

**All Wales Centre for  
Governor Training and Research**



**TRAINING PROVISION  
FOR  
GOVERNING BODY CHAIRS**

**All Wales Centre for Governor Training and Research  
Swansea School of Education, Swansea Metropolitan University  
Townhill Road, SWANSEA SA2 0UT  
Tel: 01792 482065 Fax: 01792 482076  
Email: [steve.gullick@smu.ac.uk](mailto:steve.gullick@smu.ac.uk)  
[www.smu.ac.uk/schoolgovernor](http://www.smu.ac.uk/schoolgovernor)**

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## 1

## INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This study, undertaken by the All Wales Centre for Governor Training and Research, was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government to research “training for Chairs (provided by local authorities) on their role and functions and their effectiveness in governing bodies”.
- 1.2 The role of the Chair is pivotal to the work of the governing body in raising standards of achievement and attainment in schools. Effective training for Chairs is therefore essential if they are to carry out their duties well. In addition, ongoing support for Chairs is equally important so this study also includes advice and guidance provided by local authorities; how local authorities disseminate information to Chairs, and what information is disseminated; and methods used by local authorities to measure the performance of Chairs.
- 1.3 The findings of this study are based on information from:
- A questionnaire survey (Appendix 1) sent to local authority Governor Support Officers.
  - A questionnaire (Appendix 2) sent to a 30 Head teachers and 30 governing body Chairs.
- 1.4 Responses were received from all 22 local authority Governor Support Officers, from 23 Chairs and 16 Head teachers.
- 1.5 It was decided to issue questionnaires to a relatively small number of Chairs and Head teachers to ensure a degree of parity from each sample.
- 1.6 Every effort was made to ensure that the views of a cross section of Chairs and Head teachers were represented.
- 1.7 Of the 23 responses received from Chairs:
- 13 responses were from Primary School Chairs
  - 10 responses were from Secondary School Chairs
  - Responses were received from Chairs of schools across 11 different authorities
  - Responses were received from Chairs of both English and Welsh medium schools.
  - Responses were received from Chairs of voluntary controlled schools.
- 1.8 Of the 16 responses received from Headteachers:
- 7 responses were received from Primary Headteachers
  - 9 responses were received from Secondary Headteachers
  - Responses were received from Heads of schools across 10 local authorities in Wales
  - Responses were received from Heads of both Welsh medium and English medium schools.

## 2 ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES FROM GOVERNOR SUPPORT OFFICERS

### 2.1 TRAINING PROVISION FOR CHAIRS OF GOVERNING BODIES

- 2.1.1 Of the 22 local authorities across Wales, 16 provide training for Chairs of school governing bodies. Of those local authorities who do not provide training, one commented “not currently, but we have done so. This was due to lack of take up”.
- 2.1.2 Local authorities employ a variety of methods to inform governing body Chairs of the content, time and location of training sessions. These methods are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Methods employed by local authorities  
to inform Chairs of training sessions

Method employed	No of local authorities using this method
Letter to Chair	6
Email to Chair	5
Training session(s) advertised in annual governor training programme	5
Training session(s) advertised in termly governor training programme	4
Flyer / leaflet advertising training sent to school	4
Informed of training by governing body clerk	3
Internal mail to school	1
Training advertised on local authority website	1

- 2.1.3 It is interesting to note that, of the eight methods of communication used by local authorities, the two most popular are ‘personalised’, i.e. they are sent to the Chairs of the governing bodies only, and chairs are, ‘informed of training by the governing body clerk’. Other popular methods include advertising training specifically for Chairs with the general governor training sessions included in annual and termly governor training programmes. It is also interesting to note how the school is utilised as a means of informing Chairs of the subject, location and time of training sessions. Finally, it is also noteworthy how electronic communication (email and website) is used to advertise training sessions for Chairs.
- 2.1.4 A small majority of local authorities use more than one method to inform Chairs of training sessions, though no local authority uses more than three methods. See Figure 2 overleaf.

Figure 2. Numbers of methods used by local authorities  
to inform Chairs of training sessions for Chairs

No of methods used by local authorities	Local authorities using this number of methods
3 methods	5
2 methods	5
1 method	6
No reply	6

2.1.5 Those Governor Support Officers whose local authorities provide training for Chairs (16 in total) were asked to select the topics they cover in training for Chairs of governing bodies from a given list of topics (see Appendix 2). They were also asked to add any topics not included in the lists. Only two indicated in their responses that they covered additional topics, both of which named aspects of strategic planning.

