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Governance
Association

AWARDS *for*
Outstanding
Governance
2019



Celebrating the
achievements of school
governors, trustees
and clerks.

Tuesday 21 May 2019
4pm to 6pm

Terrace Pavilion
House of Commons

AWARDS *for* Outstanding Governance



Governing boards and clerks make a substantial and valuable contribution to the education of children and young people. These biennial awards celebrate the important role of governance volunteers and professionals, recognising the very best practice in school governance and clerking. Our finalists lead the way as exemplars of good school governance and have met rigorous judging criteria to reach the final of the Outstanding Governance Awards 2019.

We will recognise achievements in four award categories:

- Outstanding clerk to a governing board
- Outstanding governance in a single school
- Outstanding governance in a multi academy trust
- Outstanding vision and strategy

Presented by

Lord Agnew
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the School System.

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Outstanding clerk to a governing board

This award celebrates the integral role of the professional clerk. Our finalists each demonstrate outstanding practice in providing administrative support and legal and procedural advice, and go above and beyond to have a significant impact on the effectiveness of their governing board. Judges describe the finalists as 'extremely impressive in the quality support that they give to their boards and the ethos with which they serve', and say that each board views the support of their clerk as fundamental to their ability to deliver for their schools and trusts. Thank you to our category judges Charis Evans from ICSEA: The Governance Institute and Katie Paxton-Doggett, NGA trustee.

Joint winners

Kelly Goddard **The Affinity Federation, Coventry**

Kelly guided her school's journey from requiring improvement by Ofsted to the formation and subsequent development of a federation. Her support across the transition has been invaluable in helping the board to adopt the structures, practices and understanding of effective governance. Throughout the process, Kelly's proactive agenda management and timely advice has supported the board in keeping their focus on strategic issues. The nominating chair commented that Kelly 'makes governors focus on outcomes for children' in a clear and committed way which has built confidence, skill and independence. Kelly brings a wealth of wider experience to the board from her role in the Governor Support Services Team at Coventry City Council, and her practice is not only outstanding in the context of the school's journey, but as an agent of systemic governance development too.

Lin Dykes **Dover Grammar School for Girls, Kent**

Lin is described by the board as 'our rock' and her proactivity, experience and drive have helped the board to continue to challenge itself and develop its way of working to explore new opportunities. Her efficient working practices in agenda setting, annual planning, governor updates, recruitment and training have enabled governors to spend more time focusing on strategic questions, in the confidence that their compliance and governance structures are robust. Lin is highly trusted in this, demonstrating excellent legal and policy knowledge, and ably prompts governors to consider their legal obligations or to reassess their procedures where necessary. Lin's documentation and working practices have evolved with the benefit of broad experience, and she is continually refining and updating her practice, sharing this across the boards she clerks.

Highly commended

Carole Booker **South Orpington Learning Alliance Multi-Academy Trust, Bromley**

Carole has supported the development of the trust over the last three years, and the nominating chair describes her contribution as 'huge' and 'pivotal' in this journey. Her strength in finding solutions, setting and maintaining standards, achieving consistency across the schools in the trust and enabling agreement have identified her as a skilled leader of governance. The board are particularly appreciative of Carole's thorough and proactive contribution to governor recruitment and induction. Carole's minutes are clear and well organised with an effective breakdown of matters in discussion – a model which Carole has established for other clerks within the trust as part of her mission to minimise workload and achieve consistency of practice.

Barbara Gerding **Meridian Community Primary and Nursery, East Sussex**

Barbara is described as 'a real treasure' by the nominating chair and is regarded by the board as a knowledgeable, discreet and well-informed sounding board for ideas and dilemmas. Barbara's impact on the board is particularly marked because she has been working with it for just over a year during which she has made a big difference, introducing several improvements to how the board operates. She maintains the momentum of the board by being highly efficient in turning around agendas and minutes and has been instrumental in strategic planning and the increased focus on governor training. The excellent relationships that Barbara has with the governors and school leaders is testament to her public spiritedness and genuine interest in supporting the school.

