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Primary school Governor training: exploring the fitness for purpose of the content and mode of delivery in England.

By

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Abstract

It is clear that the role of governance volunteers has grown exponentially, with levels of responsibility and accountability higher than ever before. This has contributed to a move away from the stakeholder-based model of governance seen in previous years to a skills-based one in which governing bodies actively recruit Governors based on their pre-existing skillsets. However, given the level of accountability involved in the role, the question arises as to whether these skills are in themselves adequate in preparing Governors to perform the role of Governor effectively or whether additional skills should be taught that enable them to have a better understanding of the educational landscape.

Adopting a mixed-method approach enabled the research to explore the perceptions of both Governors and senior leadership teams (SLT) with regards to the role Governor training plays in effective school governance. The aim of the research was to identify the current provision of Governor training, how this provision was perceived by both SLT and Governors in terms of quantity, quality, and its contribution to effective governance.

It was clear that whilst most Governors and SLT considered the overall quantity of provision to be ‘good’, there were concerns over the quality, with many referring to the “basic” or “generic” nature of training that they had experienced. There were calls for the quality of training to be improved and modernised. Many Governors felt that for training to be beneficial it needed to be relevant, contextualised, and utilise practical examples. However, for SLT the focus lay on ensuring training clarified boundaries and roles. One area that both Governors and SLT agreed was essential, was the importance of induction training for establishing knowledge at the very beginning of a governor’s tenure.

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Glossary of Abbreviations

ACRONYM/INTIALS	Meaning
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
LEA	Local Education Authority
CASE	Campaign for the Advancement of the State Education
NAGM	National Association of Governors and Managers
ACE	Advisory Centre for Education
BEAS	British Educational Administration Society
BELMAS	British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society
NGA	National Governance Association
LMS	Local Management of Schools
PTA	Parent Teacher Associations
MAT	Multi-academy trusts
LGB	Local Governing Bodies
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
SMBC	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
HR	Human Resources
UK	United Kingdom
FSM	Free School Meals
CAG	Centre Assessment Grade
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
LA	Local Authority

SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
OU	Open University
SGOSS	School Governors' One-Stop Shop
GB	Governing body
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SYSMIS	System Missing
HT	Headteacher
CCM	Constant Comparative Method
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
MAC	Multi Academy Company
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SENDCO	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Co-ordinator
KCSIE	Keeping Children Safe in Education
LAC	Looked After Children
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
FE	Further Education
AoC	Association of Colleges
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations

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1 The Evolution Of A Research Project – An Introduction To The Study

1.1 Introduction

The role of the school Governor has evolved exponentially since the 19th Century, with modern Governors facing increasingly complex and demanding responsibilities (Gann, 1998; Allcroft, 2016). As schools have gained more autonomy, governing bodies have been held to higher levels of accountability (Glatter, 2012; Male, 2021), leading to a shift from a stakeholder-based model of governance promoted during the 1970s (Hughes and Richards, 1975; Taylor, 1977; Glatter, 2012) to a more professional, skills-based model (Connolly, Farrell and James, 2017). This has resulted, with encouragement from the coalition government (Gove, 2012), in the recruitment of individuals with pre-existing skills to serve as governors. However, the question of whether existing skills, often brought from occupations outside of education, are sufficient or if additional training is necessary to equip Governors for the growing professional demands of their role, remains a fundamental concern. Hill and Husband (2023), for example, argue that even skilled professionals may have gaps that would need to be addressed through training. Whilst there are numerous studies on the role of Governors within the education system, there is little on Governor development through training. This research hopes to address this gap by exploring the impact training can have on a governor's ability to perform their role effectively through examining the perception of governing training from two main viewpoints: Governors and SLT.

1.2 Origins Of The Research

As a primary school teacher, I have been involved with schools professionally since 2004. After my children started school, I wanted to be able to support their school

and use the skills that I had developed within my professional life, so I stood as a candidate for the role of parent Governor and was elected in 2015. At my first meeting, it was relatively easy to follow the terminology and understand the data. However, my role as a parent Governor was never fully explained and there was no internal induction. I was informed that I would be booked on an external induction course that would take place every Thursday for three weeks. However, I could not attend this course until I had served as a Governor for at least one term. This seemed to me to be counterintuitive as it left me to serve as a governor, with all the legal responsibilities and accountability, but little guidance on my actual role. Speaking with other Governors, I received advice that often greatly varied not only between each governor but also from what I had read in government guidance and governance-specific support platforms. When I did attend training, it was not the level I would have expected for a role with so much accountability. Additionally, within a year of becoming a Governor, I found myself in the role of Chair and whilst all Governors are equal, there does appear to be a higher level of expectation placed on the person within that role. Again, there was little support and no induction to the role, either internally or externally.

My own experience led me to explore the types of support that a Governor could access, and I found official training courses, both paid and free, as well as unofficial support groups on social media. The lack of consistency in the quality and provision of Governor training prompted me to find training that I felt would be beneficial. It was at this point that I began an MA in School Improvement and Educational Leadership at the University of Birmingham, focusing my dissertation on the provision of Governor training. It was during this period that I identified a gap in the literature on school governance, seeing research into areas such as the

professionalisation of governance through the adoption of a skills-based model of governance (Connolly, Farrell and James, 2017), the role of the governing body in both school improvement and monitoring, with Ofsted linking ‘good’ governance to improved outcomes and better management (Scanlon, Earley and Evans, 1999; Earley, 2003; Ranson et al., 2005a), in addition to exploring areas such as power dynamics (Hatcher, 2005; Ranson, 2008) and boundaries (Ranson et al., 2005b; Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren, 2009; Smith, 2010; Quesel, Näpfli and Buser, 2017) but very little in terms of Governor or governing body development. It is this lack of consideration for governing body development that reinforces the need for this research.

1.3 The Role Of The Researcher

Any piece of research can be influenced by external and internal factors, including the position of the researcher (Barrett, Kajamaa and Johnston, 2020). It is therefore important to acknowledge my role within this research, given that its development is a direct result of my own personal experiences. With this in mind, I have consciously adopted a reflexive approach to this research, acknowledging the need to continuously challenge assumptions and positions. However, Olmos-Vega et al. (2023) note the difficulties that can be faced by researchers who are unsure of what reflexivity is or how it is utilised, acknowledging that the vast number of definitions circulating are a contributing factor to this uncertainty. In an attempt to address this, Olmas-Vega et al (2023, p. 242) collated multiple definitions before creating a standardised definition with the hope of creating clarity and consistency around researcher understanding of reflexivity:

> *"Reflexivity is a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes."*

This definition is seemingly supported by Ide and Beddoe (2024) and Jamieson, Govaart, Pownall (2023), with both sets of authors defining reflexivity as a researcher's awareness of how they may influence the study, alongside their acknowledgement of this potential influence. In order to ensure clarity and transparency within this research, I acknowledge that these definitions underpin my own approach to reflexivity.

To address my own role, I have shared my own school governance experience and roles and how this led to the development of this research. Reflecting on Barrett, Kajamaa and Johnston's (2020) description of 'insider' and 'outsider' researchers, I recognise and share that my role is that of an 'insider' researcher.

Additionally, by acknowledging my role within this research as one of an 'insider' researcher, I also accept that there is not a single reality but rather multiple realities (Berryman, 2019) in which truth is constructed through respondents' and participants' perceptions of their own realities (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Lowndes, Marsh and Stoker, 2018), meaning that truth is open to interpretation (Tuli, 2011; Chowdhury, 2014; Moon and Blackman, 2014; Hiller, 2016; Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Ryan, 2018; Berryman, 2019; Bleiker et al., 2019; Wang, 2020). Fully disclosing my ontological (Moon and Blackman, 2014; Waring, 2017; Creswell and Creswell, 2018) and epistemological (Rapley, 2018; Berryman, 2019; Bleiker et al., 2019; Al-Ababneh, 2020) stance also clarifies the choices that have been made in relation to research design and methodology, further defining my role as a

researcher. A more detailed overview of my ontological and epistemological approach can be found in chapter sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 respectively.

In addition to acknowledging the ontological and epistemological stance adopted within this research, it is important to acknowledge the theoretical lens as these “fundamental beliefs affect how you will examine and explore research” (Grant and Osanloo, 2014, p. 19). Within this research, the theoretical lens through which this research is viewed is based on the theoretical writings of Paulo Freire (1970), who examined the oppressed/oppressor relationship in education. A detailed examination of Freire and how his theoretical writings apply to this research is in chapter section 3.4.3.

1.4 Structure Of The Thesis

Chapter 1

Chapter one explores the evolution of this research, briefly discussing the aims, origins of the research, the role of the researcher, and the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2

This chapter explains the development of the literature review and provides an overview of current research.

Chapter 3

The focus of this chapter is the research design and methodology. Discussing the aims of the research and where it is situated within the wider framework, it details the philosophical approach that has guided the research and influenced the methodology and methods used. It concludes by examining any concerns over bias and rigour and detailing the ethical considerations within this research.

Chapter 4

Reviewing the quantitative data that has been collected, chapter four explains how the data has been collected. The remaining pages of the chapter present the findings from the survey.

Chapter 5

Focussed on the qualitative data, it explores the process involved in data collection and the data results/themes that have been generated during analysis.

Chapter 6

This chapter discusses the more general findings within the research, followed by key findings in relation to the research questions specifically.

Chapter 7

The concluding chapter provides an overview of the purpose of the research as well as a summary of findings. It also explores any implications and limitations, finishing with recommendations.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Often considered a ‘by-product’ of empirical, “‘real’ research” (LeCompte et al., 2003, p. 124), literature reviews are considered by many to be essential, “legitimate and publishable scholarly documents” (LeCompte et al., 2003, p. 124; Boote and Beile, 2005; Winchester and Salji, 2016; Rewhorn, 2018) within their own right. Noted to be a purposeful contribution to research, they allow authors to demonstrate their overarching knowledge of the subject matter, contextualise their research, and identify influential aspects within their chosen field (Creswell, 1994; Randolph, 2009; Rewhorn, 2018). Others expanded on this view, noting that literature reviews allowed researchers to clarify what has been explored and what remains underexplored, allowing new lines of inquiry to develop, with some also reflecting on the ability to develop a greater understanding of other methodological approaches (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996; Hart, 1998; Randolph, 2009; Winchester and Salji, 2016). Hart (1998) expands further on the wider importance of a literature review, emphasising its value within the context of academic development. However, Boote and Beile (2005) argue that the importance of the literature review has become devalued in the doctoral journey, demonstrated by the lack of formal training within doctoral programmes. Within the context of this research, the literature review is intended to provide an overview of current literature, identify gaps, and situate this research within the wider context of school governance research.

2.2 Methodology

LeCompte et al. (2003, p. 124) argue that overlooking the potential contribution of literature reviews to educational research “weakens” any possible future work.

However, it is important to ensure that the literature review is developed and conducted appropriately. Randolph (2009) suggests that if a literature review is deemed ‘faulty’ then it may tarnish the rest of the research. For example, there is some suggestion that if examiners note faults within the literature review, this may increase their scrutiny of other chapters, such as the methodology, analysis, and subsequent conclusions (Mullins and Kiley, 2002; Boote and Beile, 2005).

Randolph (2009) recommends that to plan a literature review effectively consideration should be given to Cooper’s ‘Taxonomy of Literature Reviews’ (Cooper, 1988; Randolph, 2009), which suggests six potential character classifications: “focus, goal, perspective, coverage, organization, and audience” (Cooper, 1988, p. 2). Randolph (2009) proposes that one potentially effective way to begin a literature review, is to assess it against Cooper’s (1998) taxonomy to understand where it sits within the six characteristics. Table 1 relays Cooper’s (1998) six characteristics and how they relate to this literature review.

Characteristics	Categories	Categories In This Literature Review
Focus	Research outcomes Research methods Theories Practices or applications	**Research outcomes; Research methods; Theories** The general focus of the literature revolved around outcomes, methods, and theories.
Goal	Integration (a) Generalization (b) Conflict resolution (c) Linguistic bridge-building Criticism Identification of central issues	**Identification of central issues** The intent is to explore the literature and establish any gaps which this research can address.
Perspective	Neutral representation Espousal of position	**Neutral representation** The review attempts to provide a balanced overview of the literature.
Coverage	Exhaustive Exhaustive with selective citation Representative Central or pivotal	**Exhaustive** It was the intention of the research to include all literature related to school governance.
Organization	Historical Conceptual Methodological	**Conceptual** The literature review has been organised thematically.

Audience	Specialized scholars General scholars Practitioners or policymakers General public	**Specialized scholars; General scholars; Practitioners or policymakers** The nature of this review suggests a specific audience.

