

CADWYN



ALL WALES CENTRE *for* GOVERNOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH

BUILDING EFFECTIVE LEARNING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

A SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS FRAMEWORK FOR WALES

In putting the learner at the heart of education policy and delivery in Wales, the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) spearheads the Welsh Assembly Government's aim that the whole education community work together to improve children's and young people's learning and wellbeing for the benefit of both learners and society as a whole.

In this article, Chris Britten, Head Teacher of Penybont Primary School, Bridgend, and Andy Henderson, Head Teacher of Hen Felin Special School, Rhondda Cynon Taf, who have both been seconded to the Welsh Assembly Government, explain the part governors can play in improving school effectiveness.

Many children and young people in Wales achieve well and, at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, their attainment compares favourably with those of children in other countries. At key stages 3 and 4 the picture is more variable, and recent international comparisons have shown that Wales lags behind the rest of the UK, particularly in mathematics and reading. The Welsh Assembly Government is aware of this situation and recognises the need to do more to reduce differences in learner outcomes, both within and between schools, and to raise overall levels of attainment.

Improving children's and young people's achievements underpins the moral purpose of our education system and requires that we create the conditions that provide all of them with the best possible opportunities to learn in order to maximise their potential.

The SEF recognizes the challenges we have to face and has been developed as a partnership between practitioners, local authorities and other stakeholders, and offers an exciting and innovative way of working together across school and Local Authority boundaries to create a world class education system for the children and young people of Wales.

The SEF, in seeking to improve learning and wellbeing for children and young people in Wales, is underpinned by the concept of tri-level working (schools, local authorities and Assembly Government working together towards a common purpose) and the creation of professional learning communities which bring together professionals at all levels to promote sound practice and shared learning.

Within the SEF there are six elements which research has shown have an impact on children's and young people's learning and wellbeing. These are illustrated in the diagram to the right.

The outer ring holds the 'themes' that run through everything we do in the school education sector. The segments are the six 'elements' we need to concentrate on to improve effectiveness in schools. Under each element are the 'aspects' – these add detail to the elements.



To take forward this work the Welsh Assembly Government has seconded five head teachers to develop the SEF so that it enhances and brings together current and future initiatives and developments.



THE ROLE OF GOVERNORS

Governors have an important role to play in school effectiveness. They make a unique contribution to school development, and as such are closely involved with the improvements that take place within their schools. The SEF recognises the unique and important contribution that governors make and seeks to enhance their work.

HOW WILL THIS HAPPEN?

Governors have long been critical friends of schools and their leaders and the SEF aims to support their work in this area. It is recommended therefore that Governors:

- ensure that the leadership team evaluates the school across the six elements, and also look closely at the evidence which supports this evaluation.
- ensure that the school development plan is in line with the SEF framework; if it is not, work with the leadership team to align the plan to the framework.

Responsibility for school effectiveness rests firmly within the school. To support schools in their self-evaluation and development work the Welsh Assembly Government is training 'associates' (serving headteachers or school improvement officers) who will work with schools, initially on an individual basis to evaluate the school's progress within the SEF, then by bringing groups of schools together to share what works (and on occasion what doesn't!)

It may well be that the headteacher of your school will be asked to become an associate. If this is the case, the Welsh Assembly Government hopes that you will support this request and recognise that there will be benefits for your school if the head teacher takes on such a role. For instance, he or she will be learning and bringing back ideas from other schools and other authorities that will be of clear benefit to both pupils and staff.

WHAT ELSE CAN GOVERNORS DO?

Each of the elements of the framework supports a different area of the school's work and clearly governors will have an input in all 6 elements. However, if we focus on two, "Improvement and Accountability" and "Leadership", governors might consider asking themselves and their schools the following questions.

IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Do we as governors really know how our school is performing?
- Does the school seek the views of all its stakeholders, including pupils?
- How does the school council work? Do governors have contact with the school council?
- What evidence and data does the school use?

- How are targets set and are they met?

LEADERSHIP

- Do we know where the school is going and where the leadership team see the school in the short, medium and long term?
- What strategies are in place to deliver this? Is this reflected in the school's development plan?
- Are resources linked to priorities?
- Do we meet with governors of other schools to discuss our roles?
- Are we supporting the school in collaborating with other schools to learn from each other?

"WELLBEING"

You will notice that the wellbeing of learners is at the centre of the SEF. The word 'wellbeing' might be new to governors within the school context. Wellbeing is an important focus for schools and includes aspects of a child's life such as self esteem, positive outlook and general happiness. Improving outcomes in wellbeing is a key measure for all of us if we are to develop our children and young people fully and in ways we would wish.