Michaela Savage **Exmouth Community College, Devon**

Michaela is recognised for her proactive, efficient and wise approach. She brings a practical sensibility to the management of time and workload in meetings, and her organisation and paperwork is of a very high standard. Michaela's impact is recognised by the board as creating space for them to be strategic, and being able to gently correct them if they are not. Governors feel comfortable in seeking Michaela's counsel and believe that she is 'all over the issues' and 'understands our position as volunteers and has our back'. One small example of how Michaela delivers this is the prompt sheet that she prepares for the chair to assist the focused and productive management of each meeting.

Outstanding governance in a single school

Our finalists each demonstrate the eight elements of effective governance which enables them to not only fulfil their three core responsibilities but to go beyond the basics of their role to have a significant impact on the education provided to pupils in their school. They have faced a range of challenging circumstances and opportunities, and are united by the outstanding quality of their strategic leadership, their effective support and challenge to executive leaders, and their courage in having difficult conversations and making bold decisions in the interests of children and young people. Thank you to our category judges Duncan Haworth MBE and Niki Lamont, NGA trustees and Siddique Hussain, former NGA trustee.

Winner

James Brindley Academy, Birmingham

Since being placed in special measures by Ofsted in early 2015, the board resolved to improve the quality of education to pupils and has driven significant root and branch reform of the academy. Consulting widely with stakeholders, the trust developed a strategic vision and has delivered a complete metamorphosis in terms of ethos, culture and community. Improved 2018 examination results were testament to the decisions taken by the board. Judges were impressed that the board was prepared to instigate major changes whilst the academy was still in special measures; a decision vindicated by a 'good' judgement in early 2017. The changes the board has presided over have been immense and the impact on pupils undeniable, enriching the opportunities for some of the most vulnerable pupils in Birmingham.

Highly commended

Copthall School, Barnet

The board worked quickly to review its practice and to recruit new trustees after a poor Ofsted inspection which highlighted a lack of aspiration and direction from school leaders. Collaborating with stakeholders, the board created a clear and dynamic vision for the school. A tangible impact of skilled trustees joining the board is that the 2017-18 financial results show an operating surplus when the original budget was expecting a sizable deficit; however this was not without the need for robust conversations and tough decisions. The judges consider that the board has, over the last three years, strategically managed a complete turnaround of the school – including orchestrating improvement in student progress and attainment – taking it from a position where many pupils did not want to apply, to the number of first preference applications trebling.

Eltham Church of England Primary School, Royal Borough of Greenwich

To meet school place needs, governors have overseen a sizeable rebuild, actively holding parties to account to ensure that the project resulted in a building that provided the best possible learning environment and met the needs of the local community. Throughout, the board had a 'non-negotiable' that pupil outcomes, teaching and learning must remain outstanding, and it effectively held senior leaders to account as exemplified by the level of challenge seen in the minutes of meetings. The capacity to ensure outstanding pupil outcomes through a period of change was recognised by the local authority and diocese with the school being asked to work in a successful partnership with another local Church of England primary school from September 2016.

Hoe Valley School, Surrey

Demonstrating what a group of dedicated parents can achieve by setting up their own free school, this board has turned a vision in to reality. The board took the early decision to strategically oversee the development of the permanent site, allowing senior leaders to focus on ensuring an excellent standard of education. The permanent site opened in September 2018, four months after the school was deemed to be outstanding by Ofsted. An indicator of the board's success in engaging stakeholders throughout the project was an oversubscription for the third year of entry to the school. Trustees have not been afraid to make difficult decisions and the judges were impressed that the board has consistently shown excellent capability to strategically manage all aspects of the school, utilising its experience and enthusiasm to best effect.



