

University of Manchester School Governor Initiative (UMSGI)

Governor Ofsted Preparation Checklist

This checklist can be used by UMSGI governors to support their governing boards in preparing relevant documentation and information prior to an Ofsted inspection, so that they can effectively demonstrate their strategic impact on the school.

Introduction

Although Ofsted inspections take place with limited notice, most of the time school leaders do have a fair idea of when to expect an inspector's call. With this in mind, it is possible for governing boards to be 'Ofsted ready'.

We strongly recommend that governing boards take responsibility to prepare themselves for any impending inspection by identifying which governors are the most appropriate to meet inspectors; for example, the lead governor for safeguarding, and chairs of committees.

Before an inspection takes place, the lead inspector will have considered the information that is already available to them and in the public domain. This information will help the inspector establish the initial themes the inspection will focus on.

Governors File of Evidence

Governors generally only get to spend approximately 30 minutes to an hour of time exclusively with an inspector to showcase all that they do. Preparing an organised and clearly labelled file of evidence that inspectors can look through at their leisure will demonstrate that your governing body is efficient, transparent and able to identify where it meets the responsibilities and requirements of the role.

Your file should include:

Document/Information	Evidence of
Minutes of full governing body meetings	Challenge and support
Brief agenda and key action points from weekly chair/Headteacher meetings	Challenge and support
Copies of all information from curriculum-focussed meetings (Teaching and Learning Committee), with highlighted sections to demonstrate challenge of school data	Challenge and support
Copies of all information from finance-focussed meetings (Resource Management), with highlighted sections to demonstrate how school finances are monitored to ensure they are spent wisely	Challenge and support
Copies of all learning walk or governor monitoring visit reports	Challenge and support
Information relating to your school's approach to performance management and decisions made in relation to staff salaries	Challenge and support
A copy of your governor attendance record for all meetings	Challenge and support
Copies of any governor newsletters	Engagement with key stakeholders

The latest copy of the Chair's Annual Report	Engagement with key stakeholders
Agendas for any meetings held to engage with parents and staff that governors may attend	Engagement with key stakeholders
Records of pupil conference meetings and governor attendance at school council meetings	Engagement with key stakeholders
Copies of any governor job descriptions	Governor training and development
Copies of your school's governor induction process and FAQ information for new governors	Governor training and development
A copy of your skills audit and the results of this	Governor training and development
A copy of your governing body's annual self-evaluation form	Governor training and development
A copy of any external reviews undertaken	Governor training and development

It is essential that your clerk records governor questions clearly within all minutes, but also highlight these further for the inspector and use labels to direct the inspector to sections where you have discussed or questioned current 'hot topics', such as pupil premium, staff performance, assessment without levels, British values, pupil wellbeing, etc.

Your governing body may not have all of the above information and, if this is the case, take some time to review this list with governors to see if any of these suggestions can be incorporated into the team's work. Even if you do not have all of the information listed, it is essential to start a file and include what you do have, as this will enable you to review what you need to make governance processes more effective, and to showcase aspects of governance that are particularly strong.

Inspecting governance

Ofsted will review governance alongside the leadership and management of the school and will consider how well the governing board performs in the areas in the first column.

Areas Ofsted will consider when inspecting governance	Evidence of compliance
Whether governors work effectively with leaders to communicate the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school and develop a culture of ambition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School Website (clear vision on website) ○ School Improvement Plan (SIP) or School Development Plan (SDP) ○ School Evaluation Form (SEF) ○ British Values Statement/Policy ○ Behaviour Policy ○ Governor Newsletters ○ Student Voice/School Council ○ Case studies for specific groups such as SEN, disadvantaged pupils
Whether governors provide a balance of challenge and support to leaders, understanding the strengths and areas needing improvement at the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School Improvement Plan (SIP) or School Development Plan (SDP) ○ School Evaluation Form (SEF) ○ Minutes of Governing Board and subcommittee meetings – asking challenging questions, holding the leaders to account ○ School Learning Walks
Whether governors provide support for an effective Headteacher or are hindering school improvement because of a lack of understanding of the issues facing the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School Improvement Plan (SIP) or School Development Plan (SDP) ○ Relationship between the Chair of Governors and Headteacher ○ Head Teacher's Performance Management ○ Minutes of Governing Board and subcommittee meetings – asking challenging questions, holding the leaders to account ○ School Learning Walks ○ Governing Board Roles and Committees Structure ○ Annual review of governance/Skills Audit ○ Governor Training/Development Sessions
Whether governors understand how the school makes decisions about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teachers' Staff Pay Policy ○ Pay progression and performance record

