



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

School Governance Strategy

January 2014

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to set out Manchester City Council's approach to securing effective governance of schools in the City and the Council's role in supporting this within the context of local and national developments that are shaping the role of school governance.

Vision

Manchester's vision is to develop strong, accountable governing bodies with access to a pool of highly skilled, well informed governors, who understand the City's priorities for its children, young people and residents. Effective governance is critical in ensuring that all children and young people in the City attend good or outstanding education provision. Effective governance will drive school improvement and enable young people to raise their aspirations, fulfil their potential and develop the right skills to play a part in the life of the City.

The Council will strengthen and develop effective school governance in Manchester through:

- **collaborating** with schools, academies, free schools, colleges, universities, diocesan authorities, businesses and other stakeholders to explore new approaches to and models of school governance;
- **communicating** effectively with stakeholders and governing bodies the Council's objectives and duties for child and family welfare, skills and employment, community regeneration and economic growth;
- **strengthening** governing bodies by using a skills-led recruitment model for LA governors and developing National Leaders of Governance and Manchester Local Leaders of Governance in collaboration with the Manchester Schools' Alliance and the National College for School Leadership;
- **maintaining** an 'intelligence-led' approach to ensuring that the Council and governing bodies are effectively discharging their statutory duties, driving school improvement and improving outcomes for children and young people in the City.

The development of a Strategic Education Partnership (SEP) between the Council, schools, further and higher education, business leaders and other public and private sector partners has created a significant opportunity to strengthen and enhance existing partnership working to support the realisation of this vision. The SEP links education and skills to the City's growth strategy, the classroom to the workplace and schools to communities. A School Governance Unit has been established in the Council to work in partnership with key stakeholders to support the development of the Council's strategy for effective governance and to manage the statutory responsibilities that the Council maintains for school governance.

Effective Governance in Manchester

In Manchester, governing bodies focus on: their strategic role in achieving the best outcomes for all pupils; holding head teachers to account for the educational performance of the school; and ensuring effective use of financial resources.¹ The aspiration is that all governing bodies in Manchester will have a diverse range of people with the relevant skills, experience and understanding of the local community, and can demonstrate the impact they make through an embedded, regular, self-review process.

Key Elements of Effective Governance

In Manchester there are already many good and outstanding governing bodies who demonstrate the key elements of effective governance²:

¹ [School Governance \(Roles, Procedures and Allowances\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](#)

² Informed by: [Ofsted Section 5 Subsidiary Guidance, Sept 2013](#) and [Handbook for Inspecting Schools in England under the Education Act 2005, July 2013](#) and [NGA "8 elements of good governance"](#)

- clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of the governing body;
- clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through rigorous data analysis and consultation with children, staff, parents, and the community;
- demonstration of support, challenge and holding the head teacher and other senior leaders to account for improving the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and pupils' behaviour and safety;
- demonstration of the use of performance management systems, including performance management of the head teacher to improve teaching, leadership and management;
- ability to ensure solvency and probity and effective management of financial resources;
- ability to ensure statutory duties and obligations are met;
- ability to demonstrate an impact on school performance and improvement including the governing body's contribution to this;
- commitment to a regular process of self- review and continuous professional development.

In order to maintain and increase further the standards of school improvement that have been achieved across the City, the aspiration is that all governing bodies will be able to demonstrate the key elements of effective governance. To support the development of a self-improving school partnership, the Manchester Schools' Alliance, will provide opportunities for peer-to-peer support and dissemination of good practice for governing bodies.

Accountability to Ofsted

Governing bodies are accountable to Ofsted and expectations have been defined in the Ofsted Framework, Sept 2012. "Inspectors will evaluate how effectively governors challenge and hold senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance and ensure financial stability"³ as part of the overall judgement of Leadership and Management. Governing bodies need to be able to demonstrate how well they "evaluate the performance of the school particularly in terms of: pupil achievement and progress, the leadership of teaching, management of staff and the difference made by initiatives such as the pupil premium"⁴. Schools judged as 'requires improvement' overall or for leadership and management will be recommended to undertake an external review of their governance. Every inspection report now includes a specific statement on the quality and effectiveness of governance.

"The governing body knows the school well and values the role it plays in the community very highly. Links with all classes provide excellent understanding of the school's day-to-day work. It fulfils its important role in monitoring and accurately assessing the school's effectiveness and planning for future school developments. The governors analyse and compare assessment information and question school leaders over the standards and progress of each group. Its sanctioning of additional teachers, funded through the pupil premium, has proven to be a highly successful action by ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities to achieve their best. Financial and other statutory responsibilities are carried out with smooth efficiency. Safeguarding arrangements meet all requirements. Relevant training is given high priority and procedures are constantly monitored to ensure the continued well-being of pupils and staff"

Ofsted comments from an outstanding Manchester school Nov 2012

³ [Ofsted Section 5 Inspection Subsidiary Guidance, Sept 2013](#)

⁴ [Ofsted Section 5 Inspection Subsidiary Guidance, Sept 2013](#)

The Council has statutory duties for school governance which include recruiting LA Governors, agreeing and making Instruments of Government for all maintained schools⁵ and using powers of intervention under the Education and Inspections Act (2006) to strengthen governing bodies and create Interim Executive Boards (IEBs). In addition, the Council retains a statutory duty to ensure that information and training is made available to all governors to allow them to undertake their role effectively⁶.