2.1.6 Figure 3 shows the popularity of topics covered by local authorities in the training they offer to governing body Chairs

Figure 3. Number of local authorities covering the listed training topics

Topic	No of local authorities where training for Chairs includes this topic
Effective organisation and management of meetings	13
Working with the Head teacher	12
Efficient use of committees	12
Working with the clerk to governors	11
Education law	11
Leadership skills, e.g. team building, motivation	11
Inducting governors	6
Safeguarding pupils	5
Working with parents	5
Working with outside agencies, including media	4
Giving pupils a voice, e.g. school councils	3

2.1.7 The totals in Figure 3 indicate that of the six most popular topics (are those which are covered by 11 or more local authorities), two focus on developing a chair's skills associated with systems, i.e. effective organisation and management of meeting and efficient use of committees, and three focus on inter-personal skills, i.e. working with the Headteacher, working with the clerk to governors, and leadership skills. These

training topics support one of the key roles of governing bodies which is the strategic direction and overview of the school. It would also help explain why relatively few local authorities train Chairs for what might be considered to be the more managerial skills, although these are also considered to be key skills if a chair is to be successful.

- 2.1.8 Six out of fifteen provide training for Chairs in inducting new governors. This is rather surprising given the importance of a “good start” for a new member of a school governing body, as pointed out by Nigel Gann<sup>1</sup>: “The way we start being a governor will set the tone for many of us for a long time, maybe our whole term of office.” (Cadwyn, Issue 11, Summer 2005)
- 2.1.9 There is a large variety in the number of topics covered by local authorities in the training they provide for Chairs. See Figure 4.

Figure 4. Number of topics covered by local authorities  
in training sessions for Chairs

No of topics covered in Chairs’ training sessions	Number of local authorities
11	1
10	2
9	1
8	1
7	1
6	4
5	3
4	-
3	1
2	1
1	1

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<sup>1</sup> Nigel Gann is a researcher and trainer in school governance. He has had a number of books published on the subject and worked with local authorities throughout England and Wales.

2.1.10 There is also variety in the regularity of training provision exclusively for Chairs, across Welsh local authorities. (See Figure 5.)

2.1.11 Two local authorities provide training for Chairs twice a year and also when they feel the need arises. However a number of local authorities pointed out that they also hold regular meetings between the Chief Education Officer / Director of Education and governing body Chairs which, although business meetings, might inevitably involve a degree of knowledge acquisition by Chairs.

Figure 5. Regularity of training provision for Chairs<sup>2</sup>

Regularity of provision	No of local authorities
Once a term	3
Twice a year	1
Once a year	4
Once every two years	3
Only when it is felt the need arises	6

2.1.12 Only 5 local authorities provide training aimed exclusively at newly appointed Chairs of governing bodies, and all 5 report that the topics covered at training sessions are the same as those covered in training sessions for established Chairs. One respondent added that their training sessions for new Chairs are also open to Vice Chairs and aspiring Chairs.

2.1.13 As Figure 6 shows, the bulk of training for Chairs is delivered by members of the local authority's Governor Support team and local authority advisers.

Figure 6. Training Providers

Training Providers	No of authorities who use these providers regularly	No of authorities who use these providers occasionally
Members of Governor Support Team	9	2
Local authority advisers	6	2
Existing Chairs	2	2
Head teachers	1	3
Outside providers	1	3

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<sup>2</sup> One respondent ticked 2 boxes: both ticked "one a year" and also "only when it is felt the need arises".

2.1.14 This high utilisation of members of Governor Support teams and local authority advisers is highlighted by the comparatively limited use of training input from other potential providers.

2.1.15 Equally noteworthy is the lack of variety in the professional background of trainers used by local authorities, with 4 local authorities using training providers from one source only, usually their Governor Support team, and a further 7 local authorities using only two sources of provision, usually their Governor Support team and local authority advisory service. See Figure 7.

Figure 7. Variety of Providers for Governing Body Chair training

No of different sources of provision used for Chair training by local authorities	No of local authorities utilising these sources of provision
4	2
3	2
2	7
1	5

For matrix of training providers for governing body Chairs see Appendix 3.

#### 2.1.16 Conclusions

While the majority of local authorities in Wales (16) provide training for Chairs of governing bodies, seven, just under a third do not.

Of those authorities which provide training

- 9 employ more than one method of informing Chairs of training sessions.

Of the 16 authorities who provide training

- three of them cover fewer than 4 topics.

Similarly, there is a wide variety in the regularity of training provision,

- ranging from 3 authorities which provide training once a term
- 6 who provide training only when they feel the need arises.

In all 16 local authorities which provide training the vast majority rely very heavily on their Governors Support Team and advisers, as providers.

#### 2.1.17 Recommendations

It is recommended that all local authorities provide training for Chairs of governing bodies and, for the sake of efficiency and to have a consistent approach, and where

applicable, this could be offered on a collaborative basis, between two or more local authorities.

The choice and number of topics covered in training sessions should be selected to ensure Chairs are equipped to deal with governance of both systems and people.

In order to ensure that Chairs' experience a varied input in training sessions, local authorities should endeavour to utilize trainers from a number of different areas/backgrounds.