Outstanding governance in a single school

Finalists

Bexton Primary School and Nursery, Cheshire East

Following a slight decline in pupil progress and attainment, coupled with concerns about consistency and low expectations, the board initiated a review of its working practice. This led to a fundamental review of the vision and values, and recruiting additional governors with relevant skills. High priority is given to governor training and development, and in addition to link governor roles the board has governors connected to school development priorities. Judges were impressed by the board's overall organisation and the rigorous monitoring arrangements that are in place. Noteworthy in the current financial climate is the achievement of a consistently balanced three-year budget along with significant improvements to facilities. Judges also recognise the board's strong team ethic, and persistence and tenacity in working together to improve experience and outcomes for all pupils.

Rhodes Avenue Primary School, Haringey

Embarking on a significant change by expanding from a two-form to three-form entry, the board has steered the school through a difficult consultation period which included concerns about potential changes to the school's ethos and vision. Tireless insistence from governors made a huge difference to the outcome of the buildings and the resources that the school now enjoys. Part of the vision is to contribute to the education of young people in the wider community. With the board's support, senior leaders work with three neighbouring schools and the school is now a National Support School. The chair also co-founded the local Chairs' Forum to reach out to the wider governance community. Judges were impressed with how the board recognises and deals with issues – working through challenges and implementing long term strategic changes – particularly around parental concerns.

Outstanding governance in a multi academy trust

Accounting for the different challenges and opportunities in governing a group of schools, this award recognises a multi academy trust board that has demonstrated effective governance and outstanding leadership to create positive outcomes in their schools. Finalists have evidenced how their governance practice has evolved over time, demonstrated a solid strategic approach, and have shown judges a positive relationship with their local tier of governance.

Joint winners

Co-op Academies Trust, North of England

Governance is very much seen as an integral part of the culture of the trust. Judges were impressed by the trust's clear and unique vision and values, which align closely with the principles of its sponsor and form the basis of the trust-wide strategic plan. The strategic planning process fully engaged stakeholders with emails from over 200 parents feeding into the process, and the ethos of empowering local decision makers was evident throughout. Members of the local governing body at Co-op Academy Stoke-on-Trent speak warmly of the value added by the trust, and the academy's commitment to working with the trust to transform the aspirations of the community was obvious. Judges note that the influence afforded to the local tier demonstrates the board's commitment to building a culture of openness and trust. Development opportunities for local governing body members to work with trustees, executives and governors from other academies has noticeably enabled the identification and sharing of common challenges and successful practice, as well as unifying their identity as one organisation.

The Evolve Trust, Mansfield

Honest and open about the challenges they face, the trust is flexible in its approach to a developing sector whilst maintaining a clear emphasis on vision and strategy. The trust describes itself as being a 'learning organisation' committed to benefiting others in the sector through sharing the lessons it has learned. Trustees hold firm that any development has to fit with their ethos and values, and that any growth must be carefully considered and compatible with its other schools. Stemming from this ethos, judges were impressed that the trust has opted out of the closed door culture that has surrounded the sector. The board's belief that creating a better life for children means having honest, direct conversations is commendable. Assessing its impact on pupils is a focal point for the board, and what is right for the children is central to the decisions taken by trustees. The trust board recently decided to appoint scrutiny boards, and all newly appointed members have been eager to be part of them due to the board being open in communicating why their approach to the local tier has changed.

Outstanding vision and strategy

Setting vision and strategy is a core function of the governing board, and this award recognises a board governing a single or group of schools that has an inspiring vision and is able to demonstrate how it is effective in practice. It is clear that each finalist has carefully established their values in partnership with the school community and has a clear strategy in place to achieve their vision which is aspirational for pupils.