CONCLUSION

There is a great deal of research based evidence to show that sustained and secure improvements in the performance of schools comes from developing professional learning communities, all of whose members see that improving outcomes for pupils is the responsibility of everyone in that community.

The Welsh Assembly Government are committed to making the SEF a success by establishing learning communities and as we have said, governors also have a crucial part to play in this process by making sure that discussion of the SEF is on the agenda of your meetings. You can also help take your school forward by linking and working collaboratively with the governing bodies of schools in your learning community; by sharing information and best practice; and of course by learning from each other.

The Welsh Assembly Government are confident that you will embrace this unique opportunity and join with us in creating a world class education provision for the children and young people in Wales.

For more information please contact:
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E-mail: Cheryl.Morgan@wales.gsi.gov.uk



FROM THE CENTRE MANAGER

I normally report to you the various activities that we've been carrying out at the Centre, and although these have been many and varied, as usual, in this edition I thought you might be interested in a training session I've done with governors in Neath/Port Talbot and Denbighshire.

I was asked to run an inter-active session entitled "The problems of being a governor". Well, where do you start – and, for that matter, where do you finish? After researching the topic for quite a while, I came up with twelve challenges which I thought were probably experienced most commonly by governors – "the dirty dozen" as one course attendee described them. It was clear, though, that seven stood out as the ones which regularly presented problems. I wonder if you would agree.

- I'm supposed to help run the school, but I'm not an expert in education or running a business.
- I've been told that governors govern the school and the Head manages it. What's the difference?

- I don't understand a lot of the language of education which means I don't understand how important certain things we are discussing might be.
- I don't understand a lot of the data we are given so I don't really know how well or badly the school is doing; I just rely on what the Head tells us.
- It's easy for a teacher governor to represent the teachers as there aren't that many teachers and they see them every day, but I'm a parent governor; how do I represent the parents?
- I sometimes feel that the Head and Chair work things out before our meetings and the rest of us just "rubber stamp" what they say.
- We're being inspected next term – help!

Have a good summer.

Steve Gullick

NEWS FROM GOVERNORS WALES

PUBLICATIONS

Governors Guide on Community Focused Schools – a practical guide for governors

A copy of the guide on CD, produced by Continyou Cymru and Governors Wales to support school governors in Wales with developing a community focused schools approach in their schools has recently been sent out.

<http://www.governorswales.org.uk/publications/2008/04/01/governor-guide-community-focused-schools/>

Governors Guide on the Appointment of Headteachers/Deputy Heads has been sent out to Chairs of governing bodies. This guide offers a summary of the main points that governors should take into consideration when appointing a headteacher etc and should be used in conjunction with detailed advice and support produced by LEAs and Diocesan authorities where appropriate.

<http://www.governorswales.org.uk/publications/2008/04/03/governor-guide-appointment-headteachers/>

EVENTS

The Governors Wales conference will take place on 12th July 2008 at Powys County Hall, Llandrindod Wells and this year, the theme of the conference will focus on The School Effectiveness Framework which has been developed by the Welsh Assembly Government in collaboration with key stakeholders. The

conference will provide an opportunity for governors and guests to explore a number of issues relating to the School Effectiveness Framework, looking at specifically:

- the vision and purpose of the School Effectiveness Framework;
- the role of school governors in the School Effectiveness Framework;
- current position and development in schools.

The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales will provide addresses at the conference. Headteachers who have been seconded to the Welsh Assembly Government as advisers, to forward the work of the School Effectiveness Framework will assist with workshop sessions in the afternoon.

Further information is available from the Governors Wales' office:

Tel: 029 2048 7858 | E-mail: contact@governorswales.org.uk

FUTURE PUBLICATIONS/EVENTS FOR 2008-2009

Fact Files on Annual Parents Meeting/Report, Associate Pupil Governors, the Critical Friend, Governor Guides on Effective Governing Bodies, A Model Complaints Policy commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government, National Award for Outstanding Clerks to Governing Bodies and two regional conferences.

Llywodraethwyr Cymru

Governors Wales

GOVERNORS HELPLINE

0845 6020100

is the helpline for governors of schools in Wales.

Operated by Governors Wales the helpline will provide advice on a range of issues to governors in all parts of Wales.



CONVERSATIONS

Are you in a local authority with a governor association and, if not, have you considered starting one? Ken Maund and Ian Griffiths are members of Bridgend Governor Association and here they speak to editor, Steve Gullick of their experiences

SG How long have you both been governors?

