

Title	Governance Strategy 2014-16
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Vision

Improving School Leaders → Improving Schools

“All children and young people in Wolverhampton’s schools achieve outcomes which exceed expectations by attending outstanding schools, where every governing body drives improved outcomes for young people through effective strategic leadership, challenge and support to the school.”

This strategy will explore how governance can be strengthened, and become a more effective driver of school improvement, and what the local authority will offer in order to better support schools and Governors in the most efficient and effective way possible:

“We want governors to work with the leaders of their schools to be both strategic and pragmatic in delivering good outcomes from all children and young people. We want them to strengthen schools’ professional leadership by appointing the right people to the right jobs and we want them to hold school leaders to account for the progress and outcomes they achieve in schools.”

Sir Michael Wilshaw (Chief Inspector of Schools)

1. Background and Scope:

1.1 This paper is a response to the rapidly changing landscape of school governance. New forms of governance are becoming more widespread, and increased levels of responsibility are being demanded of governors as schools become more autonomous, whilst at the same time the local authority’s role is being challenged through political, social and fiscal pressures.

1.2 These challenges mean governing bodies will need to be better equipped to take on the responsibility and accountability for the school’s strategic leadership, and to develop their role of challenge and support.

1.3 The Local Authority's new School Improvement Strategy will support the development of strong and effective school leadership ensuring all schools in Wolverhampton offer at least a good level of education for all of our children and young people. This new Governance Strategy will form an integral part of that school improvement agenda and will involve governing bodies reviewing and evaluating their current practices with the Local Authority offering them challenge and support strategies through new facilitation, training and support, and more rigorous but efficient recruitment and retention processes.

2. The council's Statutory Duties with regard to School Governance

2.1 The council has a duty to promote educational excellence as set out in section 13a of the Education Act 1996. That duty states that a local authority must exercise its education functions with a view to promoting high standards. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 further defined the strategic role of the local authority in the school improvement process:

- As 'champion' of the needs of children and young people and their families;
- In the planning, commissioning and quality assurance of educational services; and,
- In challenging schools and, where appropriate, to commission support and, if necessary, to intervene in the management and governance of the school.

2.2 With regard to school governance each local authority has a duty towards:

- Recruiting Local Authority Governors,
- Ensuring that information and training is available to governors to enable them to undertake their role effectively.
- Strengthening governing bodies and creating Interim Executive Boards (IEB's) where a governing body is failing in its responsibilities.
- Using statutory powers of intervention under the Education and Inspections Act (2006).
- Agreeing and Making Instruments of Governance for all maintained schools.

3. What the council expects from its school governors

- (i) Champion outcomes for all children and young people in Wolverhampton
- (ii) Consider national and local priorities and challenge decisions that could be detrimental to other schools or young people
- (iii) Set high expectations through promoting Wolverhampton as a place that children and young people can be proud of
- (iv) Focus on challenging schools to close gaps in attainment and progression and exceed national averages, particularly for vulnerable groups such as looked after children, children with special educational needs or children from minority ethnic groups
- (v) Maintain an understanding of and communicate the council's priorities and developments at governing body meetings
- (vi) Maintain an awareness of the school's local area, community and local priorities
- (vii) Promote the absolute expectation that to be retained as a Governor who can effectively drive school improvement, the core training offered by the LA will be taken up by all governors.

4. Recruitment & Retention of local authority governors

(While these principles are aimed at local authority governors in the first instance, they will apply universally to the recruitment and retention of all governors)

4.1 Effective marketing to successful, professional people with the right mix of high level skills needed for our governing bodies is critical. Encouraging local professionals and local authority employees to give something back to their own and other local schools through regular presentations and meetings which highlight the benefits of being a Governor in Wolverhampton will support the subsequent rigorous programme of continuous development expected of these important volunteers.

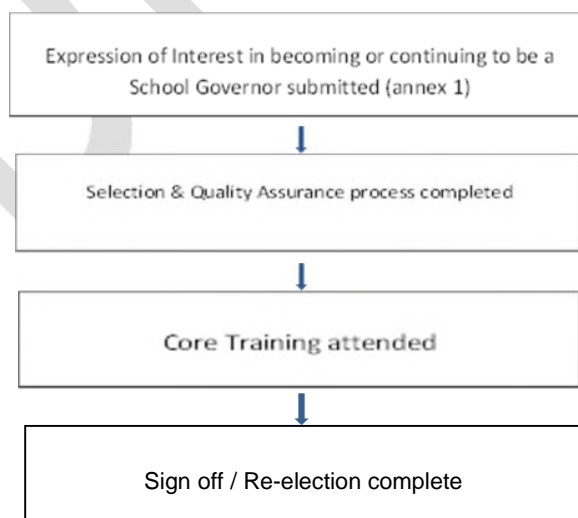
4.2 The council will look to recruit from a much wider field by working closely alongside schools with organisations such as;