In order to provide:

- local authorities who at present do not offer training to Chairs with a training programme
- local authorities who offer training to Chairs with additional support
- a consistent and cohesive training "package" for Chairs

it is recommended that a national training programme for Chairs be produced and made available to local authorities. This recommendation has support from local authority Governor Support Officers who have expressed a need for such a national training programme. "We need a national training programme pack for Chairs – approved by W.A.G." "... it would be useful to have a training package for new and existing Chairs of Governors so they understand better what their role is. A lot of governors will not (seek to become Chairs) because they are entering the 'unknown'".

## 2.2 ONGOING SUPPORT AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

2.2.1 In addition to the provision of training for Chairs of governing bodies, local authorities also provide ongoing support. Such support takes a variety of forms. (See Figure 8.)

Figure 8: Ongoing local authority support for Chairs of governing bodies

Form of support	No of local authorities employing this method
Helpline	16
Chairs' forum which meets regularly	8
Chairs' forum which meets when the need arises	2
Through governing body clerk provided by local authority	2
Local authority governor association	2
Other	5

2.2.2 Clearly the most popular form of support is the LEA helpline which is used by 16 local authorities. Other than this method, support is limited. Indeed, the support given to Chairs through local authority governor associations is likely to be less effective as it would consider issues which, while of general value, are unlikely to focus on the particular training needs of Chairs.

2.2.3 It is reassuring to note that all 22 local authorities across Wales provide ongoing support for Chairs even if they do not provide training for them. However, the number of methods of support used is limited as is shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Number of methods used by local authorities to support Chairs

No of methods	No of local authorities using these methods
3	1
2	10
1	11

For matrix of types of support for Chairs provided by local authorities see Appendix 4.

2.2.4 In order to ensure Chairs of governing bodies have access to the latest material needed to help them perform their duties effectively, local authorities disseminate material to them. The type of information sent to Chairs by local authorities is listed in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Types of information disseminated by local authorities  
to Chairs of governing bodies

Type of information disseminated by local authorities	No of local authorities who disseminate this type of information
Training Courses	18
Local authority issues	17
Educational issues	16
Legal issues	16
Health and Safety Issues	12
Child Welfare issues	12

2.2.5 In addition to these types of information, one local authority disseminates advice to Chairs “from exterior sources”, another on budget issues, and a third sends information on “any ‘hot’ topic”.

2.2.6 As might be expected, local authority issues, educational issues and legal issues figure prominently in the information disseminated by local authorities to governing body Chairs, as these are the topics which cover the majority of the work carried out by school governing bodies.

2.2.7 Information from local authorities to Chairs is disseminated in a number of ways. See Figure 11.

Figure 11: Methods of dissemination used by local authorities

Method	Number of authorities using this method
Letter	22
Email	14
Via Newsletter	13
Website	9
Contacts Chairs by telephone	1
Contacts Chairs through their schools	1

2.2.8 The most popular method of disseminating information is by letter, with all 22 local authorities using this method. However, it is noteworthy that over half of Welsh local authorities also use electronic means (email and website) to disseminate information to Chairs.

2.2.9 It is also encouraging to note that the majority of local authorities across Wales used more than one method of disseminating information to governing body Chairs. See Figure 12.

Figure 12: Number of methods used by local authorities to disseminate information to Chairs of governing bodies

No of methods used to disseminate information to Chairs of governing bodies	Local authorities using this number of methods
5 methods	1
4 methods	5
3 methods	4
2 methods	10
1 method	2

For matrix of methods of dissemination of information to Chairs of governing bodies by local authorities see Appendix 5.

2.2.10 It is interesting to note that only 8 local authorities in Wales request feedback from Chairs of governing bodies on the quality of the material they disseminate to Chairs and the methods used. All 8 local authorities use evaluation forms and/or questionnaires. One local authority reports that it also encourages informal feedback, while another comments that the feedback it received is used to inform the annual evaluation of the local authority's services.

### 2.2.11 Conclusions

All local authorities in Wales provide ongoing support for governing body Chairs in a number of ways (See Figure 8). The most popular method, by far, is the LEA helpline (used by 16 authorities) with Chairs' forum which meets regularly being the second most popular (used by 9 authorities). Only one local authority uses three forms of support, while 11 use two forms of support and 10 use one form of support. (See Appendix 4.)

The types of information disseminated to Chairs by local authorities varies, although those most commonly distributed are training courses, local authority issues and legal and educational issues.

This information is disseminated to Chairs in all 22 local authorities by letter though all but one uses at least one other method, the most common being e-mail.

### 2.2.12 Recommendation

It is recommended that all local authorities provide support via a helpline, and, in addition, put in place regular meetings of Chairs forums where common concerns can be aired and good practice shared.

It is also recommended that all local authorities request feedback from Chairs on the quality of material they receive from local authorities and how that material is disseminated to monitor performance and achieve best practice.

