

Leicestershire Governor Development Service (GDS)

1. Statutory and traded services overview

Governor Development Service supports Leicestershire schools and academy governing bodies to be effective and fulfil their strategic leadership role in relation to school improvement. Our aim is to enhance leadership and management in schools in order to raise educational achievement of, and improve the life chances for, all young people in the county.

The Local Authority (LA) has a number of statutory obligations in regards to governance. GDS is positioned to help fulfil a number of these duties, most significantly the requirement on the LA to provide appropriate information and training considered necessary, free of charge to governors, to enable governors effectively to discharge their duties.

The service is delivered in two ways: through the Local Authority's statutory obligation, and through its traded service. The LA provides a traded GDS provision through a Service Order (SO) ensuring the provision of high quality advice, information, support and training for all governors, clerks, associate members and headteachers to support their school or academy.

GDS launched as a traded service in September 2007. Subscriptions rates have increased year on year demonstrating the commitment of governing bodies to training and continuous professional development as well as the quality of the service delivered.

49% of schools in Leicestershire have converted to academy status. GDS has successfully developed its services to support both maintained and academy schools. Buy back rates in Leicestershire are:

Financial Year	% buy back	Number of schools
2011/12	91% ↑	257
2012/13	92% ↑	258
2013/14	96% ↑	269
2014/15	98% ↑	274

Increasingly GDS are approached by schools outside the county for support. Support has been provided to Leicester City and Rutland schools.

↑ represents increase on prior year

2. Monitoring and intervention work

2.1. Information gathering

Due to the number of schools in Leicestershire and the capacity of the service (4.3fte), Governor Development Service monitors governing bodies on an exception reporting basis. Concerns are immediately shared between officers either informally (verbally, through e-mails) or more formally during team meetings. Where there is strong cause for concern, Education Quality Advisers, the relevant phase Service Manager and, where necessary, the Assistant Director of Education and Learning are informed. Areas of consideration are as follows:

- **Correspondence and conversations:** Intelligence is gathered through the advice that is sought from the governors' telephone helpline by Chairs, Clerks, governors and on occasion parents. The nature of the advice sought is an early indicator of problems on the GB such as a breakdown in the relationship between Head and Chair/governing body, questionable practice in place or legal requirements not being followed.
- **Headteacher conversations:** Headteachers often contact GDS when their governing bodies are encountering problems. To raise the profile of GDS and to facilitate these conversations, the Service Manager attends headteacher meetings and conferences termly.
- **Ofsted feedback:** The Service Manager receives each Ofsted report as it is published. These are screened for governance concerns and action immediately taken. GDS proactively contacts schools to arrange governance reviews where they are recommended following an inspection.
- **Training undertaken:** Where concerns are raised GDS scrutinise the training undertaken by the GB and areas of weakness identified, such as, Chairs not attending termly briefings, no induction training undertaken by new governors and governors not attending hot topic areas.
- **Vacancies:** Those governing bodies with high levels of vacancies suggest a lack of proactiveness or apathy in ensuring an effective governing body. High levels of parent governor vacancies may suggest a lack of headteacher engagement. A high turnover of governors suggests a meltdown of the governing body thereby triggering LA concern.
- **Governing body self-evaluation:** It is expected that governing bodies spend time on their own self-evaluation. GDS promotes this as good practice to review the governing body effectiveness through a self-evaluation. GDS support governing bodies in their self-assessment by making Governance Self Evaluation Tracker (GSET) available. GSET is an online tool that GB's can use to assess their own effectiveness and draw up plans to tackle weakness/seek improvement.
- **LA information:** Provided by Education and Learning and other LA officers. All conversations and areas of concern are noted.
- **GDS Officers:** Officers often work directly with governing bodies attending meetings to support response to direct requests. Trainers also meet governors in face-to-face training or 'in-house' courses. Concerns may be raised in all of these situations.
- **Information from the Clerks:** If GDS consider that not enough is known about a governing body, then the clerk is asked to make comments about the chair, governors, effectiveness and relationship with Headteacher.
- **Complaints:** Complaints about the school made to the LA often highlight problems with lack of response or poor complaint handling from the Head, Chair, other governors or clerk. It can indicate Chairs who are not engaging with their role and

those with poor relationships with the headteacher. The LA supports all governing bodies with their complaints through advice and support.

2.2. Collation, taking action and sharing information

Actions are taken to address concerns identified through the monitoring and intelligence gathering process outlined above. Particular attention is paid to those schools in an Ofsted category or identified and notified to GDS by the Education & Learning Team as causing concern. Where areas of concern are identified, steps are then taken to provide direct focused support to governing bodies through interventions documented in section 2.4.

