



**Nottinghamshire
County Council**

Recruitment and Retention of Governors Review Group

Minutes

Tuesday 18 September 2011 at 2pm
County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham

Membership

- Councillor Liz Yates (Chair)
- Councillor John Allin (Vice-chair)
- Councillor Vincent Dobson
- Councillor Sybil Fielding
- Councillor Rev Tom Irvine
- Councillor Mel Shepherd
- Councillor Brian Wombwell
- Mr David Richards

- absent

Officers in Attendance

Martin Gately – Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Daniel Reynafarje – Governance Support Officer
Gill Thackrey – Group Manager, Business Development and Support
Leonie Meikle – Governor Services Manager

Others in Attendance

Helen Bent – Head Teacher, Jeffries Primary and Nursery School

Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 28 September 2011, having been circulated to all Members, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors John Allin, Sybil Fielding and Mel Shepherd.

Declarations of Interest by Members or Officers

No declarations of interests were made.

Parent Governors

Members welcomed Miss Helen Bent, Head Teacher of Jeffries Primary and Nursery School in Kirkby-in-Ashfield.

Miss Bent informed Members about the difficulties she faces at her school and the methods she employs for recruiting parent governors. She stated that last year all 5

parent governor spots were filled, but this year they currently have 3 vacancies. She explained how the school lies in a pocket of deprivation and has a reputation of being a “sync” school. The school has an intake change rate of 21% due to the mobility of parents, and a 42% take up of free school meals. She further stated that the school just came out of special measures last term.

Due to the social make-up of the community that her school is in, Miss Bent deems it important to develop good relationships with parents and does so through meeting and greeting every morning. By getting to know the parents she is able to recruit good candidates for parent governors. She explained that when recruiting, the usual reaction from parents was to decline as even the most confident of parents are intimidated by the role. The main goal is to get them through the door. To achieve this, parents are invited to attend a governors meeting, without committing, to see if they like it. Another big issue is mobility and the nature of their work. If a parent governor's job involves shifts, they might not be able to make meetings. The key is to be flexible with parents. Another method used for recruiting parent governors involves a very pro-active school council. The children use their own creativity to produce letters addressing the need for school governors.

In response to questions and comments, Miss Bent replied:-

- The school has had one long-standing parent governor, who is now the Chair of the Governing Body. Most parent governors leave for various reasons. Sometimes they think they have to finish when their child finishes Primary School, but this is not the case. It is important to inform parents that as long as their child is in education and there is a vacancy, they can continue to be parent governors.
- Parents with low literacy skills should not be afraid to become governors as every parent governor has a mentor to help them through the process. Even the most confident parents find the first meeting to be quite daunting for them.
- Feedback is highly valued. Rather than sending out a questionnaire, parents are invited to attend a parent evening. This makes it more casual for parents to mingle and provide feedback.
- The attendance rate at the school is 94%, and persistent absences are low.
- The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is an area that should work with you, not against. In past, PTA members have been recruited as parent governors.
- Male parent governors are more difficult to recruit, but the overall balance of male and female governors is good.
- Parent governors are very much aware of the legal implications of their role. Governors are given areas to specify in that tie-up with their talents or interests. Governors are grouped together when it comes to monitoring aspects of the curriculum. This provides the opportunity for the less experienced governors to work and learn alongside the more experienced ones.
- The Ofsted report addressed 3 key issues and one was the quality of governors. In 1998 the Governing Body were marked as “outstanding.” In 2010, they were considered “inadequate,” even though they were doing the same thing and even had the same Chair. The role has changed and it came down to challenging the school more. After 15 months of hard work, things have turned around and they are now considered “good.”

- The Governing Body has had Governor Services training as well as training on interpreting performance data. The school also looked at how they report to Governors. The information being given to them was simplified and new targets have been set. Support from a “special measures” officer was also received, and the Local Authority will continue to work with the school even though they are now considered a “good” school.

Members thanked Miss Bent for her attendance.

Further Discussions for the Review

Members discussed information provided at the meeting and highlighted the following for future recommendations:-

- Good idea for letters to be created by the school children to recruit governors.
- Good method to use a “Buddy System” for new governors.
- Important to improve on the guidance provided by the Local Authority.
- Important to get people through the door. Once they are in, they tend to be good at it.
- Head teachers need to understand that they need to work in unison with the Governing Body.
- Information presented to governors needs to be presented in an easy and understandable way.
- There is benefit from inviting governors to in-service days as they are able to see the staff working as a team.
- An idea list could be created to be sent out to schools.

The future programme of work was discussed and it was noted to include the work programme on future agendas.

The meeting closed at 3.16pm.

CHAIR

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