## 2.3 MEASURING THE PERFORMANCE OF CHAIRS OF GOVERNING BODIES

2.3.1 No local authorities in Wales employ formal methods for measuring the performance of Chairs of governing bodies. However, 8 local authorities employ informal methods for carrying out this function. In four local authorities, feedback on the performance of the Chairs (together with the whole governing body) is provided by the governing body clerk (who is provided by the local authority). In the remaining four local authorities, observation of the performance of the Chair (together with the whole governing body) is undertaken by local authority officials who attend governing body meetings.

### 2.3.2 Recommendations

Given the pivotal role of the Chair, it is recommended that methods of measuring the performance of Chairs be developed in order to help local authorities provide the most appropriate and effective training for Chairs. This is, clearly, an issue which needs to be handled sensitively and in a supportive and non-threatening way so it is further recommended that a collaborative approach be adopted by local authorities to ensure consistency across Wales.

## 2.4 CHAIRPERSON’S SKILLS

- 2.4.1 Governor Support Officers across all 22 Welsh local authorities were asked to prioritise from a set list what they considered to be the most important skills a Chair of a school governing body should possess (see Appendix 1)
- 2.4.2 Based on a weighting of 13 points for the most important skills down to 1 point for the least important, the results of this exercise are shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Chairperson’s Skills – Governor Support Officers’ views

Skill	Points Weighting
Ability to involve all governors	237
Clear communicator	219
Recognises the boundaries between governance and management	211
Ability to deal with issues sensitively	206
Ability to address difficult issues	185
Ability to adopt an impartial position	172
Ability to prioritise	166
Good organiser	142
Good listening skills	134
Knowledge of legislation	122
Time management	110
Good public speaking skills	49
Good media skills	36

- 2.4.3 A number of respondents regarded certain skills as being of equal value and gave them the same points weighting. As one Governor Support Officer commented, “a number of the above (skills) ... warrant equal standing”, and a second, “a number (of skills) are equally important”.
- 2.4.4 One respondent suggested that the “ability to work with the school Head” is an important skill for Chairs. This is recognised by a second respondent who reports that their local authority holds “training for Heads and Chairs together and discuss ways of developing the governing body”.
- 2.4.5 A third respondent includes “good leadership skills” and “knows when to bring in external advice” as desirable skills for a Chairperson.

- 2.4.6 “The ability to involve all governors” is clearly the skill which Governor Support Officers rate most highly (18 points higher than the second most rated skill). There then appear to be groups of skills which have relatively similar points weightings.
- 2.4.7 The first group (219 – 206) are the three skills “clear communicator”, “recognises the boundaries between governance and management”, and “ability to deal with issues sensitively”.
- 2.4.8 The second group of skills covered by a range of 19 points (185 – 166) consists of “ability to address difficult issues” through to “ability to prioritise”.
- 2.4.9 The third group (142 – 110), “good organiser” through to “time management”, covers a range of 32 points.
- 2.4.10 The last group (49 – 36) consists of the two very low scoring skills of “good public speaking skills” and “good media skills”, both receiving fewer than 50 points.

#### 2.4.11 Conclusions

Governor Support Officers have given a clear indication of the relative importance of skills required of the Chair of a governing body. These skills reflect the role of the Chair in people management and systems management.

#### 2.4.12 Recommendations

It is recommended that Governor Support Officers ensure that the training provided for Chairs enables them to develop the skills which have been identified as being most important for Chairs in carrying out their roles.

It is further recommended that a national training programme for Chairs be produced, a large part of which should focus on the development of skills required by Chairs as identified by Governor Support Officers.

### 3 ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES FROM CHAIRS OF GOVERNING BODIES

#### 3.1 TRAINING PROVISION FOR CHAIRS OF GOVERNING BODIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S SKILLS

- 3.1.1 A group of 23 Chairs of governing bodies (13 Primary, 10 Secondary) were asked to prioritise from a set list what they considered to be the topics which they believe should be covered in training sessions for Chairs. (See Appendix 2).
- 3.1.2 Based on a weighting of 11 points for the most important topic down to 1 point for the least important, the results of this exercise are shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Topics to be covered in training sessions for Chairpersons  
– Chairpersons' views.

Topic	Points Weighting
Working with the Head teacher	217
Effective organisation and management of meetings	205
Efficient use of committees	156
Safeguarding pupils	146
Leadership skills: e.g. team building and motivation.	139
Working with clerk to governors	122
Working with parents	121
Education Law	120
Inducting governors	97
Giving pupils a voice e.g. school councils	83
Working with outside agencies, including media	59

- 3.1.3 It is clear that Chairs of governing bodies regard “Working with the Head teacher” and “effective organisation and management of meetings” as by far the most important topics to be covered in training sessions for Chairs.
- 3.1.4 One respondent, in recognition of the importance of this relationship, points out that the relationship between Head teacher and Chair should be both partnership and shared vision but with the Chair retaining the “critical friend” stance.
- 3.1.5 A second respondent links the importance of a good working relationship between Chair and Head with “effective organisation of meetings” when they comment “It is vital that the Chair prepares for the (governors) meeting and liaises with the Head prior to the meeting to be briefed on issues.”