Table 1 Based on Cooper's Taxonomy of Literature Reviews (Cooper, 1988)

In terms of physically starting a literature review, Winchester and Salji (2016, p. 310) note that there are six main stages: “Select review topic/title; Identify keywords and search terms; Identify information sources; Generate reading list and collect articles; Make notes in your own words; Write literature review”. Using this as a basis for the literature review within this research, the following table provides a general summary of the processes adopted:

Stages
Select review topic/title
The role of school Governor training in producing an effective governing body.
Identify keywords and search terms
Governor training, School Governor training, School Governor responsibilities, School Governor roles, School governance, School governance history, History of school Governors, Governor services, Governor support, Support for school governing bodies, Stakeholder model of governance, Skills based model of governance, External support for school Governors, Governance and school improvement, Ofsted, good governance and attainment, Safeguarding training for school Governors, Induction training for school Governors, Professionalising school governance, Governor skills audit, Governance Ofsted preparation, School governance Handbook, Core functions of governance, School Governors competency framework, Evolution of school governance, Governor services, Governor training research, Quantitative school Governor research, Qualitative school Governor research.
Identify information sources
Academic online search engines University specific library search engine Citation-based literature mapping tool Reference lists within identified applicable research papers
Generate reading list and collect articles
Initial search via academic based search engine. Secondary search via university library-based search engine. Third search based on citation-based literature mapping tool to find associated literature. Fourth search using reference lists within pertinent literature identified during the first 3 searches.
Make notes in your own words
Create an Excel document to track the literature search. Use the following criteria to assess viability of the research: **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:** ***Criteria for inclusion –*** Relevance to the Research Question: Literature must relate to initial research questions. Publication Date: To enable the research to explore the historical aspect of school governance, literature will be accepted from the 19th Century onwards. Scope and Coverage: Initial literature searches will revolve around the development of school governance in the UK. Further literature reviews will take into account any themes identified within the initial search. The types of publications that will be included are: peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, books, handbooks, government documents and papers, Governor training manuals, doctoral theses, and some newspaper articles

that fit a specific criteria (e.g. commentary on Covid-19 guidelines and the effect on educational leadership). ***Criteria for exclusion –*** Unpublished work, Irrelevance to the Research Question, Poor Methodological Quality, Outdated or Inaccessible Literature, Bias or Conflicts of Interest, Lack of Peer Review. Notes on literature made using mind maps.
Write literature review
Generated themes and sub-themes: **History**; **Professionalisation**; **School improvement**; **Monitoring** (governing body performance/behaviour & governors); **Training** (availability); **Power**: Relationships, Roles & Responsibilities, Imbalance; Boundaries: Spectrum, Strategic/Operational, Blurred lines, External skills, Difficulties, Defined roles & responsibilities, Openness; **Clarity**: Educational language, Role, Weight of responsibilities, School monitoring vs external, training; **Covid**: Monitoring & visits, Pastoral & support, Government guidance, Training, Virtual governance; **Mentoring**: Mentor training, Effectiveness, Models, A place for & availability, Internal vs external; **Challenge**: Relationships, Conflict of interest, Effectiveness, Ability; **Support**: Sources, Effectiveness, Isolation & Self-doubt, Training & confidence, Why; **Training**: Perceptions, Mandatory, Negative & positive; **Recruitment & Retention**: Negative & positive

Table 2 Stages of literature review - based on Winchester and Salji (2016)

After generating reading lists (Table 2), Rewhorn (2018, p. 144) argues that adopting a systematic approach when actually reading is important, citing “SQ3R” as a potentially beneficial approach. According to Rewhorn (2018), there are five specific steps within this approach: Survey (is it relevant?), Question (question the article as you read it), Read (identify main points), Recall (reread, look at notes, summarise), Review (reread your summary to check understanding and links to other sections). Each point helps the researcher to conduct “effective, critical and active reading” (Rewhorn, 2018, p. 145), thereby helping to create an effective literature review.

The next consideration must be the organisation of the literature review itself. Rewhorn (2018) recommends the following layout, with the inclusion of diagrams, graphs, and tables if needed: Background, Methodology, Research material, Sections, Synthesis of information. Using this suggested approach as a basis, as well as reading examples of other theses literature reviews, an adapted version has been developed for this research:

Section	Content
Introduction	History and context of the research question
Methodology	Description of the literature review methodology and main sources of information.

Chapter overview	Provide a brief description of the chapter.
Section the literature review	Themes.
Conclusion	Outline findings, gaps in knowledge, new questions.

Table 3 Structure of a literature based on Rewhorn (2018, p. 146)

In addition to contextualising and understanding the type of literature review being conducted, as well as physically noting the stages of the literature review, it is important to evaluate the literature review itself, particularly within doctoral theses. To enable researchers and those who may be reading the literature reviews to understand how effective their review is in the wider context of the research, Boote and Beile (2005) have developed their own rubric based on one developed by Hart (1998). They have developed five main categories: Coverage; Synthesis; Methodology; Significance; and Rhetoric. Within these categories, there were 12 criteria, identified as A – L, ranging from justification for inclusion to the coherence of the structure of the review (Table 4). As part of the reflexive approach (Barrett, Kajamaa and Johnston, 2020; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023) to this research, this chapter has been reviewed at different stages to ensure that all necessary aspects are included when compared to Boote & Beile's (2005) rubric.

Literature Review Scoring Rubric

Category	Criterion	1	2	3	4
1. Coverage	A. Justified criteria for inclusion and exclusion from review.	Did not discuss the criteria inclusion or exclusion	Discussed the literature included and excluded	Justified inclusion and exclusion of literature	
2. Synthesis	B. Distinguished what has been done in the field from what needs to be done.	Did not distinguish what has and has not been done	Discussed what has and has not been done	Critically examined the state of the field	
	C. Placed the topic or problem in the broader scholarly literature	Topic not placed in broader scholarly literature	Some discussion of broader scholarly literature	Topic clearly situated in broader scholarly literature	
	D. Placed the research in the historical context of the field.	History of topic not discussed	Some mention of history of topic	Critically examined history of topic	
	E. Acquired and enhanced the subject vocabulary.	Key vocabulary not discussed	Key vocabulary defined	Discussed and resolved ambiguities in definitions	
	F. Articulated important variables and phenomena relevant to the topic.	Key variables and phenomena not discussed	Reviewed relationships among key variables and phenomena	Noted ambiguities in literature and proposed new relationships	
	G. Synthesized and gained a new perspective on the literature.	Accepted literature at face value	Some critique of literature	Offered new perspective	
3. Methodology	H. Identified the main methodologies and research techniques that have been used in the field, and their advantages and disadvantages.	Research methods not discussed	Some discussion of research methods used to produce claims	Critiqued research methods	Introduced new methods to address problems with predominant methods
	I. Related ideas and theories in the field to research methodologies.	Research methods not discussed	Some discussion of appropriateness of research methods to warrant claims	Critiqued appropriateness of research methods to warrant claims	
4. Significance	J. Rationalized the practical significance of the research problem.	Practical significance of research not discussed	Practical significance discussed	Critiqued practical significance of research	
	K. Rationalized the scholarly significance of the research problem.	Scholarly significance of research not discussed	Scholarly significance discussed	Critiqued scholarly significance of research	
5. Rhetoric	L. Was written with a coherent, clear structure that supported the review.	Poorly conceptualized, haphazard	Some coherent structure	Well developed, coherent	

Table 4 Literature Scoring Rubric (Boote and Beile, 2005, p. 8)

2.3 Chapter Overview

This chapter will explore the literature surrounding school governance, with the aim of providing a holistic overview of current literature. The criteria for inclusion included relevance to the research questions, publication date, and scope and coverage. Criteria for exclusion included unpublished work, irrelevance to the research question, poor methodological quality, outdated or inaccessible literature, bias or conflicts of interest, and lack of peer review. A more in-depth exploration of the criteria for inclusion/exclusion can be seen in Table 2. The literature review begins by exploring the origins of school governance, attempting to understand who Governors are, the role they play in education, and how the role of school Governor has evolved. Following on from examining how school governance has been professionalised, the literature review will examine the impact on aspects of governance such as school improvement, monitoring governing body performance and behaviour, as well as individual governors. It will also attempt to clarify what training is available and the impact it may have on areas of governance such as power, boundaries, clarity of the role, Covid-19, mentoring, challenge, and support.

2.3.1 A Brief History Of Governance

Governance has existed in one form or another for many years (Taylor, 1977; Gann, 1998; Young, 2014), with Gann (1998) stating that it began with the very first trustees who established schools in the 6th Century and Sallis (1993) reflecting on early governance in the 14th Century at Winchester College. Boards of trustees established church schools, with those deemed “‘respectable’” (Gann, 1998, p. 8) taking on the role of trustee. The position of Trustee was much more operational than is dictated in modern governance, with responsibility for buildings,

appointments, performance-related pay, financial probity, and other daily duties (Dunford, 1976; Gann, 1998; Baxter, 2017). Today, Governors are held to account by Ofsted, with inspectors either meeting or having telephone conversations with Governors, particularly Chairs of governing bodies, during Ofsted inspections. However, during the early life of 19th-century governance, inspectors had a lot less power and were actively instructed to avoid interfering "with the instruction, management or discipline of the school" (Gann, 1998, p. 9). Whilst inspectors' hands were figuratively tied in how much they could become involved, they did have the ability to award grants, with the option to punish punitively by refusing to do so. Gann (1998) suggests that as a result, there was an element of "performing the good school" (Perryman, 2009, p. 618) with inaccurate reports being submitted by the school managers (precursors to today's governors).

The 1870 Education Act, along with the development of school districts and school boards, led to a promising democratic system. It was at this point that board members were required to be voted in for terms of three years. The active nature of the role of school manager was still evident after the 1870 Act, with heavy involvement in areas such as raising funds and supervision of teachers (Gann, 1998; Gear, 1999), unlike modern governance which attempts to separate the strategic from the operational (Allcroft, 2016). Additionally, the boards had the right to appoint school managers, under section 15 of the 1870 Act. Although, as pointed out by Gann (1998), these were not representative of society. Whilst there was an improvement within the democracy of governance, there was still a distinct lack of democratic representation. In 1896, there were approximately 500 – 600 board members, around 3% were working men. By 1903, out of the 18,000 members they now had, only 370 were women – approximately 2%. This disparity in representation

was noted, even in the 19th Century, by Rev. Norris, an inspector with Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) (Gann, 1998).

As governance entered the 20th Century, the 1902 Education Act created a system based on a hierarchical structure between central government, the Local Education Authority (LEA), and schools. The school managers were the 'cushion' between the LEA and schools. Following the 1918 Fisher Education Act, teachers were forbidden from taking on the role of school managers at their own schools, which was subsequently reinforced by the 1944 Butler Act. At this point in time, Governors were either appointed by the LEA or co-opted and their roles were to provide "general direction of the conduct and curriculum of the school" (Gann, 1998, p. 15). Additionally, governance suffered from the lack of a clearly defined role and as such, produced governing bodies that were not effective and subsequently cultivated a combative relationship (Gann, 1998).

Between the 1944 Butler Act and the 1970s, governance continued to develop; groups campaigned for stronger, more representative governance. Campaign for the Advancement of the State Education (CASE), the National Association of Governors and Managers (NAGM) – who subsequently produced the first handbook – and the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) were all groups that aimed to increase representation. The British Educational Administration Society's (BEAS – the forerunner to British Educational Leadership, Management Administration Society - BELMAS) annual conference of 1975 showed increased pressure for representation, specifically parents, on governing boards (Glatter, 2012). The first keynote speaker, J. R. Boynton claimed that "A strong and vigorous local government is a good cornerstone for any truly democratic system" (Hughes and Richards, 1975, p. 6).

The Taylor Committee, attendees at the BEAS conference (Hughes and Richards, 1975; Taylor, 1977; Glatter, 2012), took this representational hope further in 1977, recommending that a governing body should consist of an LEA representative as well as staff, parents, and members of the local community - forming a stakeholder model of governance. Their responsibilities included construction of the curriculum, budgets, and both staff and Headteacher appointments. After the 1980 Education Act and the 1986 Education Act (No. 2), it was a requirement that parents and local representatives have a presence on the governing body, with specifications on the amount of each type of Governor that should sit on the board (Balarin et al., 2008; Wilkins, 2016). Moreover, the 1986 Education Act (No. 2) not only specified the term of office – four years – but also stressed the requirements that the LEA should provide information and training to governors. Additionally, following the 1980 Education Act, the more widely known term ‘governor’ replaced the term ‘manager’ (Wilkins, 2016). Although the Department of Education and Science (DES) acknowledged the recommendations on governing body structure, little progress was made in the development of their responsibilities.

Between the mid-1940s and mid-1970s, schools were regulated by the LEAs, with governing bodies made up of “mainly local politicians or church representatives” (Balarin et al., 2008, p. 10). After the 1986 Education Act, distribution of power began to shift with the LEA having to report to the governing body over things like school expenditure. It was after the 1988 Education Reform Act and the installation of the Local Management of Schools (LMS) that the largest shift in power distribution occurred, with the governing body taking on major responsibilities (Balarin et al., 2008; Woods and Simkins, 2014; Wilkins, 2016). In 1998, the School Standards and Framework Act attempted to continue to clarify the roles and responsibilities of

Governors by emphasising their responsibility to “promote ‘high standards of educational achievement’…and facilitate open dialogue with parents” (Wilkins, 2016, p. 43).

In comparison to the role of the 19th Century governor, 21st-century governance, and ultimately the role of the governor, has evolved immensely. They are no longer fundraisers, a role now associated with Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), or judges of teachers’ performances, something that is now ‘frowned upon’ and avoided (Allcroft, 2016). Instead, modern Governors are expected to monitor the schools’ strategic direction, vision, and ethos; ensure accountability for educational and staff performance; and ensure financial probity (Allcroft, 2016).

In addition to the individual role changes and the increased responsibility, the type of governance has also developed. Following the introduction of city academies, considered by the government to be a way of raising standards and reducing underachievement, the LEA began to lose some of its powers and responsibilities (Purcell, 2011; Brundrett, 2012; Gorard, 2012; Wrigley, 2012; Baxter, 2020). This devolution was intended to “…bring a distinctive approach to school management and governance and offer a radical option to raise standards in areas of disadvantage.” (DfES, 2001, p. 44). With the development of the Academies Programme, governance models developed, resulting in four variants of academy governance; single converter academies; multi-academy trusts (MAT); umbrella trusts, and collaborative partnerships. In addition to these new forms of governance, there has been an increase in the responsibility placed upon Governors, for example overseeing admissions.

2.3.2 Professionalisation

The substantial change in the roles and responsibilities of Governors over the centuries has led to the evolution of governance, with politicians such as Michael Gove praising a move away from “archaic amateurism of old-fashioned committee protocols…to be more professional” as governing bodies (Gove, 2012, p. np). As responsibility increased, governance began to move away from the stakeholder model, with the government arguing the need for Governor selection to be based on “skill, not because they represent some political constituency” (Gove, 2012, p. np) – resulting in the emergence of a skill-based model of governance (Connolly, Farrell and James, 2017).

The emphasis placed on supporting governing bodies to recruit ‘skilled people’, clearly demonstrates the government’s preference for a skills-based governing body, with the concept supported by statements promising to “continue to help governing boards to recruit skilled people, and place stronger expectations on them to ensure their members undertake appropriate induction and training” (DfE, 2016, p. 15). The Government, through the then Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, pushed the ideology of a ‘skills-based’ governing body further by attempting to remove parental representation. The removal of parents within the governing body structure was disliked by many and resulted in Justine Greening, Morgan’s successor, reversing the decision. McGrath (2015) however, highlights the importance of having a reflective governing body, noting Barbara Hunter’s (Communications director of the National Association of Boards of Education) response in an interview, stressing the importance of ensuring representation: “The school board absolutely needs to represent its community, whether…elected or…appointed…that means a lot of listening and engaging communities about what they want from schools” (McGrath,

2015, p. 54). However, Baxter (2020) argues that despite reversing Morgan's decision to remove parents from governing boards, parental representation/participation is still often diminished in light of recruiting board members with professional skills.