2.3. Task Group Meetings (round table review) and subsequent action

Task Group Meetings are facilitated by the Education & Learning Team where maintained schools have gone into an Ofsted category. Areas of concern are shared and noted.

Any concerns raised by the Education & Learning Team are brought back to officers and any action as a result of this is agreed and undertaken (often in conjunction with the Education Quality team).

2.4. Types of Intervention

- **Officer Advice**

When concerns are raised about governance the Service Manager will contact the Chair to determine the support needed to improve the governing body. This could include the provision of advice, mediation, consultation, training, arranging a review of governance.

- **The use of experienced governors to support schools in categories and difficulties ('Additional' governors, Interim Executive Boards and National Leaders of Governance)**

The Service Manager is very closely involved with the Education & Learning Team when a warning letter is sent or a school goes into a category. The adequacy of governance is assessed with the appointment of additional governors or an Interim Executive Board decided upon as necessary e.g. Belvoirdale.

GDS works closely with the 4 designated NLG's in Leicestershire. NLGs are deployed in schools requiring a review of governance or as a deployment to support the improvement of governance.

- **Different models of leadership**

Governing bodies are encouraged to consider other models of governance to secure improvement. Sessions have been provided on academy conversion, federation and collaboration models. The Service Manager attends individual governing bodies to offer bespoke advice. Considerable support has been provided to schools considering academy conversion over the past 2 years (30+ sessions, plus large scale briefings).

- **Training and support**

Additional training and support is often identified when a school is in difficulty. Tailored training is provided to address particular concerns/areas of weakness. An example of this is targeted data training that has been provided to 10 schools which require improvement.

- **Commissioning**

Leicestershire GDS uses external consultants or NLGs where necessary to offer additional support to its team and to individual governing bodies to ensure that each schools receives expert support and advice. Recent examples of this work include:

- Consultant commissioned to conduct independent investigation of a relationship breakdown between a head and chair of governors.
- Investigating Officer commissioned to assist with parental complaint.
- Consultant commissioned to support the governing body of a school issued with a warning notice by the LA.

3. Traded Service: Training

3.1. Training Programme overview

Ofsted inspection framework of local authority school improvement arrangements places strong expectations on LAs in relation to promoting and providing appropriate training programmes for governors.

GDS provides a comprehensive core training programme which is published annually, typical topics available to support key areas of governance are:

- Performance management of the headteacher
- Strategic governance
- RAISEonline
- Safeguarding responsibilities of governors
- Ofsted
- Induction

The service is responsive and sessions are added to the programme as developments in education occur or priorities emerge, such as, pupil premium and performance related pay.

An illustrative example is the training provided to support governors with the introduction of performance related pay. Over 360 governors were trained across 22 sessions from May to October 2014. The impact of this training aside for the increase in knowledge and understanding is the minimal number of pay appeals (less than 10).

Governing bodies can access training through the service order. See attached Training and Development Programme 2015/16 for the full programme outline.

3.2. Training specifically for Chairs

The importance of the Chair's role in an effective governing body is acknowledged in the provision of a range of development sessions:

- "The Role of the Chair of Governors": A two-hour session aimed at new chairs, providing a brief introduction to the role and consideration of the practical demands of the role.
- Chairs' Meetings are run termly to raise awareness of current developments and issues in education affecting schools and academies.
- 'Heads & Chairs' Workshop": This is an opportunity for chairs to work with their headteachers to share experiences of governance and provide guidelines for a successful working relationship.
- National College Chairs' Development Programme delivered in partnership with Eastern Leadership Centre (ELC). GDS has successfully recruited 62 chairs to take part in the programme so date with a 4th cohort of 20 planned for May 2015. A programme evaluation report has been completed by ELC and is available.

3.3. Briefings and meetings

Briefings and meetings are held termly for Chairs, T&D, Clerks and SEN Governors. The aims of the briefings are to raise awareness of current developments, issues in education and promote effective governance. They enable governors to network and share good practice.

Participation at these events has grown steadily evidencing the value of the information and guidance disseminated.

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Clerks	141	142 ↑	195 ↑	221 ↑
Chairs	383	312 ↑	399 ↑	401 ↑
T&D Governors	94	120 ↑	169 ↑	175 ↑
SEN Governors	87	81 ↓	102 ↑	142 ↑

3.4. Induction training

A range of opportunities is provided for governors to attend an induction session – face-to-face evenings, weekdays and Saturday sessions in addition to access to on-line learning through GEL.

T&D governors are provided with guidance to support new governors and encourage them to attend induction training.