- The Chamber of Commerce,
- The University of Wolverhampton,
- Local businesses,
- School Governor One Stop Shop¹ (SGOSS)
- Education Business Partnership
- Volunteer organisations

4.3 The Governors Service will also work in tandem with the local authority Communication’s team to ensure that the local press are aware of and run “good news” stories on governors in order to raise the profile and status of being a governor in Wolverhampton.

4.4 The following flow chart describes the process for the recruitment and re-election of local authority governors.

Election Process for Local Authority School Governors



¹ The SGOSS is a charity that exists to find volunteers with transferable skills to be volunteers

4.5 A skills-led code of practice for the recruitment of local authority and foundation governors will be put in place together with an updated application form (**see Annex 1**) which will enable the council to examine the way in which applicants can demonstrate the following essential criteria:

- The match of skills and experience required to undertake the role for driving improvement by supporting, challenging and holding the Head Teacher to account
- The range of individual skills and experience that match the needs of schools
- The candidate's support for the school's ethos and mission and commitment to attending core training² provided by the Local Authority along with their Chair of Governors.

4.6 This will involve collaboration with governing bodies to support them with appointing people with the relevant skills and community knowledge and enabling local authority governors to be appointed where their skills will be most valuable and have the most impact.

4.7 The council will also clarify the following aspects for aspiring local authority governors

- Role profile and Code of Conduct
- Disqualification criteria

5. Evaluating the effectiveness of Governing Bodies

5.1 The council is currently developing a robust system for evaluating the effectiveness of governing bodies which will include:

- Scrutiny of schools most recent Ofsted reports for comments on governance
- Scrutiny of Governing Body minutes from last three full Governing Body meetings and any committees
- An audit of recent CPD
- A requirement for Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors to complete the DfE self-audit tool
- Intelligence gathering from School Improvement Officers
- Evidence from School Improvement Board meetings.

5.2 The culmination of this evidence will enable the LA to give each Governing Body an initial rating (RAG)

- **RED** - **Inadequate**
- **AMBER** - **Vulnerable**
- **GREEN** - **Effective**

5.3 This rating will then be communicated to all Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors who will then be given the opportunity to respond to the rating by providing further evidence, if appropriate.

5.4 The authority will then make a final judgement for each school. Any schools rated as at risk or vulnerable may be directed by the local authority to participate in a full review of governance by an

² See Training and Development for Governors for further details

independent National Leader of Governance (NLG), or, where support fails to see quick results, an Interim Executive Board may be established (see powers of intervention below).

6. Training and development for governors

6.1 There is a need to improve standards of Governance across the city and therefore a programme of continuous professional development is critical if governors are to fulfil their statutory roles and contribute to excellent outcomes for children and young people across the city.

6.2 The local authority recruitment and retention policy will therefore include a core programme of training and support aimed at ensuring all governors are fit for purpose and can effectively support and challenge schools' Senior Leadership Teams.

6.3 This core package will include:

- A 12 month training package that supports new chairs of governors in their first year in post through a range of twilight training sessions and personalised support. This training package will also target 'Chairs in Waiting' and those chairs highlighted as ineffective through the local authorities RAG rating system.

6.4 Running in conjunction with the above, and capitalising on the school to school support model, will be a package of one to one mentoring and coaching from effective Chairs of Governors from other local schools. For all other governors, a series of critical twilight training sessions will target the essential skills to be an effective governor.

6.5 The core training will be funded by the Local Authority, as outlined in the 'Role Profile' and retention policy, and there will be a high expectation that all governors will attend this training in order to become, and remain, an effective governor of a Wolverhampton School.

6.6 In addition to the core training package, described above, the local authority will increase its use of National Leaders of Governance (NLG's). NLG's are highly effective chairs of governors, who use their skills and experience to support the development of effective governance in other schools. The use of NLG's will be targeted at those governing bodies who are judged to be the most vulnerable through the local authority RAG rating.

This new strategy aims to provide clear expectations of governors across the city, creating a culture of governors as motivated, skilled school leaders, recruited and retained through more efficient and effective practices, which enable early evaluation and identification of where training and development, support and challenge or indeed LA intervention is required.