governance Handbook 2017](#)

The Department for Education released on the 12th January the latest revised [Governance Handbook](#) which sets out the government's vision and priorities for effective governance. This book is necessary reading for every governor and clerk whether from a Maintained School, Academy Trust Board or Local governing body/ Advisory council. The 'Governance handbook' explains:

- governing boards' core roles and functions
- their legal duties- summarising and providing a first point of reference on all the legal duties on boards and signposting to more detailed information, guidance and resources
- where they can find the support -providing information on the support available to boards to be effective
- the main features of effective governance.

This edition of the Governance handbook has been redesigned into the six key features of effective governance. These are;

1. Strategic leadership
2. Accountability
3. People
4. Structures
5. Compliance
6. Evaluation.

The most significant changes to the content within other sections include:

#### ***Section 2: Strategic Leadership***

- A new section at 2.3 bringing together material about the board's role as the key decision-maker.

#### ***Section 3: Accountability***

- A stronger emphasis on ensuring financial propriety at 3.4.

#### ***Section 4: People***

- Updated text at 4.1.2 to reflect the new requirement that all those involved in governance in maintained schools, as well as in academy trusts, must have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- New advice on conducting informed elections at 4.1.4.
- New sections bringing together material on the important role of the chair at 4.3 and of the clerk at 4.4.
- A new explanation at 4.8 of the risks associated with close family relationships between those involved in governance or between them and senior employees.
- Details of the duty on boards to provide information about individuals involved in governance via Edubase at 4.8.

#### ***Section 5: Structures***

- Updated guidance on the role of Trustees and Members at 5.2.1.
- Clarification at 5.6 that all boards are required to publish a scheme of delegation to explain their governance arrangements, together with new guidance on what makes an effective scheme of delegation.
- Updated guidance on MATs at 5.2.2 and umbrella trusts at 5.5.1.

### **Section 6: Compliance**

- Confirmation at 6.7 that an individual on the board should take leadership responsibility for the organisation's safeguarding arrangements, which include its Prevent duty.
- New advice at 6.7.1 on handling allegations of abuse made against other children.

### **Section 7: Evaluation**

- Updated content on schools causing concern and on coasting schools at section 7.4.

### **Competency Framework**

The framework, which is essential reading for governing boards, sets out the competencies needed for effective governance. It is non-statutory guidance and should be read alongside the Governance Handbook. Academy trusts should also refer to the [Academies Financial Handbook](#).

The framework begins with the principles and personal attributes which, alongside the commitment of time and energy to the role, underpin effective governance. The seven principles and personal attributes are **Committed, Confident, Curious, Challenging, Collaborative, Critical and Creative**. Following on from this, the knowledge and skills required for effective governance are organised into those which are essential for everyone on the board; those which are required of the chair and those which at least someone on the board should have. In this way, the knowledge and skills required for chairs build on and complement the skills for everyone. There are 140 different skills listed for the board and 60 additional further skills for the Chair.

The document suggests some of the ways in which boards may want to use the framework;

- informing how they carry out a skills audit
- in individual performance review discussions, identifying training needs and/or developing a training and development programme
- putting together a role specification and determining interview questions for recruiting to the board and/or in selecting or recruiting a chair
- planning induction for people new to the board
- supporting a review of the board's effectiveness and identifying strengths and areas for development
- demonstrating the key characteristics and expectations of their role to others
- ensuring the expected behaviours are included in the board's code of conduct.

It is essential that the Competency Framework is not just used as a tick list. It is to be used in tandem with the governance handbook, assessing the skills in the framework against the roles and responsibilities in the handbook.

These publications show that there is now **significant** focus on the commitment of governors to their own development in order to improve their performance, both individually and the collective impact. Our spring district governor briefing also focussed on this area, highlighting the role of the Training and Development governor.

### **Questions for your Board**

How are you evaluating the skills within and required by your Governing body and linking them to the collective impact of effective governance? How often are you self-evaluating and auditing the impact of governance on the contribution to school improvement? We offer many forms of self-review to inform, support and aid your development. Please see the [Edukent School Improvement Services Brochure page 25](#) for more details.

### **And finally ....**

Thank you for your continued support with our schools. We are here to provide any advice and guidance you need with your roles, so please contact us if you have any queries:

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Please send through any suggestions/ideas to Suzanne Mayes, Interim Governor Services Manager – [suzanne.mayes@kent.gov.uk](mailto:suzanne.mayes@kent.gov.uk)