The following information and advice sheet has been compiled from UMSGI members personal experiences, resources from NGA - www.nga.org.uk and the TheSchoolBus - www.theschoolbus.net – April 2018

teachers' salary progression and performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minutes of Finance/Resources Committee
Whether governors ensure that assessment information from leaders provides governors with sufficient and accurate information to ask probing questions about outcomes for pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School Performance data – RAISEonline/Analyse School Performance (ASP) data for their school ○ Minutes of Governing Board and subcommittee meetings – asking challenging questions, holding the leaders to account ○ Local Authority/Academy Trust monitoring visit reports ○ Headteachers Report to the Governing Board
Whether governors ensure the school's finances are properly managed and can evaluate how the school is using pupil premium, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch up premium, primary PE and sport premium, and special educational needs funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Finance Governors Terms of Reference ○ Pupil Premium Policy, Plan and Spending ○ Year 7 Catch-up Premium Report ○ PE and Sports Premium Report ○ Termly SEND Reports to Governing Board ○ SEND Policy ○ Link Governor Reports to Governing Board ○ Evidence of Learning Walks ○ Governor Training/Development Sessions
Whether governors are transparent and accountable, including in the recruitment of staff, governance structures, attendance at meetings and contact with parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School Improvement Plan (SIP) or School Development Plan (SDP) ○ Governors Development Plan ○ Governors Skills Audit ○ Governor Roles and Responsibilities ○ School Communication Policy ○ Parent Code of Conduct ○ Governor Newsletters ○ Parent Questionnaire/Survey ○ Governors Attendance Records ○ Declaration of Interests ○ School Learning Walks and visits to school e.g. attendance at school performances/assemblies, parents evenings, engaging with the PTA, student voice meetings etc.

Questions for Governors

Strengths and weaknesses of the school

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the school and how do governors know?

The key focus of this answer is likely to be on outcomes for pupils. The most important (in inspection terms) are achievement, behaviour and attendance. Governors would be expected to have a fair working knowledge of the school's progress in these areas, based on rigorous monitoring and evaluation. This should take place during governors' meetings.

Strengths and weaknesses of the governing body

- What are the strengths and areas for development for the governing body?
- Can governors give examples of how they have supported and challenged the school?
- How are the training needs of governors identified and addressed?
- What training have governors undertaken recently and what has been the impact of this training?
- What training have you received to enable you to challenge school leaders?

These questions are testing the extent to which governors have reflected on their own effectiveness. Governors may comment on how they support the school, act as critical friends, hold the school to account, and are involved in strategic planning.

Self-evaluation and school improvement

- What are the main barriers to learning and what action has been taken to overcome them?
- How successful have the actions been?
- What contribution does the governing body think it has made to improving provision, especially teaching, and outcomes for pupils?
- To what extent is the governing body involved in the school's processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning?
- How do governors monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school improvement plan?

Governors should explain how they are involved in identifying priorities, whether specific individuals monitor parts of the plan to give a 'hands on' dimension and how frequently the plan is subject to scrutiny

Safeguarding

- What are the procedures for safeguarding pupils and how have training needs been met?

The governing body is not responsible for the day-to-day operation of safeguarding procedures, but must have a close involvement in the formulation of the child protection policy and monitor and evaluate its impact annually. The key question governors must ask themselves is: does the policy work and what information will be needed to make that judgement? The governor and the senior member of staff that have responsibility for safeguarding may hold regular meetings. The governing body may also 'spot check' the single central record. Governors must also stay up to date with training guidance and minimum training standards, including refresher training.

Consultation with parents and the community

- How do governors consult parents/the local community?
- Can governors give examples of when parental/community views have been sought and acted upon?

In order to be judged as at least 'Good' for governance, governors need to be able to demonstrate that they have systems in place to seek parental views and, if required, act on them. Increasingly, inspectors are asking for specific examples. Governor drop-in sessions at parent evenings can be an effective way of maintaining awareness of parental concerns.

Other possible questions to governors

- Tell me about the improvements made since the last inspection
- How effectively do governors fulfil the full range of statutory duties?
- What is the governing body's view of the quality of leadership in the school?
- How effectively does the governing body ensure that its skills and expertise are utilised?
- What is the school doing to raise standards?
- How do you assess quality of teaching and learning at school?
- How do you get an insight into the classrooms?
- How have you challenged school leaders? What was done in response and were you happy with the outcome?
- What are the strategic priorities for teaching and learning this year? What is being done to deliver these? How do you know?
- How are teachers and managers being developed to raise standards, quality, and teaching and learning outcomes?
- What external support has the school received and what is its impact on the school?