Winner

The Federation of Cherry Oak School and Victoria School with Victoria College, Birmingham

Passionate and committed, this board have transformed provision for young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties through the establishment of an institution which allows young people to fulfil their right to a college education. Judges were impressed by the dedication of the trustees in upholding their bold vision to create a new education offer to bridge the provision gap for young people post-19. From lobbying the council to secure grant funding to overseeing a complex building project, they were instrumental in driving and ultimately ensuring the delivery of this vision. The board has shown an admirable commitment to collaboration by sharing expertise, leadership and resources within a federation, with the success of the partnership evidenced by moving one of the schools from potential closure to being judged outstanding by Ofsted. Due to a change of legislation, the board then had to oversee the college's move to independence.

Highly commended

Little Gaddesden Church of England Primary School, Hertfordshire

With an exemplary approach to strategic development, this board has achieved success in turning a vision in to reality. Judges were impressed by the clear, methodological process to vision setting and strategy, led by an experienced governing board in partnership with the senior leaders. In creating a shared vision, the board collected extensive feedback from parents, pupils and staff and communicated to all stakeholders in a series of assemblies. The governing board has a strong understanding of the strengths and areas of development for the school which drives the annual priorities. Judges recognise the ethos of mutual respect between the board and staff, unpinning by their shared vision. It is very clear that the vision for creative, independent learners is well embedded and implemented across the school, with teachers afforded professional development and autonomy to deliver significant enrichment for their pupils.

Finalists

Eastrop Infants and Southfield Junior partnership, Swindon

Under the emboldened vision of the board of Eastrop, the governors approached neighbouring Southfield when it received a 'requires improvement' judgement from Ofsted. A partnership emerged which the board handled with determination and sensitivity. Pupils at Eastrop were engaged in the development of the values and chose an animal to represent each one. These are now integrated in to school life. The partnership allowed the values, vision and strategy to be transferred to Southfield seamlessly, and they now feed in to the curriculum of both schools. Judges were impressed by the understanding of the values shown by pupils. The schools also work in collaboration with a further 10 schools, offering the support of peer reviews, governor conferences and a chairs network. Exciting and ambitious plans for the future are underway, including a new nursery and the imminent formation of a MAT.

Glebe Academy, Stoke-on-Trent

Demonstrating a strong vision which underpins its strategy, this board does not shy from making difficult decisions. After extensive discussions, the board decided that the school should collaborate in its own way rather than join a MAT. Having successfully engaged the community, staff and parents in the creation and living of their vision and values, the board has maintained an outstanding school in an area facing many social challenges. Judges were impressed by the board's strong focus on bringing decisions back to what children need. To improve results, the board made a commitment to professional development for all staff including learning from other schools outside the local area. Determined to be outward facing, the school has built partnerships with the private sector, emphasising enrichment beyond primary school.

Richardson Dees Primary School, North Tyneside

Following the appointment of a new headteacher and chair, the board realised that the school's vision was outdated and did not inform its future direction. A governor working group was established to collaborate with stakeholders to develop a vision that was meaningful to the school community and which would make a difference to the pupils' experiences. Though in the early stages of implementation, judges were impressed with the improvements made to the school in challenging circumstances and found it clear that the whole staff team is working to deliver the vision. This buy-in from staff is credited to them being engaged from an early stage and they have been encouraged and inspired to adapt the vision to their own teaching, an example being a teacher taking the initiative to write a 'digital learning vision' to fit the school's vision.

Our mission

Our mission is to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in England by promoting high standards in schools and improving the effectiveness of their governance.

The National Governance Association (NGA) is the national membership organisation for the governing boards of schools and trusts in England.

We provide clear information and advice to governors, trustees and clerks. We are experts at extending the understanding and practice of good school governance through a comprehensive professional development offer.

We represent governance volunteers and professionals, ensuring that their voices are heard at a national level.

We are influential and recognised as the leading organisation on school governance, with high-quality policy communications, extensive research and insight from a team of school governance experts. We are a resilient, growing, innovative and successful organisation, adapting to change and continually developing the charity, its business and its people.

To find out more about NGA, our services and membership, please visit www.nga.org.uk.

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