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Courageous conversations

A truly courageous conversation is more than just asking challenging questions – it involves following up on the answers and ensuring changes are made

Delegates at Clare Collins' workshop discussed scenarios from considering federation to dealing with a longstanding yet ineffective headteacher. Although opinion varied, all agreed that it is vital to prepare. Clare suggested seeking the opinion of a trusted external person to check your thinking, especially where the issue falls into unfamiliar territory.

A chair of another governing body may have been in a similar situation themselves. When it comes to a local authority (LA) maintained school seeking advice from the LA, delegates considered how far up the ladder you should go. The resounding answer was as far as you need to, even if this means taking it right to the top.

Who and when

Consider who should have the conversation and when. If it is not one to be had in a formal meeting, in most cases this will be the chair. Taking notes may not be practicable, but it is important to have some sort of record to summarise the main points in a follow-up email, stating the next step, for example, taking the item to the

next governing body meeting. You may need to ask the other person to confirm it as a true record.

It is important to risk assess and think through what could go wrong. One way to prepare is to discuss or role play with another governor – perhaps the vice chair – how the conversation



might go and desired outcomes. This helps you choose your words and consider how you would react in different situations. It can also help you consider the issue from the other person's point of view. By their very nature, courageous conversations are challenging, a difficult conversation which you would rather not have to have, but which must be had in the interests of the pupils. 📖

Ellie Howarth, NGA information officer

KEEPING ON TARGET

Chris Smith, lead senior adviser, Essex CC, and head of service, educational technology at Target Tracker, gave an introduction to the Governance Self Evaluation Tracker.



This tool is designed to help governing bodies to share information, evaluate and evidence their effect on the school online. It makes it easier for governing bodies to set priorities and create an action plan. It is designed to assist in an understanding of cause and effect – and to get your planning right. It also incorporates the NGA skills' audit.

There are five key evaluation areas: strategic leadership, school improvement, managing the business, building relationships and responsibilities. A new area will shortly allow each governor to record their role, attendance at meetings, visits to the school/academy and their impact, which will greatly assist accountability.

A calendar function allows governors to have key dates of meetings and events.
www.targettracker.org/gset