- 3.1.6 It is interesting to compare how the priority of the topics for training as selected by Chairs compares with the most popular topics in training sessions provided by local authorities (See figure 3, Page 5).
- 3.1.7 It is encouraging to note that the five most important topics for training as selected by Chairs are covered by between 11 and 13 of those 15 local authorities which provide training for Chairs.
- 3.1.8 It appears that Chairs, like local authority Governor Support Officers, do not appear to rate highly the importance of the provision of training in the induction of new governors. Given the views of Nigel Gann, this is rather surprising. (See paragraph 2.1.8.)
- 3.1.9 The same group of 23 Chairs (13 Primary, 10 Secondary,) were asked to prioritise from a set list, what they considered to be the most important skills a Chair of school governing body should possess. (See Appendix 2.)
- 3.1.10 Based on a weighting of 13 points for the most important skill down to 1 point for the least important, the results of this exercise are shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Chairperson’s Skills – the views of Chairs of Governing Bodies.

Skill	Points Weighting
Recognises the boundaries between governance and management.	242
Ability to involve all governors effectively in the work of the governing body.	219
Ability to deal with issues sensitively.	212
Ability to adopt an impartial position.	200
Ability to address difficult issues.	194
Ability to prioritise.	174
Clear communicator.	161
Good listening skills.	159
Time management.	145
Knowledge and application of governing body legislation.	145
Good organiser.	134
Good public speaking skills.	63
Good media skills (dealing with press, T.V., etc.)	30

- 3.1.11 The ability to “recognise the boundaries between governance and management” is most obviously the skill which Chairs rate most highly (23 points higher than the second most rated skill.)

- 3.1.12 The next four skills (219 – 194) “ability to involve all governors effectively in the work of the governing body” to “ability to address difficulty issues” are covered by a range of 25 points before a drop of 20 points to the next six skills (174 – 134) “ability to prioritise” to “good organiser” which is covered by a 40 point range. “Good public speaking skills” and “good media skills” both score below 65 points.
- 3.1.13 It is worth comparing the views of Chairs on their skills needs with the views of Governor Support Officers. (See Figure 13.)
- 3.1.14 A number of respondents also commented on other skills which they felt a Chair would value possessing.

These include

- “how to use language to convince and motivate”
  - “getting to know all staff” and an understanding of the community which their school serves
  - “good local knowledge – being aware of the type of locality”
  - “it is very important that the Chair of a ..... school should ..... have an understanding of the issues and sensibilities of their own community.”
- 3.1.15 Even more respondents commented on the amount of time required to fulfil the duties of the Chair effectively. One referred to “the considerable amount of time required to perform the role”, a feeling echoed by a second respondent – “there is a great deal of commitment required to successfully fulfil the role.” A third respondent highlighted a possible problem arising from the time demand on Chairs: “The continuous increase in governor responsibilities demands a large time commitment. This can lead to appointment of a Chair because he/she has the time rather than the required skills/experience.”
- 3.1.16 Given the concern over time commitment from Chairs, it is rather surprising that “time management” is ranked so lowly by respondents in the list of skills they believe are important for a Chair to possess. (See Figure 15.)

### 3.1.17 Conclusions

Respondents have given a clear indication of both the topics which should be covered in training for Chairs provided by local authorities and the skills required of a governing body Chair to carry out their roles effectively.

It is both interesting and encouraging to note how far these indications correspond to those of local authority Governor Support Officers.

### 3.1.18 Recommendations

It is recommended that a national training programme for Chairs be produced, a large part of which should focus on the development of skills required by Chairs as identified by those currently performing this role.

## 4 ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES FROM HEAD TEACHERS

### 4.1 TRAINING PROVISION FOR CHAIRS OF GOVERNING BODIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S SKILLS

4.1.1 A group of 16 Head teachers (7 Primary, 9 Secondary) prioritized from a set list what they considered to be the topics they believed should be covered in training sessions for Chairs. (See Appendix 2).

4.1.2 Based on a weighting of 11 points for the most important topic down to 1 point for the least important, the results of this exercise are shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Topics to be covered in training sessions for Chairpersons – Head teachers' views.

Topic	Points Weighting
Working with the Head teacher	160
Effective organisation and management of meetings	149
Education Law	114
Efficient use of committees	108
Safeguarding pupils	105
Working with the clerk to governors	87
Leadership skills, e.g. team building, motivation	80
Working with parents	67
Inducting governors	64
Giving pupils a voice, e.g. school councils	47
Working with outside agencies, including media	41

4.1.3 “Working with the Head teacher” and “effective organisation and management of meetings” (160 – 149) are the two topics which Head teachers regard by quite some distance as the most important to be covered in training sessions for Chairs. This coincides almost exactly with the opinion of the 23 Chairpersons who also undertook this exercise. In fact, there is a great overall similarity between Chairs and Head teachers as to what both consider to be the training needs of Chairs. (Compare Figures 14 and 16.)