I.G. I've been a governor of an infants' school for two and a half years.

K.M. And I've also been a governor for two and a half years but at a comprehensive school.

S.G. And how long have you been members of Bridgend Governor Association?

K.M. Oh we're both quite new! I've been a member for one and a half years and Ian for six months.

S.G. I know it's relatively early days as you haven't been members for that long but what would you say are the key roles of a local authority governor association?

I.G. First of all, I'd say it's to provide a friendly ear for governors who have concerns about their roles and also to advise and counsel governors especially if they feel that, for whatever reasons, they cannot talk to colleagues and staff at their school. Secondly, a local governor association gives a voice to governors when they are lobbying their local authority or Welsh Assembly Government.

K.M. I agree very much with Ian, especially regarding the second point. At Bridgend we enjoy excellent relations with the local authority and we receive a lot of help from the Governor Support Office, but I still think it's very important that governing bodies, as a group, have an independent voice, separate from that of the local authority.

S.G. What are the greatest challenges in setting up and running a governor association?

I.G. I think the greatest challenge is to engage as many governors as possible in the association, and this is not easy as committed governors will already devote a lot of time to their own school. It's also essential that your governor association is recognised as a key player in education by schools and, especially, the local authority.

K.M. I'd add to Ian's points the difficulties of communication between the association and individual governing bodies. For this reason, we're asking schools to include "Governor Association news or business" on all their meeting agendas. This will give us an opportunity to disseminate information to individual governing bodies and governors and hopefully encourage governors to

support the association. We're also starting a termly newsletter which will be sent to every governor in Bridgend.

S.G. And what sorts of thing will you feature in the newsletter?

K.M. I think the keyword in answer to that question is "relevant"; things which governors feel are useful and helpful to them. So we'll probably include a question and answer section, messages from the local authority, useful contacts, information from organisations like Governors Wales, and so on. Oh, and all articles will be jargon free!

S.G. I'm glad to hear that! Now, if a governor from another local authority came to you and asked for help on setting up and running a governor association, what advice would you give them?

K.M. First of all, have clear achievable objectives. You don't need many, either as the more you have, the less likely you are to be able to achieve them. Secondly, hold regular meetings (we meet once a term) and at your meetings stay focused on what you regard as important and relevant. Meetings shouldn't be just talking shops. Thirdly, don't become isolated. I really can't emphasize enough how essential it is to communicate well and regularly with individual governors and governing bodies. Finally, set up your own page on the local authority website. If you do that you can give information and invite responses and questions quickly and easily.

I.G. In connection with Ken's last point I'd add, make sure you have the active support of your Director of Education and the member for Education. This is really important as without their recognition and encouragement, it's very unlikely an association will have much influence.

I think it's also important to remember that starting a governor association is not easy so, in the early days be prepared to do a lot of work yourself until more governors show an interest. Also, be prepared to "sell" the association and, above all don't take disappointment personally, and be prepared to "bounce back" when things go wrong – as they inevitably will.

S.G. That's it?

K.M. And if you haven't got a sense of humour get one!

I.G. And if you haven't got a thick skin get one of those as well!

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INTRODUCTION

This Fact file provides guidance to schools and governing bodies on:

- (i) the statutory content of Governors' Annual Report, based on The School Governors' Annual Report (Wales) Regulations 2001 and Guidance Circular 15/01: Governors' Annual Reports - Guidance for Governing Bodies.
- (ii) the Annual Parents' meeting based on (The Annual Parents' Meeting (Exemptions) (Wales) Regulations 2005). Although the regulations came into force in September 2001 and the Welsh Assembly Government is in the process of reviewing the circular the large number of requests to Governors Wales' helpline have prompted the writing of this fact file which contains the following sections:-

ANNUAL REPORT

- Timing
- Distribution
- Content

ANNUAL PARENTS' MEETING

- Exemptions
- Further information

ANNUAL REPORT

All governing bodies of maintained schools are required to produce an annual report to parents. The statutory contents are detailed in this guidance, however governing bodies may, of course, choose to add additional information which they think will be helpful. The Annual Report and meeting are the main formal means by which the governing body can demonstrate their accountability to parents. They provide an opportunity to not only engage with parents on what has been happening at the school during the previous year but to share the governing body's plans for promoting high standards of educational achievement and to actively seek the views of parents for the future.