Whilst diverse representation is considered important, it is essential to note that there has been an increase in what is expected of Governors and as such, James et al. (2014) highlight the importance of ensuring a range of skills are represented to meet the expectations of the role. They argue that as there is a reliance on skills notably seen within managerial and professional roles, an effective governing body should be comprised from within these particular demographics. Additionally, they explore the benefits of utilising retirees who have the experience and expertise but who do not face the same time constraints as those currently within a working role. A later paper by Roden and Allan (2020, p. 134), although specific to one school, seemingly confirms the benefits of a skilled governing body, whilst also noting the difficulties they faced in terms of time. Roden, a Headteacher, reflected on the "fantastic" ability of the Governors but also noted that some "found the time needed extremely difficult to commit to". This suggests that James et al.'s (2014) consideration of professional retirees might be beneficial, combining the knowledge and skill with the time to fully commit to the role. However, for Roden, a possible solution would be to have a larger governing body, which would enable responsibilities to be shared more effectively.

James et al. (2014, p. 36) further note that there are benefits for both governance and the individual Governors, particularly "'young professionals' for both the contribution they can make and the development benefits they will gain". The increased level of expectations placed on governing bodies and the claims that

collaboration between the professional workforce and governing bodies is mutually beneficial demonstrates a clear move away from stakeholder representation and an alignment with the Government's stance on skills-based governing bodies.

Whilst it has been noted that skills and collaboration with a professional workforce are considered essential to modern governance, the role those "looking after the home or the family" could play in governance, has not been as extensively explored by James and Goodall (2014, p. 28). Although there is discussion on the importance of making governance 'family-friendly', there is little discussion on how to attract more Governors from within the home. This is in contrast to the emphasis placed on the importance of making governing bodies 'work-friendly' by highlighting the positives of a collaboration between governing bodies and professional workforces. They do note that respondents within their study, highlight the preference for a Governor who is able to take a comprehensive approach to their governing role and that whilst a commitment to the school is essential, it should be an overarching commitment to all schools, students, and education overall. It could be argued that being a parent from within the local school community and approaching governance with holistic oversight are not mutually exclusive, particularly if training has been provided. Additionally, would a parent Governor from within the school community demonstrate a greater commitment because they have a reason to be 'invested' in the school? Hill and Lake (2008) argue the opposite, noting that parent Governors could be problematic due to having a short-term focus surrounding their child's attendance, with little consideration given to the longer-term governance of the school, or the potential instability created through board members leaving upon their child's graduation.

Further to the potential disadvantages of parent Governors raised by Hill and Lake, Bauch and Goldring (1998) note that whilst there was an attempt to develop a feeling of ‘parents as partners’ within governance, the notion of being seen to be ‘overstepping’ by questioning professionals impacted the implementation of this ethos. Bauch and Goldring (1998) suggest that becoming more knowledgeable about schools and how they operate, would lead to a more effective interaction between parents and education professionals. With this in mind, it would suggest that further training would enable parents to become confident Governor partners with their schools.

With the introduction of academies, free schools, and the subsequently increased autonomy, the level of accountability and scrutiny from Ofsted, noted by Baxter (2020, p. 40) as being an inspectorate with “one of the most punitive and high-stakes models in the world”, has amplified (Wilkins, 2015). This paved the way for a move towards a model of governance with greater professionalism and further away from governance within the “safe, comfortable, and informal environment of a ‘bums on seats’ culture” (Wilkins, 2015, p. 183) that existed previously. Wilkins (2015) posits that the deeper scrutiny of governing bodies is a sign of insecurity from the Department of Education (DfE), following the increased autonomy given to schools. This has led to an expectation that Governors and governing bodies, which are comprised of volunteers, should hold themselves to a higher, more professional standard than previously known. In an attempt to achieve this and meet the serious legal responsibilities they have been afforded, governing bodies are encouraged to attract Governors considered to be of a ‘high standard’, with those who possess pre-existing skills and knowledge developed through professional development considered to be the pinnacle (James et al., 2014; Gann, 2015; Wilkins, 2015).

However, Baxter (2017) contends that the definition of what is ‘good’ governance, is contested. It has already been noted that both the Government and Ofsted increasingly see it as developing a level of professionalism within the governing body, through the recruitment and retention of Governors from a professional work environment (James et al., 2014; Wilkins, 2015). However, the question arises of whether this definition is acknowledged by those who engage with governance every day, such as Headteachers. Baxter’s (2017, p. 35) study suggests that Headteachers see Governors as “well-meaning but ineffectual volunteers”, appearing to be in stark contrast to the perception encouraged by the Government.

With expectations of the role changing, with greater levels of accountability placed on governing bodies (Baxter, 2020), it was suggested by Sir Michael Wilshaw (former head of Ofsted) that there should be a re-evaluation of the role of governor. Furthermore, he even suggested that there should be a move away from Governors as unpaid volunteers, arguing that a move towards paid governance would be prudent, with schools paying “as much as the school budget could afford” (House of Commons, 2014, p. 27). Finch et al. (2016) also recommended that the Department for Education should consider amending the Governors Handbook to make provision for maintained schools and academies to pay their governors. Forrest, Hill and James (2023) note that this is a reality for Governors in colleges in Northern Ireland, with board chairs earning up to £20,000 per annum. They share examples of general considerations around why a move to paid governance might be beneficial, citing the depth of the roles and responsibilities in modern governance, including the time commitment and expertise involved. Additionally, they note that some felt payment would assist with both recruitment and retention and create a more professional approach. In addition to the paid college governance seen within Northern Ireland,

there are also examples of Further Education (FE) governance within England, in which remuneration or compensation is used (Fino, 2019). Guidance for this is provided by the Association of Colleges (AoC) (2022). In the guidance, it explains that whilst it is not normally allowed to pay trustees of a charity, upon application to the commission, it may be permitted in exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, the AoC encourages FE colleges who are considering this, to reflect on 8 influencing factors prior to authorising payment (Table 5).

Factors to consider in seeking authority to pay governors for undertaking governorship duties
"What additional skills or diversity of membership will be attracted to the governing body through payment?
What steps have been taken to recruit Governors with the required skills or diversity without offering payment?
Are the functions to be carried out genuinely those of a governor, as distinct from an employee or a consultant?
Is there a clear advantage to paying a Governor as opposed to spreading duties among Governors or increasing the number of unpaid governors?
What amount of payment is being considered? Is this amount reasonable and affordable?
What risks have been identified and how will these be managed?
How will the conflict of interests be managed?
How will performance be managed, and if applicable, payment be brought to an end"

Table 5 8 Influencing Factors (Association of Colleges, 2022, pp. 4–5)

Fino (2019) noted that, at the time of the article, there were three FE college groups that were paying some of their governors: NCG, LTE Group, and the East Kent Colleges Group. The amounts varied, but examples were given: LTE – 7 Governors paid £11,833 and 3 co-opted Governors paid £3,000; NCG – 1 Governor paid £15,000; and East Kent Colleges Group – 1 Governor paid £20,000. Fino (2019), as later seen in Forrest, Hill and James (2023), found that for most, paying Governors was a natural extension of the increased responsibilities and the impact this has in terms of the time commitment required within the role. Additionally, Fino's article also highlights the belief of some, that offering paid governance roles would support both recruitment and retention. However, Fino (2019) also addressed the concerns of

Louise Thompson, Head of Policy at the ICSA governance institute, in relation to paying governors. Aside from crossing boundaries in terms of the principles of volunteerism, Fino notes Thompson's concerns over the increased level of legal accountability that Governors may face, arguing that it is possible that courts may hold a paid governor to a higher standard. Further to the concerns outlined by Louise Thompson (Fino, 2019), Forrest and Hill (2017) also consider the potential for governing body reductions under the guise of saving on costs, although they openly acknowledge that they did not find examples of this during their study.

In addition to creating a paid governance role in response to increased levels of responsibility and time commitment, there were some thoughts around paid governance leading to an improvement in the calibre of governance candidates and a more professional level of governance (Forrest and Hill, 2017; Forrest, Hill and James, 2023).

Wilshaw states that a professional governing body should contain an ex-HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector), ex-Local Authority Advisors, or ex-Headteachers (House of Commons, 2014), which would seem to be supported by Wilkins (2015), who notes that the strength of a governing body lies in the presence of 'skilled' governors. The increased focus on the necessity of 'skilled' professionals in a governing body, is further demonstrated by Ofsted who has claimed that without the necessary skills, governing bodies struggled with performance information (OFSTED, 2016).

Gann (2015) questions the validity of focusing on a 'professional' governing body as the epitome of good governance, evidencing this concern with the example of Swindon Academy. This academy had a governing body that consisted of several high-level 'professionals': Sir Anthony Greener, the former chair of the Qualifications

and Curriculum Authority; Mary Curnock Cook, Chief Executive of UCAS; Colin Fraser, the retired Deputy Head of Marlborough College; Nic Allott, Marlborough's Director of Science; and Mike Godfrey, Chief Engineer at Honda. With a governing body so heavily supported by professionals, Gann notes that Swindon Academy still received a letter of warning from Ofsted as well as a grade of 'Requires Improvement' (Dunn, 2013; Gann, 2015).

Additionally, the question arises over whether the use of 'professional' Governors is suitable in terms of ensuring that the roles of strategic and operational remain separate and unconfused (Balarin et al., 2008). Several authors have noted that the guidance on strategic and operational is unclear and that there is some evidence of difficulty in distinguishing between the strategic (governance) and operational (SLT) aspects of governance (Hill and Lake, 2008; Balarin et al., 2008; Baxter, 2017). Although the government has noted that the role of the Governor is a strategic one, Gann (2015) further notes that Ofsted has praised what many would consider to be an operational aspect of school life – financial management - with Ofsted saying, "The local governing body manage the academy's finances effectively" (Gann, 2015, p. 346; Ofsted, 2015, p. 4). Given the emphasis on the importance of recognising the strategic/operational split, it does raise the question of whether it is the responsibility of the governing body to manage the finances or rather to ensure that the finances are managed effectively by providing financial probity. The lack of clarity in how the strategic/operational divide is defined or explained is further evidenced within the Government's Governance Handbook (DfE, 2020a). In section 3.1.3, it is specified that "Boards should play a strategic role and avoid routine involvement in operational matters" and yet section 3.1.4 contradicts this information, stating "However, since the board is responsible in law for the school(s), it may need to intervene in

operational matters if a circumstance arises where… the school may be in breach of a duty" (DfE, 2020, p. 23). There is little to guide governing bodies on what such a circumstance may look like. This information is not only available within the Governance Handbook but has also been disseminated, verbatim and again without clarification of what these circumstances may be, within Governor induction training (SMBC, 2016).

2.3.3 School Improvement

School improvement has long been at the forefront of both political thinking and educational research, with some noting that "The past 20 years have witnessed a remarkably consistent, worldwide effort by educational policymakers to reform schools by holding them more publicly accountable for improving student performance" (Earley and Weindling, 2004; Day, Sammons and Gorgen, 2020, p. 7). Part of the focus of research on school improvement explored the role of partnerships within education, with Dhillon (2006) noting the emphasis placed by Labour, after their 1997 election, on the importance of partnerships in raising educational standards. Although short-lived, existing between 1998 – 2001 (Reid and Brain, 2003), Dhillon (2006) highlights the Education Action Zones (EAZs) as an example of an initiative brought in by Labour to create an opportunity for partnership development. The aim was to attract clusters of schools and LAs, in addition to other stakeholders, such as Governors (National Audit Office, 2001). Although there appeared to be some issues surrounding collaborative Labour initiatives, such as the EAZs (Reid and Brain, 2003), Dhillon (2006, p. 588) noted that the Midlands Urban Partnership (MUP) found them to be "'a breath of fresh air'", with collaboration replacing the marketized concept of competition. However, despite the underlying intention of "modernising education" (Dhillon, 2006, p. 584) and improving

educational standards through collaboration, Reid and Brain (2003, p. 211) argued that it failed because it was both “conceptually faulty” and “unduly complex”. Furthermore, they argue that despite being brought in as a “new form of governance” (Reid and Brain, 2003, p. 207), it actually acted to “further fragment the governance of schools” (Reid and Brain, 2003, p. 208), which could be concerning given the link between ‘good’ governance and school improvement (Earley and Weindling, 2004).

Governance as a tool for school improvement has been considered by some to have been neglected within research (Earley and Weindling, 2004; Ranson, 2004). However, its role has gradually been acknowledged within educational research and government guidance, with Earley and Weindling (2004) noting that Ofsted initially acknowledged the role of school Governors in their 1994 report, Improving Schools. In fact, Ofsted has suggested that there is a strong link between governing bodies judged to be ‘good’ and higher levels of attainment (Scanlon, Earley and Evans, 1999; Earley, 2003; Ranson et al., 2005a). This is supported by Ranson et al. (2005a, p. 307), who argue that “Better governance sharpens the practice of management, which in turn generates improved standards of attainment”. Acting in the capacity of ‘Critical Friend’, challenging management with the intention of ensuring standards are held high, is demonstrative of Government expectations that governing bodies will “…conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement” (School Standards and Framework Act, 1998, p. 34). McAleavy and Riggall (2016) note that whilst governance is one of eight factors in school improvement, it comes with a caveat that school leaders should evaluate governance support within the school, ensuring that Governor training is taking place (Ofsted, 2012; McAleavy and Riggall, 2016). However, exploring governance under the lens of a ‘skills-based’ model, it can be noted that there is a greater emphasis

today on Governors bringing a specific skill set to the governing body. Hill and Lake (2008) align with this, reporting that Headteachers found it difficult to work with Governors who are inexperienced, leading them to suggest that the difficulties experienced by the Headteachers, could be reduced if Governors were comprised of professional people with specific skills. They further argue that having these skills would enable Governors to challenge effectively, thus becoming more than a “well-meaning but ineffectual volunteer” (Baxter, 2017, p. 35). Wilkins (2015, p. 184) suggests that there was an expectation that Governors with existing skillsets could be “summoned as ‘experts’”, to provide the rigorous monitoring of data. However, whilst noting that Governors are also subject to performance management and judgement from both Ofsted and SLT, Wilkins (2015, p. 184) also explains that there is an expectation that “Governors are expected to be educated and properly guided on how to effectively challenge and support schools.” This potentially highlights the need to combine existing, external skills with more specific educational training, focusing on areas that could impact school improvement, such as curriculum and teaching methods (Earley and Weindling, 2004).