Recruitment of LA Governors

The role of the Local Authority governor is key to the Council communicating and developing a sustainable, integrated and mutually beneficial relationship with schools as part of the self-improving school system. LA governors are sourced from a range of organisations and do not have to be employees of the Council or elected members. In July 2013, there were 241 LA governors working in 170 schools and academies across the City and of this number 37 were elected members.

There are currently two school governance constitution regulations in operation which are dependent on when the governing body was established or varied its constitution. The majority of governing bodies in Manchester currently operate under the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2007, which allows up to one fifth (one tenth in voluntary aided schools) of the membership to be LA governors appointed by the Council. If a governing body chooses to reconstitute or has reconstituted since Sept 1st 2012, they operate under the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012. These regulations stipulate that there can only be one LA governor, who is nominated by the Council and appointed by the governing body. It is therefore essential that LA governors have the relevant skill set to increase the impact of the governing body and present the policies and priorities of the Council effectively. Academies have the option of agreeing to appoint an LA governor. It is the wish of the City Council that in order to strengthen the partnership between the Council and academies that academies will choose to appoint an LA governor. This will only be achieved if LA governors are viewed as a valuable asset who can make a positive difference to an academy's performance.

The School Governance Unit will liaise with local businesses, the School Governor One Stop Shop (SGOSS) and other partners to develop a diverse pool of highly skilled LA governors. A skills-led Code of Practice for Recruitment of LA governors has been developed to include an appointment, re-appointment and removal process, and a job description, person specification and code of conduct. It involves collaboration with governing bodies to support them with appointing people with the relevant skills and community knowledge and enabling LA governors to be appointed where their skills will be most valuable and have the most impact.

The School Governance Unit will provide a training and development programme for all LA governors to support them to undertake their role effectively and assist them to communicate the Council's priorities and objectives clearly with their governing bodies.

In addition to fulfilling the role of a governor, LA governors will be expected to:

- champion outcomes for **all** children and young people in Manchester;
- consider national and local priorities and challenge decisions that could be detrimental to other schools or young people;
- set high expectations through promoting Manchester as a place that children and young people can be proud of, where they can fulfil their full potential and progress to live and work;
- focus on challenging schools to close gaps in attainment and progression and exceed national averages, particularly for vulnerable groups and learners such as looked after children, children with special educational needs or children from minority ethnic groups;
- maintain an understanding of and communicate the Council's priorities and developments at governing body meetings;
- maintain an awareness about the school's local area, community and local priorities

⁵ School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations [2007](#) and [2012](#)

⁶ [Education Act 2002, Part 3, Chapter 1, Section 22](#)

Instruments of Government (IOG)

The School Governance Unit together with the City Solicitors and appropriate Diocesan Authorities for faith schools will provide advice and guidance and make new Instruments of Government (the legal document that sets out the composition of a maintained school's governing body) in line with the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012.

Quality Assurance and Statutory Intervention

The School Governance Unit will support and enhance the already established school improvement quality assurance process by providing accurate and timely information about governance in schools across the City including: Ofsted results, Ofsted comments on governance and key school performance data to identify governing bodies that are most in need of strengthening.

Where a school is classed as 'eligible for intervention' under the Education and Inspections Act 2006⁷ the Local Authority may exercise powers to require a governing body to enter into arrangements with a view to improving the performance of the school. This can include the appointment of additional governors, or the replacement of the governing body with an Interim Executive Board (IEB). The Governance Unit will support such intervention by ensuring access to a pool of high calibre governors to strengthen governing bodies where necessary and to serve as members of Interim Executive Boards where these are required.

Information, Support and Training for Governing Bodies

The School Governance Unit will develop a quality assurance framework and work in partnership with the Manchester Schools' Alliance, Manchester Governors Association, the Diocesan Authorities and national organisations to review areas of best practice in order to provide signposting and information about governor support services, training and resources that are available for governing bodies to purchase or access via peer to peer support. Governing bodies are responsible for their own improvement and self-review and are best placed to decide what training and support they require. Governing bodies should commission the training and governor support services they require from the various providers that are available both locally and nationally. The School Governance Unit is not a direct training provider.

The Manchester Schools' Alliance will provide a forum through the Governor's Reference Group for the dissemination of good practice, networking, the development of a Manchester Local Leader of Governance model and support to increase the number of National Leaders of Governance.

Several key organisations in Manchester have already embedded school governance into their corporate social responsibility plans, providing support for employees to become school governors. The School Governance Unit will build on this best practice and encourage further organisations in the City to consider this approach in order to increase the availability of high-calibre governors with a good understanding of local priorities.

⁷ According to the DfE [Statutory Guidance for Schools Causing Concern \(October 2012\)](#) "A school will be eligible for intervention under the 2006 Act if it has not complied with a warning notice and the local authority has given the school written notice of their intention to exercise their intervention powers under part 4 of the 2006 Act or where it has been judged by Ofsted to be inadequate" (serious weakness or special measures).