

REGIONAL GOVERNORS' CONFERENCE

6TH MARCH, 2010

Good morning and a very warm welcome to Ty Dysgu. I am delighted to be given the opportunity to open your Conference today – The Effective Governing Body.

Each governing body is unique in that it serves a particular or group of schools in a particular community and is made up of a range of people with differing skills, knowledge and expertise.

The key is to harness what each governor brings to the table and build a strong and effective team.

The effective governing body, is a term that trips off the tongue easily, but it is often ill defined. However, in 2008 the two headteacher associations, ASCL and NAHT, together with the National Governors Association met to discuss this very topic. They acknowledged that there was often a lack of clarity about what is expected for a governing body to be effective from both school leaders and governing bodies themselves and that governing bodies and school leaders should jointly develop effective working practices which are mutually supportive and respectful of each other's roles and responsibilities. They produced a short paper – which you will find in your pack – it makes interesting reading.

What is clear from all the research undertaken on the effective governing body is that governors can and do make a difference.

However, this is more likely to happen when:

governors are clear about the aims of the school and the values they wish to promote;

the Chair gives a clear lead;

relationships between governors and staff are open and honest;

meetings have sharply focused agendas and have the support of a quality clerk;

roles and responsibilities are clear;

Governor training is linked to school priorities and the individual needs of governors;

and systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work are robust.

Now there is probably nothing new to you in that list but it provides a useful checklist when you are asking are we effective? And how do we know?

As a governor, you may not be involved in the delivery of the curriculum but you can make your contribution to the standards agenda in other ways. You are also able to judge whether the knowledge skills and attitudes which are being taught are preparing young people for when they go into the adult world.

You are able, by being effective in the execution of your responsibilities, to help to create the most favourable conditions for learning to flourish. Because you live in the community, and see the school as others see it,

you are also well placed to be a good ambassador for the school and a good messenger for the community it serves - to explain, praise, defend, warn and guide.

Governors have a key role to play in the leadership of the school, you are a team, not a collection of individuals or groups of individuals with a separate agenda.

However much you differ in your opinions and experience you are united by a commitment to the school and the responsibility you share for raising standards and the well being of children, young people and the staff. In short – you have a common purpose and that in itself is the basis for a strong partnership.

The governing body has a unique role and purpose equally the staff working in the school have a clear but different role.

School governance at its best recognises these distinct yet complementary roles enabling governors and staff to work in partnership to the benefit of children, young people, their families and the wider community which the school serves.

If you are effective as a body you can make a significant contribution to the life chances of the children and young people in your care – you owe it to them to be the best that you can.

In concluding, I'd like to read you a quote from Nelson Mandella.

“Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become head of the mine, and that a child of farm workers can become president of a great nation.”

Nelson Mandella

You have it within your gift to really influence the lives of children and young people as you and the headteacher are the engine that drives the school improvement agenda.

You need to ensure that you have a regular ‘Service’ to keep the engine in tip top condition so that you know that your being effective.

Your commitment is unquestionable and your work valued by us all. I on behalf of all my colleague Directors I thank you for that and hope you have a very productive day.