2.3.4 Monitoring Governing Body Performance And Behaviour

With the growth of autonomy and increasing levels of accountability (Glatter, 2012; Male, 2021), governing bodies and by extension Governors, have faced increasing levels of pressure in relation to their role in monitoring schools. Part of this pressure resulted from the threat of Ofsted sanctions if certain areas were not monitored effectively. These sanctions took the form of Ofsted grades – ‘Outstanding’, ‘Good’, ‘Requires Improvement’, or ‘Inadequate’, with the awarding of a category considered emotionally and professionally “high-stakes” (Dhillon, Howard, and Holt, 2020, p. 61). It should be noted, however, that Ofsted has more recently decided to move away

from these inspection grades. The serious nature of the impact of these grades on leaders, as raised by Dhillon, Howard, and Holt (2020), was exemplified in the suicide of Ruth Perry in 2023. The coroner's report, whilst acknowledging that this was a suicide, publicly recorded the role that Ofsted played in Ruth Perry's death (Connor, 2023, para 3):

> *"Suicide, contributed to by an Ofsted inspection held in November 2022"*

Although this is not the first death attributed to Ofsted inspections (BBC, 2007; Waters and Palmer, 2023), it is the first to contribute to the removal of subjective word grades.

As can be seen in the following excerpts from Ofsted reports, Governors were often held equally (Figure 1), if not at times primarily (Figure 2), responsible for certain perceived failures that ultimately led to poor Ofsted ratings.

> Leaders and governors do not have a clear understanding of the school's weaknesses, including in the early years. They do not take sufficient action to ensure that pupils get a good quality of education and that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND receive the support they should. They do not ensure that safeguarding records are as thorough as they should be. Leaders should take immediate action to identify and address weaknesses, including carefully evaluating the use and impact of funding received for different groups of pupils, to achieve the best outcomes for all.

Figure 1 Excerpt from a 2023 Ofsted report on a school based in the West Midland (Inadequate) (Ofsted, 2023a)

During recent years, governors have not supported leaders well enough. This means that school leaders have not been able to move the school forward as quickly as it could have. Despite this, leaders have successfully raised the expectations of what pupils can achieve. They are beginning to put together an ambitious curriculum. However, this is at an early stage, and there is more work needed to ensure that staff are dear about what pupils need to learn.

Figure 2 Excerpt from a 2023 Ofsted report on a school based in the West Midlands (Requires Improvement) (Ofsted, 2023b)

The theories of Freire (1970; 2008), as briefly mentioned in chapter one, with a more in-depth exploration of his theories in chapter 3.4.3, provide a useful account of the oppressed/oppressor relationship within education and the real-world impacts these relationships may have. Whilst originally borne from Freire's own experiences of oppression and his belief that education could lead to the oppressed becoming active participants in their own liberation, within this study it has been utilised to explore oppressed/oppressor relationships within educational leadership.

As noted by Freire (2008), those who have real fears in terms of job loss (e.g. possible removal of the governing body) or lack of promotion/demotion (e.g. Ofsted ratings), try to set limits to this fear by being seen to adopt, or at least imitate, the voice of the oppressor and adhere to their perceived expectations. Reflecting on this fear, it could be argued that the inspection framework is being used as a tool of oppression that could have a very real impact on the behaviour of governors. For example, the wording of the excerpts above could suggest that Governors should take an active role in school life, and by not doing so it could affect how the school is seen by those judging them. This could lead to situations as seen in the following Ofsted excerpt (Figure 3), particularly if Governors do not fully understand the remit of their roles.

For a prolonged period of time, governors have not fully understood and carried out their roles and responsibilities effectively. This has led to governors being too focused on day-to-day activities and not maintaining a strategic oversight of the school. Governors should ensure that they develop a detailed understanding of their strategic duties and ensure that they support the leaders to move the school forward, while ensuring that they consider all leaders' well-being and workload.

Figure 3 Excerpt from a 2023 Ofsted report on a school based in the West Midlands (Requires Improvement)(Ofsted, 2023b)

In addition to the potential for operational and strategic boundary violations, the fear Governors feel in terms of the inspection framework and real-world impact could lead to a form of role reversal, with Governors seemingly internalising the ideology of the oppressive system and becoming oppressors themselves. Examining this through the theoretical lens of Freire (1970) and his arguments around the inability of the oppressed to initiate violence, he argues that an act of "violence" cannot be instigated by the oppressed as they are simply reacting to the oppression they have faced. Transposing this, placing it within the reality that Governors themselves can act as an agent of an oppressive system, it could be argued that the oppressed becoming the oppressors is not in and of itself a violent act initiated by the oppressed, but rather a response to the initial subjugation by the oppressors.

It is not solely the Governors who feel the pressure of increased accountability. SLT also feels the fear of job loss and potential disruption to promotion opportunities. Again, this fear can lead to SLT not only adopting the voice of the oppressor by adhering to what they believe the oppressors want to see but potentially crossing from the oppressed to a version of the oppressor by monitoring those who are supposed to monitor and oversee the school and those who lead it. If Governors (the oppressed) begin to distrust their own knowledge in fear of losing the desired 'Good'

or ‘Outstanding’, it could lead them to defer aspects of their responsibilities. This is something that has been noted by both Earley (2000) and Mestry (2006), who reported on Governors’ opinions in terms of which aspects of governance oversight (finance and curriculum) should be monitored by paid professionals. The willingness to defer to a paid education professional could be exacerbated by SLT who have concerns about the ability of the governing body to perform their duties adequately. This was something identified by Heystek (2004) in their study on school governance in South Africa. They highlight the case of a Headteacher who admitted performing roles traditionally assigned to Governors because he felt that they were not capable of doing it themselves.

Headteachers overseeing the overseers was something actively encouraged by Ofsted (2012, p. 4) at one point, with Ofsted reflecting positively on Headteachers who are direct in their mission to improve leadership within their school:

> *“These heads refuse to be distracted from their core purpose of school improvement and take decisive steps to ensure that their vision is not compromised by weak teaching or poor leadership…these headteachers take a more didactic approach while they first build the leadership capacity…within their school, including governors”.*

Ofsted (2012, p. 16), in their guide on how to achieve ‘Good’, appear to encourage Headteachers monitoring Governor effectiveness.

> *“As one headteacher reported, ‘In the early stages I had to model the questions that the Governors could ask. Following my headteacher’s report I would say, “Now you might want to question me about this.” I would then give them questions that they should ask.”*

Although not explicitly stated, it is clear that they see Headteachers tackling ineffective governing bodies that are considered ‘weak’ as a positive approach. As seen in the above excerpt, they offer a Headteacher’s experience of physically

guiding their Governors through the process of questioning, as an example of good practice. The belief that Governors needed support in generating monitoring questions was further highlighted by Young (2016), who explored the views of witnesses, shared in the 2013 Education Select Committee Inquiry, noting that the inquiry openly declared that some felt it was ‘dangerous’ to allow Governors to develop their own questions independently. However, it could be argued that the use of SLT to enforce competency expectations in how challenge should occur is potentially reducing Governor autonomy and placing them in a position of dependency (Freire, 1970; Kress, 2011; Darder, 2018). It also raises the question of whether the development of a governor’s critical consciousness, or conscientização as referred to by Freire (1970), is restricted by the expectation that they should comply with what they are being told to ask by the people that are part of the structure that they oversee. Furthermore, it challenges the role that Governors play in the political and democratic process of school oversight if their autonomy is curtailed and the dialogue is either artificial or predominantly one-sided, with Governors led to believe they are taking an active role in the conversation when in reality they are led by paid professionals. Consideration should be given to whether this is simply another way for Governors to be kept in a position of dependency and limit critical thinking through the implementation of prescribed criticality (Young, 2016). Exploring this notion from the perspective of a Governor, Chaise (2014, p. 2) questioned whether Governors were “governing to the test…”, summarily asking, “Who in their right mind would subject themselves to such a regime?”

In addition to the monitoring that Governors experience from both the government and SLT, Governors also monitor themselves through governors’ skills audits (DfE, 2017a; 2017b). However, this has less to do with inspection expectations and more

to do with establishing a governing body that has a balance of skills in order to monitor effectively. For some LAs, there are expectations that those applying for a role should complete the audit and submit it at the same time as their application (Birmingham City Council, 2024). This is done with the intention of helping governing bodies to develop holistically in terms of bringing the right skills to the table.

In addition to being monitored internally by SLT, as well as externally by Ofsted in terms of how they perform their duties, Governor behaviour is also something that is monitored and addressed when needed (DfE, 2017b; 2020a). Provisions have been made within the statutory guidance for governing bodies to allow Governors of all types to be either suspended or removed should the need arise (DfE, 2017b; 2020a). However, the Department for Education is explicit in explaining the seriousness of the disqualification, particularly when implementing something as consequential as a 5-year disqualification. They stress the importance of ensuring that those appointed as a Governor have a solid understanding of expectations. They couple this with advising on the importance of training and 'good' chairing in helping to prevent situations that result in disqualification. In an attempt to further support governing bodies, they also provided a list of specific situations that may result in the disqualification of a Governor (Table 6). However, removal of a Governor is expected to only take place in "exceptional circumstances" (DfE, 2017b, p. 23). If a governing body gets to the point of disqualifying a governor, there is a clear process that they are expected to follow, which includes offering those disqualified the right to appeal.

Disqualified from holding or continuing to hold office if:
Failure to attend meetings for 6 consecutive months (not applicable to HTs or Foundation governors)
Bankruptcy
Disqualification order
Misconduct or mismanagement in the administration of a charity
Removed from office as a Governor within the last 5 years
Listed as unsuitable to work with children and young people or barred from working with children

Previously served a prison sentence
Convicted/Fined for causing a nuisance/disturbance on school/educational premises
Refusal to obtain a DBS
5-Year Disqualification if:
Repeated grounds for suspension
Serious misconduct
Repeated and serious incompetence
Conduct undermining 'British values', rule of law, and/or shows bias
Actions that detract from core strategic functions/interferes with efficiency

Table 6 List of reasons for disqualification (DfE, 2017b)

2.3.5 Monitoring Schools

The balance of power has not remained static in school governance, with power passing between the government and governing bodies on a regular basis. Initially, governing bodies held a substantial amount of power but were subjected to very little challenge (Gann, 1998). In 1840, for example, the guidance issued to school inspectors explicitly dictated that they should not interfere in the running of the schools they were inspecting. However, following the 1988 Education Act, power began to settle at a more local, school management level. More recently, with the introduction of academisation, both power and responsibility for some have moved away from the government and individual schools, now resting with academy trusts.

There have been waves of increasing pressure from the government for all schools to move towards academy status. One wave was seen in 2015, when the Conservative government pushed for all schools to become academies by 2022 (DfE, 2016). The government eventually changed their position on enforced governance, although the Conservative government appeared to be attempting to resurrect it (Williams, 2021).

With the fluctuations in levels of power, responsibility for monitoring has varied. In modern governance, the fractured nature of the educational landscape has created different levels of monitoring, with responsibility lying with governing bodies in

maintained schools and with the Board of Trustees in academies (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2014). However, Wilkins (2015, p. 187) notes that moving power to “institutions and agents” does not necessarily improve monitoring. Both governing bodies and Trusts have responsibility for the three core functions of governance: “1. ensuring there is clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction; 2. holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils and the performance management of staff; 3. overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent” (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2014; NGA, 2021, p. 1). Earley (2000) observed in their research that most Governors found monitoring difficult to understand. Furthermore, they noted that some Governors not only doubted their ability to monitor effectively due to their skill level but also questioned whether it was in their remit to do so, which would contradict the expectations of the three core functions of governance.

One of the three core functions is focused on financial oversight, with balancing the budget one of the most important considerations for governing bodies (Garrington, Henson and Ebbs, 2020). Although Earley (2000) suggests that most feel happy adopting a monitoring role in terms of their school’s finances, Mestry (2006) suggests some Governors feel more comfortable allowing SLT to oversee the finances, with some specifically suggesting that it should fall under the remit of the paid professional rather than volunteers. However, De Bruin (2014) suggests that for financial monitoring to be effective, Governors should not only have generic financial training within an induction but should also have training in more specific, nuanced aspects of financial oversight. De Bruin’s (2014) finding seems to be even more pertinent in the light of the NGA’s 10th annual governance survey findings, in which

Garrington, Henson and Ebbs (2020) note that 13% of those surveyed (Governors and trustees), shared that they had either not received or were unaware of any advice on their school's financial state from the school's business professional. One possible reason for this could be because of an issue with communication within the board, particularly MATs, in which concerns were raised over communication being exclusionary because of a preference for communication between Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and higher management rather than Governors (Baxter, 2020).

The attempt to remove themselves from their monitoring responsibilities, as suggested by Mestry (2006), was not solely restricted to the financial side of their oversight. Earley (2000) previously noted that some Governors felt that aspects of their monitoring responsibilities, in this case curriculum and standards, belonged to the SLT, believing that they would bring any concerns to them if needed. However, it is important to note that Earley (2000) also highlights that some of the Governors understood that this reliance on SLT to provide information was potentially irresponsible, as the accuracy of the information presented to them is either unknown or unverified.

The reticence of some Governors to accept full monitoring oversight, preferring to pass it back to the paid professional, suggests they have not fully understood their responsibilities. Although specifically mentioned in terms of understanding the role of financial monitoring, additional training as suggested by De Bruin (2014) could prove beneficial in helping the Governors to better understand how to effectively monitor. Furthermore, it could also address the difficulties of accepting information at face value, mentioned by Earley (2000), as they would most likely have a better understanding of what they should be seeing.

