

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE – DO’S AND DON’TS

An effective governing board creates an ambience in which the school, its staff and its pupils thrive.

How do they do it?

Governors

1. Have a clear strategic vision of the school, what it is now, what it aims to become and how it will achieve this
2. Understand the ethos of the school including its religious character
3. Have a regular external audit of governance including a governor skills audit
4. Respect the respective roles of governors and headteacher and in particular the expertise of the head teacher and professional staff
5. Respect the expertise and experience of their fellow governors
6. Govern, not manage
7. Attend meetings as a priority – only miss a meeting if it can’t be avoided
8. Read the papers ahead of the meeting
9. Are aware of what they don’t know and join in seeking advice when the collective knowledge and experience of the governing board does not indicate a solution. PaJeS can often assist here.
10. Follow the PaJeS “Ten Commandments for Good Governance”

An ineffective governing board creates tensions, saps energy and detracts from the school achieving its full potential.

What can cause this?

1. Failure to observe the above
2. A breakdown in the relationship between chair of governors and head teacher. The headteacher has primary and professional responsibility for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff. The head teacher must be allowed to manage the school (including management of its finances). Interference in day-to-day management reduces the effectiveness of the headteacher, uses up valuable time which in turn detracts from operational efficiency and crucially, makes the head teacher less accountable for failure.

3. Governors not accepting corporate responsibility for decisions even if they have voted against them. It detracts from the authority of the governing board
4. Governors using their position to bring individual issues to the governor table instead of channelling them through the chair of governors to the head teacher
5. Governors pursuing their own agenda rather than keeping in mind that their overall duty irrespective of personal interests (including interests as parent, LA or staff governors) and views is to do what is objectively considered to be in the best interests of the school.
6. Not preserving confidentiality. What is said in the governing board meeting should stay in the room.
7. A lack of succession planning, especially in relation to the chair of governors
8. Governors remaining in post beyond their sell-by date