



OFSTED – THE GOVERNORS’ INTERVIEW – GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNORS

This guidance is based on responses to a questionnaire sent to governors of eight Diocesan primary and secondary schools after an OFSTED inspection under the new framework between March and July 2013; it gives practical advice to governors in preparing for the interview with inspectors. Every school inspection will be different and inspectors may differ in their approach, but there are some common themes emerging.

I THE INTERVIEW

How long was the interview?	In the majority of schools the interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.
Who was interviewed?	This varied: in all but one* school the Chair was interviewed and in 50% of schools the Chair was interviewed alone, either by choice or because no one else was available at short notice. In other schools, three governors attended and in one school, eight. * Chair unavailable.
Were governors’ minutes examined?	Yes, in over 50% of schools surveyed.

2 WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

	Area of questioning	The sort of questions you may be asked <i>(NB: these are simply the range of questions that were asked across all 8 schools in the survey)</i>	Possible answers
1	The school’s strengths and weaknesses	How do governors know the school’s strengths and weaknesses? What progress has been made during the year? What does the school do best? How are all groups of pupils catered for?	Data, self-review processes, visits to lessons, learning walks, meetings with head, review of SDP, head’s report, work of the teaching and learning committee, surveys/talking to parents/pupils.
2	GB involvement in self evaluation; school development planning; governors’ support and challenge of the school	What is the GB’s view of the school’s self evaluation? How rigorous are the governors in holding the school to account?	Emphasis on approach taken by committees in challenging the school, eg the impact of interventions of children’s progress. Give examples of where governors have challenged the school and be able to show this in minutes.

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3	Performance management (PM) policy	How do governors ensure PM is effective, including head's PM? How are rewards linked to performance of teachers? What % of teachers are on UPS?	Demonstrate understanding of process, receipt of head's reports on progress, handling of capability issues and addressing changes in the framework of PM through training, attending briefings etc
4	Pupil premium	How is it spent and evaluated? How is it used to support target groups of pupils?	Review of performance for pupils eligible for FSM following termly pupil progress meetings. Refer to data dashboard; governors expected to know about narrowing the gap and what the gap is. Demonstrate with examples of how money used and impact. Know the information is on the school's website.
5	Understanding of pupil data	How does GB ensure all governors understand the data? Have the governors done enough for children in Year X? (Inspectors may focus on a particular end of key stage year group if there is evidence of weakness in the data) What sources of data are available to the GB?	RaiseOnline, data dashboard, pupil progress data, differences between classes and year groups, focussed discussion at teaching and learning committee. Know whether there is a focus on a specific year group or key stage and what the school is doing to address the issues.
6	Impact of teaching and learning on progress	How effective are the teachers? What is the impact of teaching on narrowing the gap?	Tracking data (including that given above), head's observation reports.
7	Governors' visits and links to classes, subjects etc	How are visits organised and what is the impact of the visits?	Frequency/regularity of visits; show visit reports which demonstrate evidence of implementation of development plan.
8	Governor training and development	How do governors address their training and development needs	Refer to list of training undertaken by GB and individual governors. Make reference to training and development working party. Participation in Bishop's Certificate, induction training for new members.

3 CHANGES IN EMPHASIS

3.1 The current OFSTED framework which came into force in September 2012 has undergone some changes through the year and the survey (albeit of a small sample of schools) has shown a change in emphasis as demonstrated by the examples of questions given in section 2 above. Few school governors were asked about safeguarding during the interview, but in some cases this is because the inspectors had seen reports which satisfied their questions. There is currently a huge emphasis on the link between teachers' pay and performance and pupil progress across all groups. Governors need to keep abreast of developments in the framework; revised OFSTED documents have been published to take effect from September 2013 – the two affecting governance are [The School Inspection Handbook](#) and [Subsidiary Guidance](#): further details on recent changes can be found in the SDBE Briefing on Section 5 OFSTED Inspections (October 2013). OFSTED now expects as many governors to attend the feedback as possible.

4 TIPS FOR GOVERNORS IN PREPARATION FOR THE INTERVIEW

4.1 The following suggestions have been made by governors interviewed on the basis of their experience:

- (a) Know your school's strengths and weaknesses and key areas for development and progress made during the year.
- (b) Know your school's monitoring regime.
- (c) Know your SEF and data dashboard.
- (d) Know your performance management policy.
- (e) Know the impact of the pupil premium (and tell the inspectors before they ask!).
- (f) Ask if you don't understand or don't know why something is being done.
- (g) Think about what may have triggered the inspection, so you can focus on those key areas.
- (h) Don't do it alone – ensure that there are governors available at short notice who have rehearsed the questions inspectors may ask; colleagues can offer support to responses and/or fill in gaps.
- (i) Keep talking – ensure that you get your points across and take opportunities to expand on a question to demonstrate the impact that the governors are having.
- (j) Take with you a file of information which you can refer to easily when answering questions or illustrating a point (ensure the pages you want to highlight are easily accessed – one school had summaries of points they wanted to make in the file to counteract any nervousness); leave file with inspectors.
- (k) Be ready with examples of the work the governing body has achieved during the year.
- (l) Ensure your minutes show clearly that governors challenge the school and follow through any action and ensure that inspectors have a pack of recent minutes from day 1.
- (m) Have a briefing with the headteacher the night before so key messages to OFSTED are clear following day 1.
- (n) If possible, meet headteacher just before interview to identify any issues that may need reinforcing from day 1.
- (o) Ensure the website is up-to-date – inspectors will check the website to glean information about the school and to see whether required documents are accessible.
- (p) Attend the oral feedback and take notes.