2.3.6 Power

Baxter (2020) notes that governance within LA maintained schools is considerably different from MATs. Moreover, Baxter (2020, p. 46) acknowledges that MATs can even vary from one another, noting that LGBs within MATS can have substantially different levels of power allocated to them, with some unable to monitor their own budgets or control “significant financial expenditure”. This led Baxter to question the apparent contradiction of an LGB being unable to monitor their own financial situation whilst being expected to plan strategically and financially for their school. Arguably, this would, by extension, cause problems with an LGB’s ability to challenge effectively.

The need to have a governing body capable of challenging SLT whilst monitoring governmental expectations, as highlighted by James et al. (2013), Wilkins (2015), and Baxter (2017), aligns with Ranson’s (2011) belief that governing bodies are there to reinforce the quality of leadership and ensure accountability. However, Ranson (2011) also notes that there is a potential relationship between how the governing body is organised and the impact on the improvement of school performance and overall standards, identifying four main governing body ‘types’ (Table 7), the role Governors play within each ‘type’, and their effectiveness. Ranson (2011, p. 400) surmised that ‘Governance as a deliberative forum’ and ‘Consultative sounding board’ formed “weaker types of governance”, whilst the latter two, ‘Executive board’ and ‘Governance as a governing body’, were “stronger types”. Looking at the four different types of governing bodies, it is interesting to see the role and position of Governors based on the perceived position as stronger or weaker.

It is clear that within both ‘Governance as a deliberative forum’ and ‘Consultative sounding board’, the hierarchical structure positions the Headteacher as the primary

leader, with a reduced role for governors. In these two types, Governors are seen as little more than people who 'rubber stamp' decisions or acquiesce to the Headteacher because they are seen as the 'professional'. An example of 'Governance as a deliberative forum' can be seen in Heystek's (2004) analysis of school governance in South Africa, in which an interviewed principal shared that they did everything for the governing body because they felt it was expected. However, upon further investigation, the principal admitted that he did not believe the governing body capable of completing the work and, as such, wanted to keep the power within his control.

Governing Body Type	Definition	Role of Governors within the organisational structure
Governance as a deliberative forum	Professional Control	• Gathering of members (especially parents). • Led by the HT. • Parents may feel unable to question the authority of HT but may enquire about aspects of progress.
Consultative sounding board	Deference governance	• Sounding board for strategies and policies provided by HT as principal professional. • HT brings policies to the board for consent and authorisation. • Some discussion and questioning with occasional adaptation of policy. • Leadership stems from the HT.
Executive board	Power sharing	• Partnership between Governors and the school • Partnership between the HT and Chair with former leading primus inter pares. • Division of labour. • Board assumes overall responsibility (e.g. Finance, Staff, Building). • Board concerned with legal responsibility and accountability. • HT assumes overall responsibility for curriculum and pedagogy. • Board - strong role of scrutiny over performance and finance. • Board - comprised of professionals who bring social capital. • Likely to contain strong structure of sub-committees with delegation of responsibilities that will later be ratified by the full governing body.

Governance as a governing body	Most complete public authority	• Governing body exercises overarching jurisdiction and responsibility for the conduct and direction of the school. • HT - Strong, professional leader but acts as a member rather than a leader of the governing body. • Agenda and meeting - led by the chair. • HT language - communicates a different relationship (e.g. 'would the Governors like to consider' as opposed to 'I strongly propose the policy should be...'.

Table 7 Types of Governance - based on Ranson, (2011, pp. 400–401)

In comparison, both the ‘Executive board’ and ‘Governance as a governing body’ allow Governors a more substantial role. The ‘Executive board’ has a more distinct split, defined by Ranson (2011, p. 400) as “power sharing”. It is suggested that even though there appear to be distinct roles, Governors and Headteachers in this structure work in partnership, adopting a balanced approach to oversight, albeit with the tacit acknowledgement that the Headteacher comes to the role with a deeper understanding of the education system. The final governing body type, ‘Governance as a governing body’, suggests another collegial structure, similar in nature to the ‘Executive board’. However, whilst the Headteacher is still considered a “strong professional leader” (Ranson, 2011, p. 402), they are present as an equal member of the governing body, with the overarching responsibility for the school belonging to the governing body. Ranson notes that this is often reflected in the language used by the Headteacher, with a Headteacher within ‘Governance as a governing body’ utilising language that is more participative (see Table 7).

Comparing and contrasting the four different aspects, it is clear that the main difference between those deemed to be weaker and those considered to be stronger examples of governance structures is the level of power distribution. Both ‘Governance as a deliberative forum’ and ‘Consultative sounding board’ are led by the Headteacher, with Governors reduced to lesser roles that are based around

supporting the Headteacher. This would appear to be in direct opposition to the third and fourth structures, ‘Executive board’ and ‘Governance as a governing body’, both of which have a more equal distribution of power. Whilst there is an acknowledgement that the Headteacher should still be recognised as the education professional, governing bodies appear to take more ownership of governance responsibilities in structures with a more balanced power relationship, something also noted by Bagarette (2011). It is clear that ‘Executive board’ and ‘Governance as a governing body’ have a more equal approach, akin to a partnership, a concept that the post-1997 Labour government’s education policy promoted through the implementation of multiple initiatives that promoted collaboration (Dhillon, 2006).

Dhillon, Howard, and Holt (2020) note that through the evolution of the education system and the increasing reliance on partnerships, education leaders have had to develop ‘soft skills’ in order to facilitate effective communication and networking. Reflecting on this in light of Ranson’s (2011) ‘Executive board’ and ‘Governance as a governing body’, it is clear that effective communication plays an important role within partnerships. This is particularly evident in ‘Governance as a governing body’, in which Ranson (2011) acknowledges the importance of Headteacher language in establishing relationships. However, as Dhillon (2006, p. 589) notes, for a partnership to be successful, there must also be trust and shared values, which can take “time and effort” to develop. Examining the roles of Governors in both ‘Governance as a deliberative forum’ and ‘Consultative sounding board’, a lack of trust can be seen in both, which is seemingly confirmed by Heystek’s (2004) conversation with a principal who had doubts about the ability of the Governors to perform their role adequately. Given the impact that school inspections can have on the life of Headteachers, in terms of increased stress, potential loss of employment,

and in some extreme cases, the loss of life, it could be argued that some reticence from Headteachers to trust their governor partners is understandable. However, this creates a situation in which Governors and Headteachers exist in an inauthentic partnership, with one side tightly controlling the roles of the other. It is possible, as noted by Dhillon (2006), to develop a level of trust and create an equal partnership over time, but there would also need to be government-level reflection on the punitive nature of school inspections.

It has been suggested that within any team, power play can be expected and that it can often be difficult to accept having to share that power (Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren, 2009; Bagarette, 2011), particularly if there are trust issues as mentioned above. Much like Ranson's (2011), first two structures of governance, but particularly that of 'Governance as a deliberative forum', it has been noted that principals can often dominate within meetings and decision making, potentially as a result of their role within the school (Karlsson, 2002; Bagarette, 2011). This perceived dominance could be a result of a number of factors. Heystek (2004), for example, discusses the impact of perceived ineptitude of parent Governors on power dominance, noting that principals felt that parents who could not fulfil their responsibilities were hindering the oversight process. Heystek (2004) posits that layering the responsibility, by allowing principals to initially prepare policies, for example, might be beneficial. This approach would appear to fit within the second structure type suggested by Ranson (2011) in which Governors defer to the professional – 'Consultative sounding board' (Table 7). The intention of this would be to ensure the initial documents are prepared by the professional and then passed to the Governors for approval, thereby allowing the governing body to keep some semblance of power. However, this does raise the question of whether this is authentic, autonomous power or quasi-autonomous, akin

to that experienced by LEAs when power passed to governing bodies (Ranson, 2008). Hatcher (2005) also notes the perceived level of risk for Headteachers by sharing power, reflecting on the potential for mismatched commitments to governmental targets, with Headteachers feeling that they alone will suffer when it comes to being held accountable. Robinson, Ward and Timperley (2003) also highlight potential difficulties in having non-education based leadership, noting that Governors may have limited understanding of educational concepts, professional language, or practical procedures and processes. The lack of understanding, coupled with the threat of punitive action via Ofsted inspections, could also lead to Headteachers adopting 'Governance as a deliberative forum' and 'Consultative sounding board' types of governing bodies out of fear. However, there are difficulties that should be acknowledged. Although both 'Governance as a deliberative forum' and 'Consultative sounding board' are led predominantly by the Headteacher, both types allow Governors some form of limited power. However, allowing the power to predominantly lie with the Headteacher means that there is the potential for manipulation or control of information (Robinson, Ward and Timperley, 2003). This can lead to "inappropriate Trustee deference towards and dependence on professional staff" (Robinson, Ward and Timperley, 2003, p. 273).

2.3.7 Boundaries

Questions over the appropriateness of the boundary line between governance and overall school management have existed for some time, with consideration also given to the perception of 'blurred' lines from the perspective of Governors and Headteachers (Ranson et al., 2005b; Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren, 2009; Smith, 2010; Quesel, Näpfli and Buser, 2017). The most rudimentary understanding of boundaries within governance is based on the strategic and operational split (Wilkins, 2015; DfE,

2020; Gibson and Bailey, 2021). However, difficulties appear to arise when these boundaries are crossed by Governors, whether inadvertently as a result of misunderstanding their role; deliberately because they had a greater, perhaps unrealistic level of expectation of what their role would be; or as a result of having a personal agenda (Lewis and Naidoo, 2004; Hayden, 2006; Gibson and Bailey, 2021). Merrell (2000) suggests that any form of ambiguity in boundaries can lead to volunteers feeling anxious in terms of what is expected of them. Furthermore, they note that there appeared to be a particular ambiguity between the boundaries of those with 'lay' knowledge and those with 'professional' knowledge, suggesting that it was important for those with the 'professional' knowledge to have clear boundaries established on what the volunteers can do within their role, to alleviate the concern that volunteers may encroach on their professional space.

For some Headteachers, it was also important to establish boundaries directly, to ensure that they controlled the narrative and reduced the risk to their autonomy (Quesel, Näpfli and Buser, 2017). Gibson and Bailey (2021) shared examples of this direct approach from two of their interviews with principals, noting that one principal opted to train the Governors for their school to specifically allow them to 'mark out their territory'. Another principal took a more confrontational approach, almost admonishing the Governor for being too involved, supposedly 'helping' the Governor to understand their position, albeit in a somewhat inharmonious manner.

Overall, there appears to be a general consensus that maintaining boundaries is difficult (Merrell, 2000) and a major cause of animosity and difficulties within governing body/Headteacher relationships, with some speculating that forms of 'territorial conflict' are inevitable (Shearn et al., 1995; Hayden, 2006; Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren, 2009; Connolly and James, 2011; Gibson and Bailey, 2021). However,

Hayden (2006) speculates on how this conflict of power can be dealt with, acknowledging the benefits of managing conflict or avoiding it completely, to stop any further escalation. Merrell (2000) suggests that adopting formal, written definitions of volunteer roles could alleviate the anxiety felt by volunteers who are unsure of expectations, whilst simultaneously easing the concern felt by the professionals at the potential for volunteers to overstep any perceived boundaries. It could be argued that this approach has the potential to avoid any conflict, as suggested by Hayden (2006).

However, for some, crossing boundaries by utilising Governors with external, non-education based skills, particularly those from a business-based background, could be mutually beneficial, with Governors gaining professional development and governing bodies becoming more diverse and less hierarchical (Balarin et al., 2008; Dobson et al., 2020). Ultimately, this would create a governing body that is more of a partnership.

In terms of skills brought to the governing body, it has been suggested that there are three distinct types of skills – ‘Lay’ (external, non-education based knowledge), ‘Managerial’ (external, transferable skills), ‘Educational’ (broader educational knowledge) (Young, 2017; Dobson et al., 2020). There has been some suggestion that those who bring external skills from areas such as business, are often more valued than those with ‘Lay’ skills, with some noting that there can be some form of hybridisation between ‘Managerial’ and ‘Educational’ (Young, 2017; Dobson et al., 2020). Young (2017) reflects further on the concept of ‘Lay’ skills, associating it with the non-expert, stakeholder Governor (e.g. parents), positing that it is better defined as a lack of educational knowledge. It is this lack of educational knowledge that some feel brings an outsider perspective to the role, often seen as a strength, and

allows them to ask what some deem to be the ‘common sense’ questions (Waring, 1992; Creese and Earley, 1999; Young, 2017). However, as previously noted, there has been a move away from stakeholders with ‘Lay’ skills, with more emphasis placed upon external, transferable skills, as reflected in the aforementioned ‘Managerial’ skills, with government validation of this approach in 2015 (Balarin et al., 2008; Young, 2017). With the introduction of skill-based governance, the opportunities for crossing boundaries increased and although it is generally understood that Governors should not cross into the operational side of leading a school, the fact that governing bodies are recruiting Governors based on the skills they have suggests that there should be some reflection on how these skills are going to be utilised, particularly as it has been suggested that ‘Managerial’ and ‘Educational’ skills can become hybridised (Young, 2017; Dobson et al., 2020). Merrell (2000, p. 98) considers the impact of skill sharing, suggesting that potentially it can change the “traditional divisions of labour” and create a path of empowerment for those bringing the ‘Managerial’ skills. However, Merrell also reflects on the possible negatives of sharing skills, highlighting the potential for exploitation in a situation where responsibilities for certain aspects are passed to unpaid volunteers. Framing governance within Merrell’s dichotomic reflections on skill sharing, it is possible to see the benefits, such as increased diversity and a decrease in hierarchy, discussed by Balarin et al. (2008) and Dobson et al. (2020), as well as Governors having access to professional development.