The percentage of newly appointed governors attending induction sessions is significantly greater than the national average:

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Percentage of new governors attending induction training (Based on national benchmarking)	69% Vs 57% national	56% Vs 42% national	78% Vs 53% national

3.5. In-house and cluster training

Under the service order each governing body is entitled to an in-school session where a trainer delivers a session specifically tailored to that governing body. A menu of available sessions covers the core aspects of a governing body responsibility.

Where appropriate, governing bodies are encouraged to collaborate and 'share' in-school sessions with other schools in a local training group. In this way training reaches a greater number of governors, governors can access more training locally, can network with others locally, and the impact of training can be maximised.

3.6. E-Learning

Whilst face-to-face training is seen as the most effective way for governors to access training, our e-learning offer acknowledges that not all governors can attend face-to-face training. All governing bodies who subscribe to the service order have access to Governors E-Learning (GEL). There are a range of over 20 governance modules to choose from cover the key responsibilities of the role.

3.7. Marketing and course take-up

A regular review is made of course take-up and, as necessary, courses are promoted through the training newsletter and through direct approaches to governing bodies and governors with flyers and e-mails.

New Training & Development Governors and Chairs are provided with information about the training and support that is available specifically to support them in their role. Targeting and encouragement of training is done both by GDS and through support to the T&D governor.

As a result of this our training programmes are well attended. Over the last 3 years the take-up has been as follows:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Total number of training hours delivered	603	658	680
Number of attendees	3248 ↑	3545 ↑	4544 ↑

3.8. Evaluation and impact of courses

All our trainers are experienced officers and consultants with experience as a senior leader or school improvement partners.

Each participant completes a course evaluation at the end of each session. Evaluations are reviewed for initial comments and then statistically sampled.

	% good or better	
	April 2012 to March 2013	April 2013 to March 2014
Relevance	99%	100%
Clarity	99%	99%
Trainer skills	99%	99%
Quality of materials	97%	98%
Quality of venue	97%	95%
Overall	100%	100%
Recommend?	99.8%	99.8%

It is difficult to directly assess the impact of training on all courses. Some courses provide information and increase participants knowledge and confidence while others lend themselves to more direct action.

For courses from April 2013 we have asked a sample of governors to do 3-5 month follow-up evaluations of the courses they attend. As yet this is not fully embedded and the response rate is low however those governors who have responded tell us that the training has developed their knowledge and skills as a governor and has impacted on the way they carry out their role.

Some examples of the impact on governors from training:

- 100% of governors sampled felt their knowledge of the subject area had increased making them more equipped. This was especially true of new governors who felt they were able to participate and fulfil their role more effectively after training.
- Governors who attended some of the more practical workshops were able to report on actions they had taken. For example a governor who attended an Engaging Parents course has gone on to set up a parent council.
- Another example of a governing undertaking the Performance Management course who has now complete their first cycle of Performance Management of the headteacher successfully.
- Evidence for the extensive programme of Performance Related Pay training support the effectiveness of training. HR have reported minimal pay appeals.
- Examples of skills audits being completed and training needs identified and addressed to improve the effectiveness of the governing body.
- Pupil Premium training lead to a GB nominating a Pupil Premium governor. In their Ofsted the inspector was impressed with the quality of the monitoring work completed by the nominated governor.
- A governor attending the Ofsted training has implemented a new committee structure focus on the 4 inspection areas.
- Governors attending the Visits course have gone on to carry out formal visits aligned to the school development plan.

Comments from Ofsted reports evidencing impact of training:

- **Roundhill College judged “Good” February 2014**
Governors take their roles and responsibilities very seriously and are currently reviewing their internal committee structures to make sure that they meet current and future needs, should they become an 11-16 academy. They take advantage of the training provided by Leicestershire County Council to ensure that they are completely up to date in their knowledge and understanding.
- **Newbold Verdon judged “RI” March 2014**
All members of the governing body have undertaken recent training about the use of data in schools; this has helped them to understand how the school is performing in relation to others nationally
- **Bosworth Academy judged “Good” February 2014**
The training governors undertake means that they ably support the work of the academy in important areas such as safeguarding and analysing data on students’ achievement.

4. Provision of information and helpline support

The LA has a statutory duty to provide governors with access to information to support them in their role. GDS delivers this in a number of ways.

4.1. Induction Packs

All new governors receive an induction pack designed to ensure that they understand their role in school improvement. Schools which subscribe receive an enhanced pack that includes:

- National Governors Association publication 'Welcome to Governance'
- Leicestershire Governor Handbook
- Guidance to support the use of Electronic Information Service (EIS).

4.2. Updates and alerts

Information in the form of announcements are posted electronically several times a week through the Electronic Information Service. A summary is provided each half term to enable chairs to ensure they have actioned/noted the information provided.

4.3. Guidance and briefing papers

The governors' microsite on EIS contains a range of guidance materials to support governing bodies.