4.1.4 A large number of Head teachers emphasized what they obviously consider to be the vital relationship between the Head teacher and Chair: “Chair is vital link for an efficient school. Unless there is a sound partnership between the Chair and the Head progress will be limited”, “the most important part of the Chair’s role is to work in collaboration with the Head teacher.”

- 4.1.5 Two Head teachers specify particular areas on which Head teachers and Chairs should work together closely: “(It is) good (for the Chair) to meet with the Head on a regular basis to keep up to date with events/issues in school”, “(the Chair should) share with the Head a vision of the school in 5 years time,” while a third is aware of the “critical friend” role of the Chair. “(The Chair) should be able to critically evaluate and challenge the school management.”
- 4.1.6 One Head teacher also highlights the importance of the Chair’s role regarding the staff of a school. “I believe that it is also important (that the Chair) be known to the staff and (have) the ability to communicate with them.”
- 4.1.7 The same group of 16 Head teachers (7 Primary, 9 Secondary) were asked to prioritize from a set list, what they considered to be the most important skills a Chair of a school governing body should possess. (See Appendix 2.)
- 4.1.8 Based on a weighting of 13 points for the most important skill down to 1 point for the least important, the results of this exercise are shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17: Chairperson’s skills – Head teachers’ views.

Skill	Points Weighting
Recognises the boundaries between governance and management	170
Ability to involve all governors effectively in the work of the governing body	148
Clear communicator	144
Ability to address difficult issues	131
Ability to prioritise	128
Ability to deal with issues sensitively	115
Ability to adopt an impartial position	115
Good organiser	114
Time management	107
Knowledge and application of governing body legislation	93
Good public speaking skills	62
Good media skills (dealing with press, T.V., etc.	20

- 4.1.9 Once again, there are many similarities between what Heads and Chairs consider to be the most important skills for a Chair to possess. (Compare Figures 15 and 17.)

- 4.1.10 Both groups place “recognises the boundaries between governance and management” and “ability to involve all governors effectively in the work of the governing body” in first and second place.
- 4.1.11 There is also broad agreement in the value of other skills with the exception of “clear communicator” which Head teachers place in 2<sup>nd</sup> position and Chairs in 7<sup>th</sup>, “ability to deal with issues sensitively” which Head teachers place in 6<sup>th</sup> position and Chairs in 3<sup>rd</sup>, “ability to adopt an impartial position” which Head place in 7<sup>th</sup> position and Chairs in 4<sup>th</sup> and “good organiser” which Heads place in 8<sup>th</sup> position and Chairs in 11<sup>th</sup>.
- 4.1.12 Finally, there is a remarkable level of agreement between Head teachers, governing body Chairs and Governor Support Officers on the relative importance of the skills required by governing body Chairs. (See Figure 18.)

Figure 18: Chairperson’s skills – comparison of the views of Heads, governing body Chairs and Governor Support Officers.

Skill	Head teachers’ ranking	Chairs’ ranking	Governor Support Officers’ ranking
Recognizes the boundaries between governance and management	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Ability to involve governors effectively in the work of the governing body	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Clear communicator	3 <sup>rd</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Ability to address difficult issues	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
Ability to prioritise	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>
Ability to deal with issues sensitively	6 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
Ability to adopt an impartial position	7 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>
Good organiser	8 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>
Good listening skills	9 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>
Time management	10 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>
Knowledge and application of governing body legislation	11 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>
Good public speaking skills	12 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
Good media skills, (dealing with press, T.V., etc.)	13 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>

4.1.13 With the exception of “Clear communicator” which Chairs rank 4 positions below Head teachers and 5 positions below Governor Support Officers, all other skills are rated in roughly the same position. Indeed two skills – “Good public speaking skills” and “Good media skills” are placed in exactly the same position of importance by all three groups of respondents.

4.1.14 It is also interesting to note that all three groups of respondents agree on the seven most important skills for a governing body Chair to possess even though they do not rank them in the same order of importance.

#### 4.1.15 Conclusions

As with both Governor Support Officers and governing body Chairs, Head teachers have given a clear indication of both the topics which should be covered in training for Chairs provided by local authorities and the skills required of a governing body Chair to carry out their roles effectively.

It is both interesting and encouraging to see how far these views coincide with those of local authority Governor Support Officers and governing body Chairs.

It is interesting to note how low all these groups rate “Knowledge and application of governing body legislation” given that governing bodies are required to conduct their business within a range of legislation.

#### 4.1.16 Recommendations

It is recommended that a national training programme for Chairs be produced, a large part of which should focus on the development of skills required by Chairs as identified by Head teachers and coincidentally, Chairs of governing bodies and local authority Governor Support Officers.

## SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 15 local authorities in Wales provide training for Chairs of governing bodies. However, there is a wide variety across local authorities in the number of topics covered in training sessions and also in the regularity of training sessions.
- 5.2 In all 15 local authorities which provide training, the vast majority rely heavily on their Governor Support Team and advisors as providers.
- 5.3 In addition to providing training for Chairs of governing bodies, all 22 local authorities also provide ongoing support. Most commonly, this is in the form of a “helpline.”
- 5.4 All local authorities in Wales disseminate information to Chairs. Most usually, this information concerns training courses, local authority issues and legal and educational issues. The most popular methods used for disseminating information to Chairs are letter, e-mail and newsletter.
- 5.5 No local authorities employ formal methods for measuring the performance of Chairs of governing bodies to help them shape training programmes to address common difficulties and challenges which may be experienced by Chairs.
- 5.6 There is a high level of agreement between Chairs of governing bodies, Head teachers and local authority Governor Support Officers on the skills required by Chairs to carry out their roles effectively.

## 6 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 All local authorities should provide training for Chairs of governing bodies and, for the sake of efficiency and where applicable, this could be offered on a collaborative basis between two or more local authorities. This might also allow local authorities to utilize a wider variety of trainers than the majority use at present, viz. members of the local authority Governor Support Team and local authority advisors, and also develop distance learning training packages for Chairs.
- 6.2 In order to support local authorities in the provision of training for Chairs of governing bodies a national training programme should be produced and made available to them. Such a training programme should focus on those topics and chairing skills as identified by Chairs, Head teachers and local authority Governor Support Officers in this report as important for Chairs to carry out their roles effectively.
- 6.3 In addition to providing training for Chairs, local authorities should provide ongoing support, in particular a “helpline” and regular meetings of Chairs forums.
- 6.4 While recognizing the sensitivity in measuring Chairs’ performance it would help shape their training programme for Chairs if local authorities were to develop ways of measuring how effectively Chairs perform their duties. (See earlier)
- 6.5 Every effort should be made by Chairs of governing bodies and the Welsh Assembly Government to ensure that Chairs are aware of the legislation within which governing bodies work.

# Appendices



**All Wales Centre for  
Governor Training and Research  
Swansea School of Education**

### THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNING BODY CHAIR

Name of Local Education Authority .....

How many of the following schools are in your LEA?

Nursery: ..... Infants ..... Junior: .....

Primary: ..... Secondary: .....

#### **1 TRAINING PROVISION & SUPPORT FOR CHAIRS OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES**

1.1 Does your LEA provide training for Chairs of governing bodies?

- YES             (answer questions 1.2 –1.4)  
NO              (go to question 1.5)

1.2 How do you inform Chairs of the content, time and location of training sessions?

.....  
.....

1.3 What topics do you cover in training for Chairs of governing bodies (tick as many as applicable):

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Effective organization and management of meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Working with the Head teachers                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Working with the Clerk to governors               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Inducting new governors                           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Efficient use of committees                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Education law                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Safeguarding pupils                               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Leaderships skills, e.g. team building motivation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Working with outside agencies, including media    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Working parents                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Giving pupils a voice, e.g. school councils       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify).....                       |                          |

.....

**1 TRAINING PROVISION & SUPPORT (continued)**

1.4 How often does your LEA provide training **exclusively** for Chairs of governing bodies?

- Once a term
- Twice a year
- Once a year
- Once every two years
- Only when we feel the need arises

1.5 Does your LEA provide training aimed exclusively at **newly appointed** Chairs of governors?

- YES
- NO  (go to question 1.7)

1.6 If you answered YES to question 1.5, what topics do you cover in these training sessions?

.....

.....

1.7 Who delivers the training on the course you run for Chairs of governing bodies?

	<u>Usually</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>
Members of the Governor Support Team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LEA Advisers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Existing Chairs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Head teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outside providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify).....		
.....		
.....		

**1 TRAINING PROVISION & SUPPORT (continued)**

1.8 In what forms of ongoing support, other than formal training sessions, does your LEA provide for Chairs of governing bodies?

Chairs' forum which meets regularly

Chairs' forum which meets when the need arises

Helpline

Chair's Handbook containing advice and guidance

Other (please specify).....

.....

**2 DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION**

2.1 How do you disseminate information to Chairs of governing bodies? (you may tick more than one box if applicable).

Email

Letter

Via Newsletter

Website

Other (please specify).....

.....

2.2 What type of information do you disseminate usually to Chairs of governing bodies? (tick as appropriate).

Educational issues

Legal issues

Health & safety issues

Child Welfare issues

LEA issues

Training courses

Other (please specify).....

.....

## 2 DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION (continued)

2.4 Do you request feedback from Chairs of governing bodies on the quality of the material your LEA disseminates to them and the methods used?

YES

NO

2.5 If you answered YES to question 2.4, please specify the method(s) you use to collect feedback.

.....

.....