The concern over exploitation notwithstanding, the very definition of volunteer is someone who voluntarily takes on a role without remuneration, but the question that would seemingly follow is, at what point does this become an exploitative relationship? On one hand, there have been suggestions that having Governors with

transferable skills is beneficial as it allows Governors to better understand the information presented to them, meaning they can better support and challenge their school and/or Headteacher (Creese and Earley, 1999; Young, 2017). Additionally, some highlight the mutually beneficial nature of crossing boundaries for professional development, with Headteachers/schools learning from people with different backgrounds and Governors learning from interacting with those who have an educational background (Creese and Earley, 1999; Dobson et al., 2020). However, does crossing boundaries in terms of utilising external skills lead to crossing boundaries in terms of responsibilities? There is a governmental expectation that Governors will bring appropriate skills to their governing body (DfE, 2017a; 2017b; 2020a). Within government guidance, there are clear expectations of the skills required as well as advice on how they should be used, with some of these bordering on professional-level work expectations (Table 8).

Skill	Source	Quote
Analysis of Data	(DfE, 2017a, p. 16)	"reviews and analyses a broad range of information and data in order to spot trends and patterns"
Finance	(DfE, 2017a, p. 17)	"uses their detailed financial knowledge and experience, which is appropriate for the scale of the organisation, to provide advice and guidance to the board"
Staffing	(DfE, 2017a, p. 19)	"monitors the outcome of pay decisions, including the extent to which different groups of teachers may progress at different rates and checks processes operate fairly"

Table 8 Examples of skills defined by the department for Education

The descriptions above are clearly designed to utilise the skills Governors bring from their own professional background. However, does this lead to a disparity between the overarching belief in an operational/strategic divide, with Governors becoming

unofficial, unpaid workers? Governors are, for example, often reminded that in monitoring Health and Safety, they should remain strategic, with some Governor support associations reminding Governors not to physically conduct a Health and Safety inspection or advise SLT on what they should do (The Key, 2022). However, the guidance issued by the Department of Education (2017b) referenced above, could be considered contradictory in light of the guidance issued for the role of Health and Safety link governors. For instance, the Finance guidance suggests that the individual with expertise in financial matters should provide both advice and guidance. In terms of HR and staffing, it is suggested that Governors are involved not only in monitoring the outcomes of pay decisions but also the rate of progress of teachers. Whilst it could be argued that these can fall under the remit of a governing body, it can also be argued that there is a fine line between the operational and strategic side of this monitoring. With skills becoming closely entwined and boundaries between strategic and operational so close, there can be ambiguity between the roles and where the boundary lines lay, which can cause anxiety for the volunteers and discomfort for Headteachers (Merrell, 2000; Hayden, 2006; Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren, 2009; Connolly and James, 2011; Quesel, Näpfli and Buser, 2017; Gibson and Bailey, 2021; Unda et al., 2023). Merrell (2000) suggests mutually agreed job descriptions for volunteers as a potential approach to reduce feelings of anxiety for volunteers and fear or concern potentially felt by Headteachers over perceived encroachment into their ‘territory’.

2.3.8 Clarity Of Role

The overall role of the governing body is to monitor strategically the three core functions of governance: clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction; educational performance; and financial performance (DfE, 2020b). There are suggestions that for

governance to be effective, Governors and Headteachers should be aware of their own roles and responsibilities within governance (Perry, 2011; Unda et al., 2023). This is not a new idea and is something that Sallis (1993) reflected on over thirty years ago, noting that mutual respect for skills within the governing body, professional acceptance of external perspectives, and clear role parameters for Governors are key.

Although the government has released a document detailing the roles within the governing bodies (DfE, 2020a, 2020b), it was somewhat general, covering types of governance, governing body structure, and general governance roles (e.g. Parent Governor, Co-opted Governor). The only roles specifically described were Chair and Clerk. In terms of link Governor roles, the government has not been overly specific in their descriptions, stating that “Boards may choose to, and in some cases should, appoint specific Governors to link to specific areas” (DfE, 2020b, p. 13). Given the flexible nature of how governor roles develop within governing bodies, it could be argued that it is difficult for the government to provide a more informed overview of these roles and their associated responsibilities. However, as previously highlighted, this can lead to anxiety for the Governors and fear for the Headteachers (Merrell, 2000; Hayden, 2006; Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren, 2009; Connolly and James, 2011; Quesel, Näpfli and Buser, 2017; Gibson and Bailey, 2021; Unda et al., 2023). Additionally, a lack of clarity in terms of responsibilities can lead to Governors feeling disempowered (Baxter, 2020). If the government cannot expressly detail responsibilities to clarify role expectations, should responsibility for this fall to the governing body and its SLT? Unda et al. (2023) suggest that inadequate communication of expectations and responsibilities between the SLT and board members can increase ambiguity, potentially affecting their perceptions of what they

can do within their role. This would suggest that if clarification of roles and responsibilities did fall under the remit of the SLT and governing body, they should ensure that communication of role expectations is explicit and clear. This could potentially be achieved through ensuring schools create specific job descriptions, as discussed by Merrell (2000), or via training, specifically induction (Jones, 1998; Perry, 2011). However, some researchers argue that role-specific training is not always effective, particularly when it is rushed (Mestry and Hlongwane, 2009).

Balarin et al. (2008) put forward the recommendation that Governor roles and responsibilities should be amended, roles simplified, and responsibilities reduced. Additionally, they acknowledged the potential difficulty Governors have in adhering to the operational/strategic divide, particularly when guidance can edge Governor responsibilities further over the line into operational territory (Balarin et al., 2008; Baxter, 2017). Similar concerns can be raised with current Government guidance on governance role descriptions, in which Governors appear to be heavily involved in financial or human resource aspects of the school, taking on aspects more commonly related to paid work (DfE, 2020b). This suggests that, in addition to schools ensuring clarity of roles and responsibilities, the Government should also ensure that any guidance they produce is clear and without contradictions in terms of strategic and operational territory. Understanding where strategic ends and operational begins is made far more difficult when Governors are expected to appoint and appraise Headteachers, deal with staff grievances and disciplinaries, take an active role in exclusions, and complaints (NGA, 2021)

2.3.9 Covid

As news of an unknown respiratory illness emerged from China, the UK Government began to react (Figure 4), noting by March 2020 the seriousness of the situation.

This resulted in the closure of schools, the cancellation of exams, and immediate cessation of Ofsted inspections (Williamson, 2020a, 2020b).

> “This global pandemic is the biggest threat that this country has faced in modern times” (Williamson, 2020a, p. np)

The decisions made by the Government inevitably had an impact on education in general (Milner, Mattei and Ydesen, 2021). Although schools were expected to close, they were also expected to remain open for children of key workers and vulnerable children. There was an expectation that, as well as adapting to virtual learning platforms where remote learning would take place, schools were simultaneously expected to teach the children who were physically present. There was also an expectation that Free School Meals (FSM) would continue to be provided, with an extension to the FSM system by including children who were expected to remain at home during the lockdown via vouchers (Ziauddeen et al., 2020; Department for Education, 2021b; Kelly, Hofbauer and Gross, 2021).

Additionally, although exams and primary assessments were cancelled, newer forms of assessment were developed, which included the centre assessment grade (CAG) system. CAG was based on teacher judgement, with Williamson (2020b) sharing that if students were unhappy with their received grades, they would be allowed to appeal or sit a formal exam. However, teachers and Headteachers were placed under an enormous amount of stress under the CAG system, with accusations of teacher bias in marking, last minute communication of expectations and guidance, and the unknown territory of increased teacher autonomy for teachers in a system that is heavily guided and monitored (Milner, Mattei and Ydesen, 2021). It was not solely the difficulties that arose from implementing a sudden change in assessment

practice that impacted teachers and school leadership, concerns were also raised over general guidance, contradictory advice, lack of communication, and sudden changes (Beauchamp et al., 2021). Schmidt and Groeneveld (2021, p. 117) argue that with decision making centralised and the need for a quick responses and decisions, clear communication to all other stakeholders is essential during any form of crisis to ensure acceptance of “crisis-induced changes”. Schnabel, Anderson and De Francesco (2023) also acknowledge that the public expects guidance from the Government, but if the Government expects any form of compliance, then they need to communicate clearly with the public. However, the UK Government was widely criticised over their decision making and communication throughout the pandemic, this was particularly evident over the 2020 Christmas period (GMB Union, 2021; Staton, Cameron-Chileshe and Bounds, 2021).

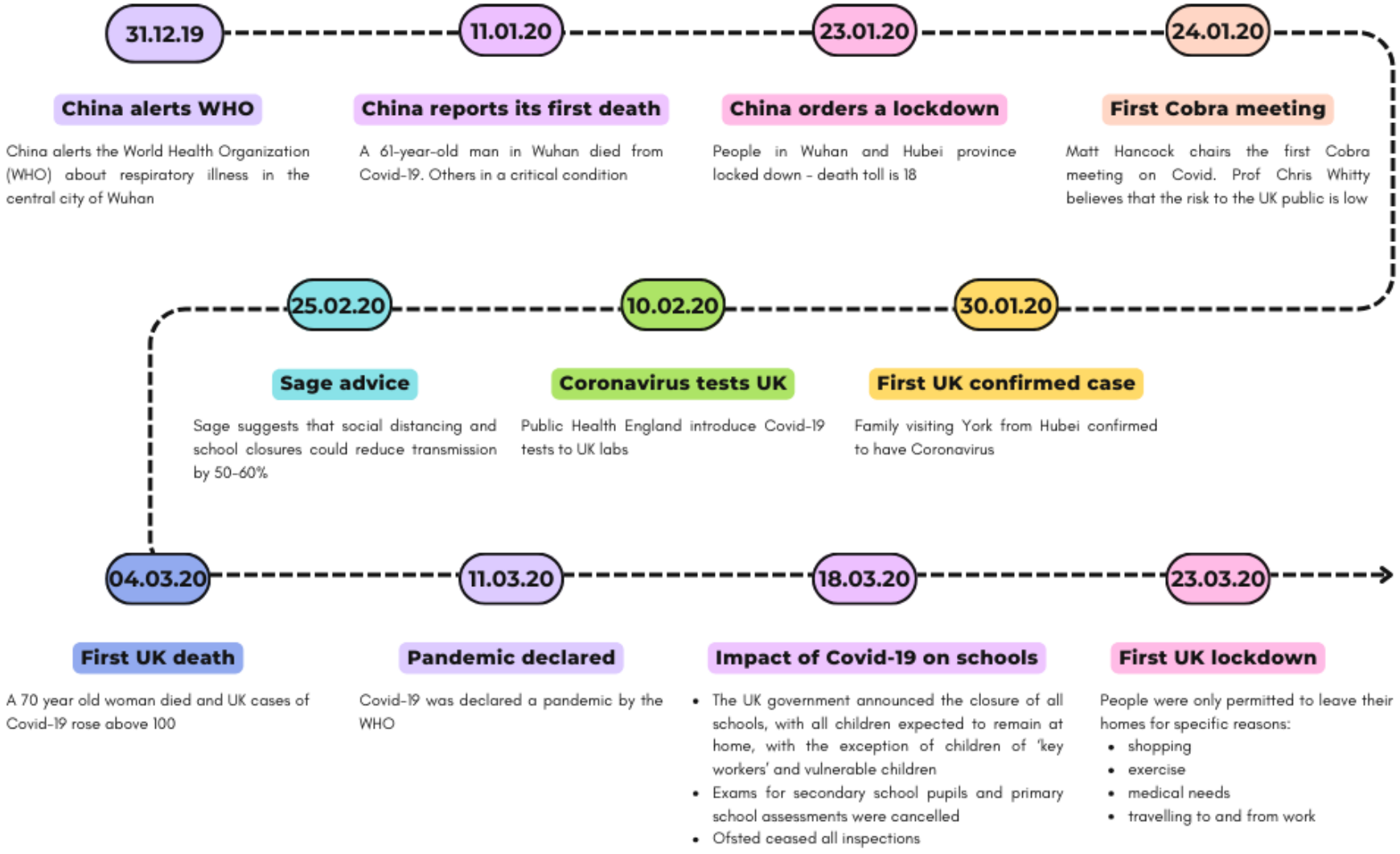


Figure 4 Initial Covid-19 timeline.

Despite the Government receiving advice from their own scientific committee on the 22nd of December 2020 in relation to a new variant, one considered to be a greater risk amongst younger people, they chose to reinforce their decision to reopen schools (Williamson, 2020c; Staton, Cameron-Chileshe and Bounds, 2021). On the 30th of December, the then Education Secretary Gavin Williamson confirmed that Government expectation was that all children would eventually return to school, beginning with primary on the 4th January 2021. This decision was widely criticised, with some Headteachers suggesting legal action to ascertain what the data was behind the decision (BBC, 2021). Within a matter of days after Williamson's speech reiterating that schools would open, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that the UK would be entering a third lockdown, with all schools remaining closed until at least the February half term (Johnson, 2021b). This put schools under immense pressure, leaving them "scrambling" to adapt to the new decision (Jones, 2021, np; Bingham, 2022). Fotheringham et al. (2022) also suggest that in addition to the pressure from the constantly changing guidance, some experienced pressure from parents and Governors to ensure they were providing the 'best' support.

Although decisions were clearly centralised during the pandemic, communication was not particularly clear or timely, which appears to be in direct opposition to the importance placed on communication by Schmidt and Groeneveld (2021), potentially impacting the acceptance of any changes made. However, given the lack of timely communication from the government and the immense, negative response from the wider population, Johnson (2020, 2021a, 2021b) often appealed to the UK 'community spirit' (Table 9).

Source	Quote
(Johnson, 2021a, p. np)	“We are a great country. We have the vaccines to protect our people. So let’s do it. Let’s Get Boosted Now”
(Johnson, 2021b, p. np)	“But now more than ever, we must pull together”
(Johnson, 2020, p. np)	“The people of this country will rise to that challenge”

Table 9 Examples of appeals to the community spirit by former Prime Minister Boris Johnson

Appealing to the nation’s community spirit could suggest that Johnson is aiming to lead through a community-based approach, creating a “shared identity” and attempting to encourage collaboration and resilience (Hyvärinen and Vos, 2015; Beauchamp et al., 2021, p. 378).