GDS have commissioned key publication to support governors:

- Briefing paper to support new requirement for maintained schools to reconstitute
- Briefing paper to support governors with their new responsibility under Performance Related Pay
- Understanding the Ofsted Framework – including monitoring pro formas
- A Guide to Primary Data
- A Guide to Secondary Data
- Leicestershire Governors Handbook and planner Headteacher – this publication has recently been updated and made available to all governors. It is a valuable resource and contains sections on delegation, self review, the curriculum, pupil premium, monitoring and evaluation, Ofsted inspection and target setting. This also forms part of the induction pack and all governors are given a revised copy when major amendments are made.

4.4. E-mail and phone helpline:

A helpline is provided to clerks, chairs, heads and governors. The telephone is manned during office hours and e-mails are answered during the day. Any queries not immediately answered are responded to within 24 hours.

4.5. Anecdotal evidence on the impact of GDS advice and guidance

The helpline is well regarded, the following comment is typical of the feedback GDS receive:

Trevor Hollingworth, Chair, Buckminster Primary School 26th February 2014

He expressed the gratitude of his governors and himself for the support given by GDS which has assisted in moving the school from inadequate to good in a short period of time. The governing body realised that there was still work to do and hoped in due course with their excellent head and the support from GDS to eventually become an outstanding school.

Comments made by Affinity Governors at their meeting on 11th February 2014

“Very grateful for the guidance and support which enables me to support my school “

“Over the years the support given to me and my governor colleagues has got better and better.”

“The postings on EIS are an essential source of up to date information for my colleagues and myself.”

“The information provided by GDS through training and postings on EIS has meant that I am not dependent on the Head and I can challenge and support my school effectively”

Darren Bramely, Chair of Governors

“The advice and clarification you have provided should help ensure Old Mill have robust processes in place come September/October. The impact will be we can hopefully resolve our pay decisions in a timely manner without giving rise to appeals, due to a process technicalities, which can only be a positive for staff and pupils.”

5. Support for governing body clerks

Clerks provide a pivotal role in governing body effectiveness. This has led to the introduction national standard of service, a national job description and person specification and a national training programme to meet the requirements of the job description. Leicestershire GDS encourages all governing bodies to adopt the national job description to ensure their clerk is not just a minute-taker and that he or she plays a full part in supporting the governing body in their school improvement role. All school and academy clerks are supported fully by the following services provided by the traded service:

5.1. Clerks Induction Training

GDS holds a clerks induction training at least annually. All newly appointed clerks are invited to this training; existing clerks are invited to attend this session as a refresher.

5.2. National Clerks' Development Programme

Working in partnership with the Eastern Leadership Centre and the National Governors Association, GDS has begun 2 pilots (35 clerks) of the new National Clerks' Development Programme developed by the National College. The pilots are part way through and an evaluation will be completed following conclusion of the programme.

5.3. Further Clerks Training

In addition to the training outline above, GDS offers training on specific areas such as clerking panels, effective clerking. The termly briefings are also used as a development opportunity and mini training sessions are delivered.

5.4. Termly Clerks Briefing

Every clerk is invited to the termly clerks briefing. Copies of the packs are made available on EIS to ensure that those who could not attend can access the information, and so that clerks can use the information to brief their governing body. Clerks are encouraged to have a slot within their governing body meetings to pass on information to governors. Each briefing includes a development session followed by an update in changes in legislation.

5.5. Helpline and guidance notes

All clerks can access our helpline via e-mail and telephone to get personal guidance and support in all aspects of their role. A range of publications are provided to each clerk as part of their school's subscription:

- ISCG: Role of governing bodies and their clerks
- LA publications: Guidance notes for parent and staff elections, preparing for governing body meetings, Headteacher appointment and a complaints toolkit

5.6. Professional development

GDS encourages governing bodies to performance manage their clerks. PDR forms and guidance have been provided.

6. Governor Recruitment Strategy

6.1. Authority Governors

As part of its statutory responsibility the LA ensures that authority governor appointments are filled promptly with high quality individuals matched to the needs of the governing body. Local councillors have an important role to play in identifying people within the local community to become LA governors. Nominations are invited through both the local councillors and the schools and agreed by the political party representatives. We always aim to appoint quality governors quickly.

Our recent LA governor vacancy levels have been as follows:

As at 31 st March	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of vacancies	68	68	54	48
LA vacancy rate	10%	10%	9%	9%

6.2. Supporting schools in governor recruitment

Additionally under our service level agreement with schools, we provide support for the recruitment of all categories of governors, including the provision of recruitment literature and resources.

Annually the LA reviews the vacancies of each school according to the database. For those schools with 25% vacancies we contact the clerk to assess what action is being taken and offer support.