## 3 MEASURING THE PERFORMANCE OF CHAIRS OF GOVERNING BODIES

3.1 Do you employ **formal** methods for measuring the performance of Chairs of governing bodies?

YES

NO

3.2 If you answered YES to question 3.1, which formal methods for measuring performance of Chairs of governing bodies do you use

Questionnaire to other governing body members

Questionnaire to Head teacher only

Self-assessment questionnaire to Chair

Regular interviews/discussions with Chairs on their performance

Observation of Chair at meetings by local authority official

Other (please specify).....

.....

3.3 Do you employ **informal** methods for measuring the performance of Chairs of governing bodies?

YES

NO

### 3 MEASURING THE PERFORMANCE OF CHAIRS (continued)

3.4 If you answered YES to question 3.3, please specify the method(s) you use to collect feedback.

.....

.....

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.....

### 4 CHAIRPERSON'S SKILLS

4.1 In your professional opinion, what are the most important skills a Chair of a school governing body should possess? Please consider the following list of skills and add to the list any other you feel are important. Then rank all the skills listed in order of importance, starting with 1 as the most important.

SKILL	Rank order of importance
Time Management	
Ability to prioritise	
Clear communicator	
Good organiser	
Recognises the boundaries between governance and management	
Ability to deal with issues sensitively	
Ability to adopt an impartial position	
Ability to involve all governors effectively in the work of the governing body	
Good listening skills	
Ability to address difficult issues	
Good public speaking skills	
Good media skills (dealing with press, TV, etc.)	
Knowledge and application of governing body legislation	
Other (please specify)	

**5 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

Please add any other comments you may have on the role of the Chair of the governing body.

.....

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Thanks for your help. Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed reply-paid envelope to:

**Steve Gullick, Centre Manager**  
**All Wales Centre for Governor Training and Research**  
**Swansea School of Education, Swansea Institute of Higher Education**  
**Townhill Road, SWANSEA, SA2 0UT**



**All Wales Centre for  
Governor Training and Research  
Swansea School of Education**

**THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNING BODY CHAIR**

Name ..... Head teacher/Chair of Governors\*  
 Name of school ..... LEA: .....  
 Type of School: Infant / Junior / Primary / Secondary\*      No. of pupils .....

\*delete as applicable

**1 TRAINING PROVISION FOR  
CHAIRS OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES**

In your opinion, what topics do you believe should be covered in training sessions for Chairs of governing bodies? Please consider the following list of topics, and add to the list any others you feel are important. Then rank all the topics listed in order of importance, starting with 1 as the most important.

TOPIC	Rank order of importance
Effective organisation and management of meetings	
Working with the Head teacher	
Working with the clerk to governors	
Inducting governors	
Efficient use of committees	
Education law	
Safeguarding pupils	
Leadership skills, e.g. team building motivation	
Working with outside agencies, including media	
Working with parents	
Giving pupils a voice, e.g. school councils	
Other (please specify)	

## 2 CHAIRPERSON'S SKILLS

In your opinion, what are the most important skills a Chair of a school governing body should possess? Please consider the following list of skills and add to the list any other you feel are important. Then rank all the skills listed in order of importance, starting with 1 as the most important.

SKILL	Rank order of importance
Time Management	
Ability to prioritise	
Clear communicator	
Good organiser	
Recognises the boundaries between governance and management	
Ability to deal with issues sensitively	
Ability to adopt an impartial position	
Ability to involve all governors effectively in the work of the governing body	
Good listening skills	
Ability to address difficult issues	
Good public speaking skills	
Good media skills (dealing with press, TV, etc.)	
Knowledge and application of governing body legislation	
Other (please specify)	

**3 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

Please add any other comments you may have on the role of the Chair of the governing body.

.....

.....

.....

.....

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.....

Thanks for your help. Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed reply-paid envelope to:

**Steve Gullick, Centre Manager**  
**All Wales Centre for Governor Training and Research**  
**Swansea School of Education, Swansea Institute of Higher Education**  
**Townhill Road, SWANSEA, SA2 0UT**

Training Providers	Local Authorities																Totals							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P		Q	R	S	T	U	V	
Members of the Governor Support Team			Y		Y	Y			Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y				Y	11
LEA Advisors		Y				Y	Y	Y		Y				Y		Y							Y	8
Existing Chairs					Y	Y								Y										4
Head teachers			Y		Y	Y								Y										4
Outside Providers		Y										Y	Y										Y	4
Other								Y										Y						2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	

Types of Support	Local Authorities																Totals							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P		Q	R	S	T	U	V	
Helpline	Y		Y		Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y		16
Chair's forum which meets regularly				Y	Y		Y		Y		Y			Y	Y			Y						8
Chair's forum which meets when the need arises						Y																Y		2
Through governing body clerk provided by local authority			Y	Y																				2
Local authority governor association													Y				Y							2
Other		Y				Y	Y													Y		Y		5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	

Method of Dissemination	Local Authorities																				Totals		
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T		U	V
Email				Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y				Y	14
Letter	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	22
Newsletter			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y						Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		11
Website			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y					Y	Y		Y					9
Other				Y		Y																	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	