Hyvärinen and Vos (2015, p. 587) identify a resilient community as one that “is able to recognize unusual conditions, mobilize resources and self-organize in response to a crisis”. The language used by Johnson in his addresses to the nation appears to have the aim of unifying the country at a time of uncertainty, combining aspects of “Direction-Giving Language” and “Empathetic Language” to engage with, and rally, a multitude of stakeholders (Mayfield, Mayfield and Sharbrough, 2015, p. 100). However, the inconsistencies and constant, last-minute changes impacted how these speeches and government guidance were received by the public and those working in areas such as education. The response seen in the media from senior education leaders suggests that there was a disconnect between the overall intention of national communications and guidance, with many condemning the lack of clarity and fore planning (Kim and Asbury, 2020; Beauchamp et al., 2021; Kelly, Hofbauer and Gross, 2021; Rice, 2021; Hulme et al., 2021).

Whilst it is true to say that guidance was offered to school leaders and by extension Governors, it was notably delayed, contained conflicting information, was often

overturned on short notice, and at times differed between the four countries of the UK (Kim and Asbury, 2020; Parnham et al., 2020; Schnabel, Anderson and De Francesco, 2023). As a result of the lack of communication and disorganisation of the Government, SLT were often expected to adapt and deal with situations that would be considered outside their remit in a non-pandemic time. With FSM and the Government decision to open the scheme up to children who were not physically present at school, schools had to deal with a government-approved company who were expected to issue vouchers. However, there were substantial delays in issuing the vouchers, which left schools trying to solve the problem themselves (Kim and Asbury, 2020; Parnham et al., 2020). For some, this involved creating baskets of food and either delivering them or arranging for families to collect from the school (Kim and Asbury, 2020). Additionally, despite Government provision of digital devices and 4G hotspots, there were difficulties in accessing this provision, with receipt of laptops delayed, impacting those in deprived areas the most (Lucas, Nelson and Sims, 2020). As well as the difficulties faced by SLT in terms of providing food support and technology, schools had to be acutely aware of additional safeguarding needs, supporting children more remotely than they had previously. This all led to a build-up of pressure and feelings of “isolation” (Hulme et al., 2021, p. 171) for school staff, often released through “venting” to colleagues (Kim and Asbury, 2020, p. 1077; Jopling and Harness, 2022). Given the additional responsibilities placed on schools, particularly SLT, Governors were expected to “support…and help avoid burnout”, developing a more pastoral aspect of governance (Walker, Sharp and Sims, 2020, p. 5). Some noted that despite the many changes seen within the education sector, governing bodies generally continued to operate as expected, although McCrone, Lucas and Sims (2021) do point out that there were some differences identified,

highlighting three main areas: some Governors were better prepared for meetings; support increased to include a deeper, more pastoral level, with some chairs extending their responsibilities to include well-being phone calls; and examples of challenge growing to include questions on the provision and quality of home learning. Building on the discussion of Covid-19 and its impact with respect to the need for adaptive leadership and pastoral support, the following chapter examines the role of mentoring within Governors' continuing professional development in simultaneously strengthening their knowledge and providing collegial support.

2.3.10 Mentoring

To be an effective governing body, Governors need to understand their roles and responsibilities, which is especially important given the level of accountability Governors now face. It is acknowledged that training is important, with recommendations on developing Governor training mentioned almost 50 years ago (Taylor, 1977). Whilst it is clear that training is important in developing a governor's understanding and ability to perform their role, there is some suggestion that it is not enough, with Luggya (2019) arguing that it should be supported by mentoring, with the mentor 'bridging' the gap between the theory and practice of governance. Arguably, by combining training with mentoring, not only will Governors embed their training in the reality of practice, but it will also afford them the opportunity to have extended periods of support whilst they adjust to their new role. The concept of mentoring was also developed further by the Government in their now defunct National Leaders of Governance (NLG) programme, claiming that NLGs could provide coaching and mentorship, amongst a number of other services (DfE, 2021a, 2023b).

Varghese et al. (2022) note that most professional development consists of a mixture of formal training courses, study groups, coaching, and peer mentoring. Furthermore, Varghese et al. (2022) argue that mentoring is considered to be the preferred option when supporting less experienced colleagues. They suggest that mentoring can open up discussions on what Governors have learned, to ask questions, and to contextualise their training, all of which increase the chances of the mentees implementing their learning (Varghese et al., 2022). The nature of mentoring, as discussed by Varghese et al. (2022), would suggest that there needs to be an environment that cultivates open dialogue, allowing questions and concerns to be spoken about freely. Prior to this, Macpherson and McKillop (2002) considered the formality of the mentoring sessions, noting that some consider there to be two approaches – informal based, on collegial support, and formal with set structures and guidelines, with information passed down from mentor to mentee (Jones and Brown, 2011). Varghese et al. (2022, para. 2.1) stress that a combination of both formal and informal training creates participants who are no longer “passive recipients of knowledge”. Moreover, they argue that a collegial approach to professional development, with peer support adopted, is more effective and allows for contextualisation of their learning. It is possible that the peer mentoring approach has the potential to equalise the power relationship between mentor and mentee, which is frequently dominated by the mentor in a more traditional approach to mentoring (Jones and Brown, 2011; Varghese et al., 2022). The impact of more formal training/education is something also identified by Freire (1970). He argues that the more traditional approach to education in which information is passed from teacher to the student, referred to by Freire (1970, p. 72) as the “banking model”, is ineffective and can impact the development of “conscientização” (Freire, 1970, p.

74). Instead, Freire argues the importance of resolving the teacher-student contradiction by acknowledging the interchangeable nature of the teacher-student relationship, with both sides adopting the role of educator and pupil.

In addition to having the potential to create balance between mentors and mentees in terms of their power relationship, as well as increasing the likelihood of training being implemented successfully, mentoring can also be considered a form of training that is mutually beneficial (Macpherson and McKillop, 2002; Varghese et al., 2022). As seen in Figure 5, the peer-based approach creates a more equal status, with knowledge and skills transferred between both parties in a collaborative manner (Jones and Brown, 2011). Despite the overall consensus on the mutually beneficial nature of peer-based mentorship, Macpherson and McKillop (2002) suggest that potentially mentors would find this approach especially beneficial, with Fullerton (1999) highlighting the impact that the reflective nature, as well as the exposure to new ideas brought into the mentoring process by the mentees, can have.

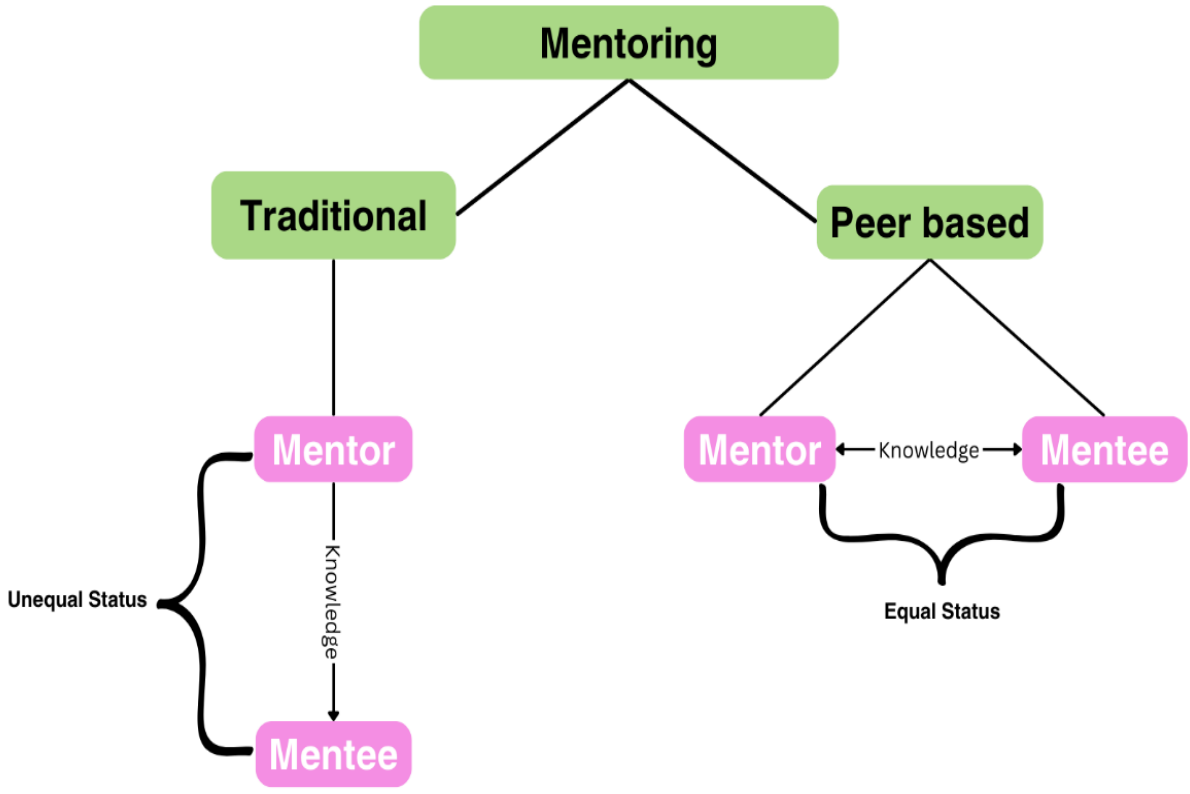


Figure 5 Mentoring - transfer of knowledge and status

As previously discussed, Varghese et al. (2022) consider mentoring to be an extension of training, allowing the mentee to have a space to reflect, contextualise, and clarify anything they do not understand. This view of mentoring would appear to align itself with the Educative Mentoring approach to mentoring, as it:

> "includes opportunities for deep and rich reflection on practice with the participation of a mentor who helps to shape and instill this intellectual habit." [sic] (Schwille, 2008, p. 141).

Schwille (2008), whilst exploring Educative Mentoring through the lens of developing novice teachers, argues that novice teachers need to contextualise their learning through taking part in real-life teaching tasks under the guidance of someone who has more experience. The need to extend training through mentoring is also noted by Luggya (2019), who considers mentoring an important part of ensuring that Governors actualise their learning whilst creating a deeper understanding of their role. Utilising a more collaborative approach can potentially stop newer Governors seeing the mentor as someone who has all the answers, and avoid the misconception that the mentee should be a 'carbon copy' of the mentor (Mackintosh, 2019). Furthermore, encouraging the mentee to take an active role in the mentoring process can allow challenge, create an atmosphere of co-learning and co-creation, which can in itself help to avoid a status quo developing within the governing body (Mackintosh, 2019).

Adopting a mentoring approach, particularly an educative mentoring one, would open up the professional development of governors. By incorporating educative mentoring in the process of Governor professional development, the concept of Governor training would evolve, moving away from simple task mastery towards a focus on independent reflection and critical thinking (Chitty, 2009). It is this more

collaborative approach that Chitty (2009) uses to differentiate between training (set tasks) and education. With this in mind, consideration should be given as to whether Governor training is still the most appropriate term, or whether it has evolved to the point that it should be referred to as Governor education.

2.3.11 Challenge

A large part of what most deem to be ‘good governance’ is the governing body’s ability to challenge effectively, with Governors often judged on their ability to do so (Governors for Schools, 2024; Dean et al., 2007; Wilkins, 2015; Baxter, 2017). This is supported by the Government, which has also emphasised the importance of challenge as part of the accountability responsibilities of the governing body (DfE, 2020a). Baxter (2017) further highlights the importance of challenge, noting the emphasis placed on governors’ external skills by Ofsted, particularly ones that can contribute to challenge. Baxter (2017) also noted that whilst challenge has always been expected, it used to be combined with support but moved away from this approach towards one that solely concentrated on challenge – a move that Baxter (2017, p. 32) suggests was intended to “sharpen the ways in which Governors hold senior leadership teams to account”. However, there are some who argue that referring to challenge could be considered as inappropriate as it creates the impression that Governors should be “confrontational” (James et al., 2013, p. 88), particularly if they are concerned about Ofsted judgements.

The increased focus from the UK inspectorate on challenge led to many governing bodies feeling concerned and subsequently developing the belief that they needed to be seen to challenge. Baxter (2017) reflects on the lengths that governing bodies will go to in order to evidence challenge, sharing the views of one particular Headteacher who explains that every challenge in every meeting is documented down to the exact

minute. However, the Headteachers in Baxter's (2017) study, whilst acknowledging they are challenged by Governors and that this challenge is noted within the minutes of meetings, also share concern over the quality of this challenge. There were some Headteachers who noted that their governing body "ask all the right questions" (Baxter, 2017, p. 33) but are reliant on the school improvement partner to confirm whether the Headteacher is reporting accurately, something also noted by Robinson, Ward and Timperley (2003). Another Headteacher casts doubt on the effectiveness of their governing body's questions, but this time in connection with the quality of questions from Governors in comparison to those of the school improvement partner, conceding that the Governors either do not understand what they are asking or are intimidated (Baxter, 2017). These responses could be seen to suggest that whilst challenge is seemingly taking place, it is not as effective as it could be and that there is potentially an air of performativity (Ball, 2003; Wilkins, 2015; Young, 2016). However, it could also be argued that there are two levels of performativity seen in Baxter's (2017) examples. Noting that all challenge is documented within the minutes of the meetings, it provides evidence that Governors are seen to be performing their duty by providing challenge, allowing Ofsted to pass judgement with the potential of a reward or sanction based on this performance. However, there is a lower level of judgement seen in Baxter's study, with Headteachers passing judgement on the quality of Governor challenge, which in this case was deemed by some to be subpar.

However, challenge does not always seem possible, as identified by Ranson (2011, p. 400) in their description of the governing body type, "Governance as a deliberative forum". Within this type, Ranson suggests that parent Governors in particular may find challenging the authority of a Headteacher difficult, even though they may feel

able to ask questions. This could be seen as problematic, particularly when reflecting on Baxter's (2017) study, in which two of the Headteachers interviewed outlined concerns over the ability of Governors to understand the information presented to them or whether they are able to independently assess the truthfulness of this information, something also noted by Dean et al. (2007). It would suggest that even if challenge is seen 'on paper', there may be questions over its effectiveness. Being reticent to challenge may come from the governing body itself, with Dean et al. (2007) suggesting that Governors felt more comfortable acting in a supportive rather than challenge-based capacity. Further to this, Dean et al. (2007) suggest that two possible reasons for this could be:

- **Challenge – Support balance:** Avoiding the potential for developing an adversarial relationship.
- **Feeling ill-equipped:** Governors may feel unable to challenge a Headteacher in a professional capacity.