FACT FILE 01/08

GOVERNORS' ANNUAL REPORT TO PARENTS/ ANNUAL PARENTS' MEETINGS

GOVERNORS WALES

HELPLINE:

0845 60 20 100

**Empire House, 1st Floor Mount
Stuart Square,
Cardiff Bay
CF10 5FN**

Phone: 029 2048 7858

Fax: 029 2048 7843

E-mail:

contact@governorswales.org.uk

TIMING

There is no set time of year for publishing Governors' Annual Reports. However, to tie in with target setting requirements, governing bodies are encouraged to publish their reports during the Autumn. The annual report must be provided to parents no less than 2 weeks before the annual meeting at which the report will be considered.

DISTRIBUTION

It is appreciated that producing and distributing the full annual report to all parents can prove costly for schools. The Regulations therefore allow for schools to make available the full report only to those parents who request it, and to issue a summary report for distribution to all parents.

Governing bodies must inform parents of how they can obtain a copy of the full report, which must be available on request.

CONTENT

The full statutory content for both the full and summary report can be found in Circular Guidance 15/01 available on:

www.new.wales.gov.uk. A useful checklist is provided in this document.

Content of Summary Annual Report (Examples include):

- ◆ Details of the Annual Parents' Meeting
- ◆ Details of members of governing body
- ◆ Performance and Target Information
- ◆ Attendance information

Content of Full Annual Report (In addition to the information already detailed for the summary annual report - Examples include):

- ◆ A full financial statement outlining school income and expenditure;

- ◆ Action taken by the governing body/School e.g. to review school policies, to implement and review school strategies, as a result of any resolutions passed for the last APM;
- ◆ Summary of changes to the school prospectus since publication;
- ◆ Progress on the school action plan (post-inspection);
- ◆ Term dates and session times;
- ◆ Progress in Sport;
- ◆ Performance and Target Information;
- ◆ Destination of school leavers;
- ◆ Arrangements for admission and access.

The writing of the annual report is the corporate responsibility of the governing body and should not fall to the headteacher on his/her own.

Governing bodies will often set up a working group comprising a few governors to prepare a draft for consideration at a meeting. This is a useful exercise and helps to share the workload whilst securing 'ownership'.

ANNUAL PARENTS' MEETING EXEMPTIONS

EXEMPTIONS

Exemptions to the requirement to hold an Annual Parents Meeting which apply for one year only, are as follows:-

Exemption for hospital special schools and boarding schools

If the school is established in a hospital or is a maintained boarding school where 50% or more of the pupils are boarders, the governing body can decide it is not practical to hold a meeting.

Exemption for schools that hold a post-inspection meeting

If a parents' meeting has been held after a school inspection, to discuss the inspector's report prior to the governing body producing its action plan.

Exemption for schools that hold other meetings

If the governing body has held a meeting or series of meetings where all parents have been invited to at least one of the series of meetings, and:-

- ◆ 20% or more of parents of registered pupils attend the meeting or at least one of the meetings;
- ◆ the parents have the opportunity at these meetings to discuss the manner in which the school has been, and is to be, conducted and the school's performance; and
- ◆ three or more governors are present at the meeting(s).

Exemption if parents do not respond to the notice of meeting

If fewer than 5% of parents of registered pupils respond to a notice sent out accompanying the annual report asking parents if they wish the governing body to hold the annual meeting.

These exemptions do not apply if:

- ◆ no annual parents meeting was held in the preceding year, or
- ◆ the governing body receives a written request before 31st May in that school year from the parents of at least 5% of the parents asking for an annual parents meeting to be held.

The governing body is responsible for planning and running the meeting with parents. They will need to:

- (1) plan the agenda;
- (2) determine who will chair the meeting (usually the Chair of the governing body);
- (3) hold votes on any resolutions and report back on the consideration given to any resolutions passed at the last meeting;
- (4) ensure that minutes are taken.

The APM should encourage useful discussion, providing parents with an opportunity to express their point of view and listen to the views of other parents (refer to background above). It can be useful to ask parents to submit any comments on areas they would like to raise in advance of the meeting.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- ◆ National Assembly for Wales Circular 15/01: Governors' Annual Reports - Guidance for Governing Bodies. Available on: www.new.wales.gov.uk
- ◆ The School Governors' Annual Reports (Wales) Regulations 2001. Available on www.opsi.gov.uk and www.governorswales.org.uk
- ◆ The Annual Parents' Meeting (Exemptions) (Wales) Regulations 2005. Available on: www.opsi.gov.uk and www.governorswales.org.uk
- ◆ School Governors Guide to the Law
- ◆ Governors Wales' Helpline: **0845 60 20 100 (all calls are local rate)**

N.B.: This Fact file should be read in conjunction with the legislation and guidance listed above and information produced by your LEA and diocesan authority where appropriate.