In terms of feeling 'ill-equipped', Young (2016) argued that Governors could access appropriate questions aimed at providing challenge, through Governor training and literature. In addition to this, support in understanding how to challenge and the type of questions that may be beneficial can also be found in private Governor training companies, as well as in the less formal format of online, social media-based support groups. Guidance on questioning within the context of challenge has also been provided by Ofsted, with examples of questions given within case studies of what Ofsted believed to be examples of effective governance (Ofsted, 2011; Young, 2016). However, Young (2016, p. 171) notes that this became something of a 'revered' document, sharing the time a Chair of Governors (CoG) referred to it as "The 10 commandments", whilst a Headteacher called it the "new regulations". Young (2016)

also considers whether this form of support, by providing example questions, belied an underlying doubt in the ability of Governors to develop their own challenging questions, which lends itself to the possibility of Governor performativity by being seen to ask 'the right questions' (Ball, 2003; Wilkins, 2015; Young, 2016).

When considering Dean et al.'s (2007) suggestions on why Governors feel more comfortable acting in a supporting role, in the light of Baxter's (2017) study, it is possible to understand why Baxter suggested that Governors may feel intimidated. Concerns over ensuring the SLT and governing body relationship remains cordial, as well as the power imbalances between educational professionals and a group of volunteers, albeit with external skills, can be seen to impact the challenge offered by governors. One way that challenge was impacted, as noted by Dean et al. (2007), was seen in the response of a Headteacher who felt that Governors should not overly scrutinise the school. This 'gate keeping' approach, in which Headteachers seem to have an invisible line that they do not wish Governors to cross in terms of monitoring, was also reflected in some of the responses of Governors interviewed by Dean et al. (2007, p. 31), who felt they were there to "rubber stamp" decisions as opposed to providing effective challenge. Ofsted (2011, p. 11) argues that to be effective, there needs to be a balance between support and challenge. The onus for this balance is placed on three key factors, all of which lie with the governing body:

- *"Understanding their role and how it complements but differs from that of the headteacher*
- *using the knowledge and experience they bring to enhance leadership*
- *asking pertinent questions based on the information and knowledge they have about the school."*

It is clear that Ofsted felt that for challenge to be effective, possibly even 'Outstanding', governing bodies must have an understanding of the boundaries of their role, whilst utilising any skills that they bring to their governing body. Further to their expectations of a balanced approach to challenge, Ofsted (2011) also stipulated that Governors should challenge each other by, for example, speaking up if others overstep the boundaries between operational and strategic. This would suggest two approaches to challenge: oversight of the school and self-regulation of the governing body. In the former, Ofsted monitors the challenge provided by governing bodies; in the latter, monitoring challenge is the responsibility of chairs, committee chairs, or trustees (Ofsted, 2011).

2.3.12 Support

There are two considerations when exploring support in the context of governance: how are Governors supported to do their role, and how do Governors provide support. O'Sullivan and West-Burnham (2011) and Ranson (2011) acknowledge that support is part of the role of a governing body and is, according to both Dean et al. (2007) and Earley (2003), an area that they are most comfortable with. Although Baxter (2017) noted that the balance between support and challenge was leaning increasingly towards challenge, with less focus on the support aspect of the role. However, the balance between support and challenge once again shifted, with a focus on Governors supporting their schools and SLT (Walker, Sharp and Sims, 2020; McCrone, Lucas and Sims, 2021), considered particularly pertinent during the Covid-19 pandemic (Jopling and Harness, 2022).

As previously discussed, the government response to the pandemic was felt by many to be inadequate, with some going so far as to describe it as 'incompetent' and 'negligent' (Milner, Mattei and Ydesen, 2021; Bingham, 2022). Educational leaders

struggled with the indecisive nature of the Government's leadership, having to adapt to last minute changes to guidance and decisions, as well as attempting to solve issues with the lack of IT equipment for remote learning, and the adoption of FSM vouchers, which led to some creating and even delivering food parcels (Ziauddeen et al., 2020; Milner, Mattei and Ydesen, 2021). Jopling and Harness (2022, p. 75) noted in their research that "91.7% (n= 121)" of respondents within their survey identified Covid-19, and aspects related to it, as their biggest challenge. However, despite the weight of the situation, many school leaders found it difficult to reach out for support, with only "36.4%; 48" [sic] approaching Governors (Jopling and Harness, 2022, p. 78). It has also been noted that some Headteachers felt that Governors added to the pressure of the situation, which could explain the reticence to approach Governors for support, as highlighted by Jopling and Harness (2022) (Fotheringham et al., 2022). With a clear focus on well-being support, Steward (2014) recommended ensuring that Governors were actively involved in supporting Headteachers to monitor and maintain their emotional resilience, something that was essential during the pandemic.

Providing support is not a new trait for governing bodies and was considered an essential part of governance prior to the pandemic. Research conducted by Earley (2003) showed that Governors felt that they were there to be a supportive 'sounding board', which links closely to Ranson's (2011) 'Governance as a deliberative forum' and 'Consultative sounding board' type of governance. They also highlight the fact that although Governors acknowledge the skills they bring to the governing body, the Governors themselves set limitations on what they can do, with Earley (2003, p. 359) quoting two Governors who felt that despite the skills they brought with them, they still felt relegated to more of a supporting role:

“Supporting the head, occasionally offering advice but we are not teachers and cannot always understand fully”

“We’re supportive - but it is unrealistic to expect that non-qualified Governors can do anything more than oversee in a general sense”

Of course, in the twenty-two years since Earley’s (2003) publication, there has been a concerted effort to ensure that Governors understand the nuance of their role, that it is more than providing a listening ear. Wilkins (2015) emphasised the importance of ensuring that Governors followed expectations and were educated on not only how to effectively challenge the school, but also how to support it.

2.3.13 Training

Discussions around Governor training, including the type, quality, and whether it is needed, are not a modern phenomenon. Conversations around training have been happening for decades, but were particularly prevalent after the release of the Taylor Report (Taylor, 1977; Louden and Urwin, 1984). Louden and Urwin (1984) reflect on the increase in training publications from the National Association of Governors and Managers (NAGM), Home and School Council, Advisory Centre for Education (ACE), and Confederation for the Advancement of State Education (CASE). In addition to this, the Open University also produced a course titled “Governing Schools” (Louden and Urwin, 1984, p. 260). However, not all recommendations within the Taylor Report (Taylor, 1977) were acted on immediately, with guidance on LEA implementation of training delayed until the 1980 Education Act (Field, 1990). There was further guidance in the 1986 Act, although the language used was ambiguous, leaving it up to the LEA to decide what training would be needed (Field, 1990).

Following the 1986 and 1988 Education Acts, which adapted the responsibilities of Governors, further funding was provided to allow development of additional Governor training (Turner, Mountford and Morris, 1991). Evaluating the effectiveness of Governor training in Hampshire, Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991) noted that whilst there were positive Governor reflections, the majority of feedback was negative (Figure 6).

Whilst Governors identified a number of negative aspects, it is clear that it is less about the idea of training itself and more about the quality and effectiveness of the training they received, with Governors reflecting on the need for practical sessions, conducted by trainers who have the appropriate knowledge to conduct the courses (Turner, Mountford and Morris, 1991). Although it should be noted that some Governors preferred to have more direct instruction that consisted of specific information and instructions, highlighting the difficulty faced in ensuring that training meets the needs of all its participants.

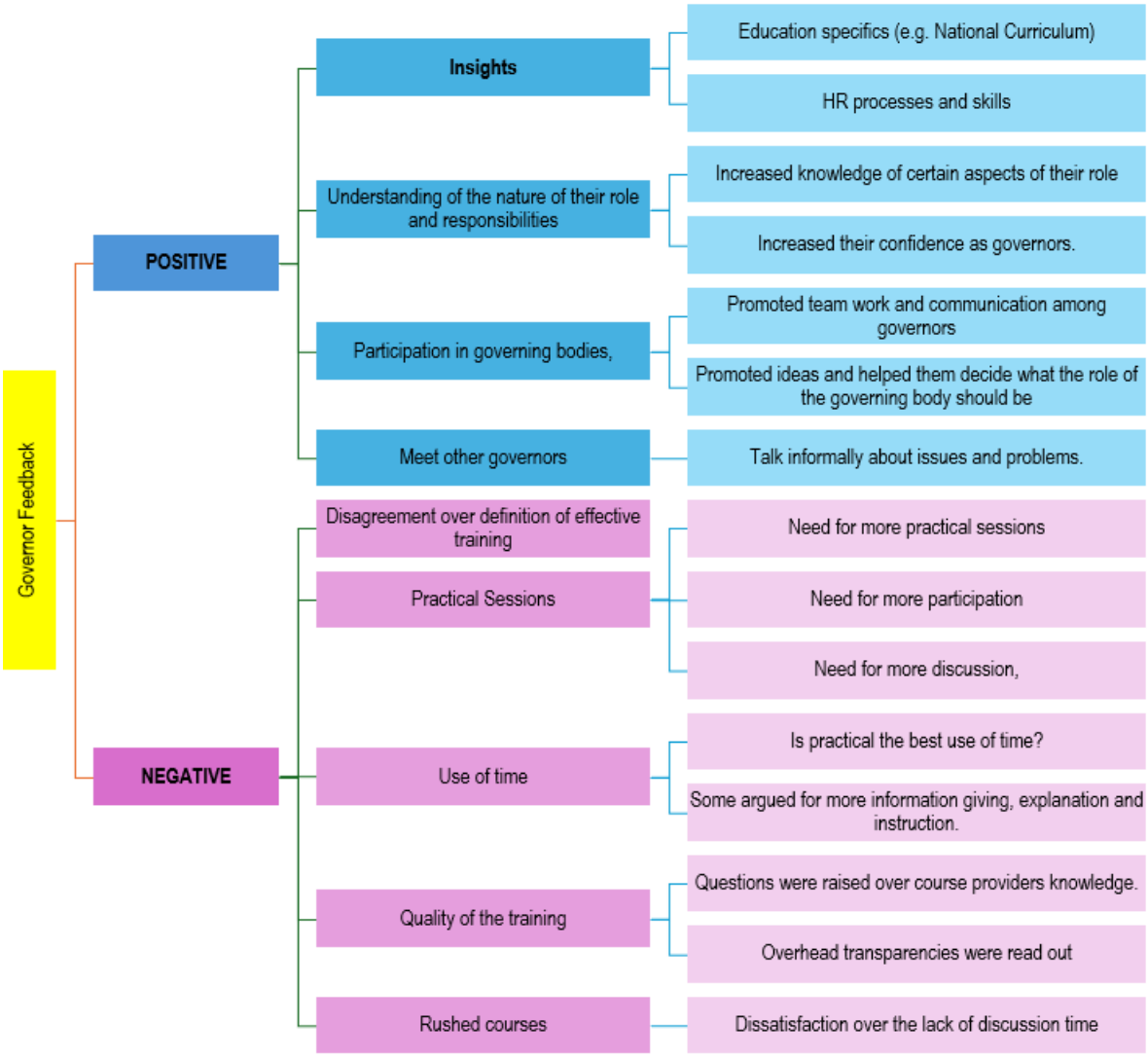


Figure 6 Breakdown of the impact of Governor training courses in Hampshire - based on Turner, Mountford, & Morris (1991)

In Perry's research (2011), it was noted that although there were some differences in levels of confidence between governance types, more than ¾ of Governors were offered induction training, with an uptake of 89% who reflected positively on their experience. In terms of training for Governors, post-induction, 82% attended and reported back positively. However, as with Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991), feedback from Governors suggested that there was room for improvement in terms of the training offered. Perry (2011, p. 15) reveals that Governors felt that the pitch of

the training was too low, with some suggesting it was “basic”. Additionally, there were also requests for both case studies and contextualisation of training, with the latter being an aspect that Hill and James (2015) also identified as a key consideration among their respondents.

Further to their considerations on how the training could be improved, Perry (2011, pp. 15–16) also shared areas of Governor responsibilities that the respondents felt would benefit from support, which included: “Legal issues; Health and safety; Data protection; Monitoring and evaluating school performance; Public relations management; Communications management; Accessing and analysing information; and Mediation.” In terms of structure, Thody and Punter (2000) noted that Headteachers and Governors felt it should be set within the school to both contextualise the information and build a ‘team spirit’, with Headteachers taking the lead and either situating training within actual school-based experiences or inviting Governors to in-school staff training. Furthermore, they felt that adopting a whole governing body approach to training was more beneficial than individualised training. In addition to this, Headteachers suggested induction and mentoring, covering the basics of governance (e.g. educational terminology, strategic versus operational, funding) (Thody and Punter, 2000).

Further to the topics Governors felt would benefit their governance journey, Perry (2011) also briefly mentioned the potential for mandatory training as a way to ensure that Governors could begin their ‘career’ as informed as possible about their roles and responsibilities (McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011; Perry, 2011).

The importance of induction training has long been noted, with most acknowledging the impact it can have on a Governor’s ability to successfully complete their role

(Jones, 1998; McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011; Perry, 2011). Despite the strength of feeling towards the importance of training, particularly induction and its potential to clarify roles and responsibilities, all Governor training, including induction, is still optional in England. There have been calls to introduce mandatory training, generally focusing on induction, with Jones (1998, p. 333) observing that "the importance and significance of training for Governors has grown in parallel with governing body responsibilities" (Taylor, 1977; Louden and Urwin, 1984; Jones, 1998; McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011). Results from the NGA's 10th Annual Survey (Garrington, Henson and Ebbs, 2020) suggest that 93% of those surveyed acknowledged the importance of mandatory induction training. However, concerns have been raised about the consequences of enforcing training, the most notable being the impact on Governor recruitment and retention (McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011). However, in Wales mandatory induction training has been in place since 2013 (Welsh government, 2013a, 2013b; Huyton, Hanuk and Morris, 2018), with the expectation that all new Governors will complete their induction training within one year (Welsh government, 2013a). The expectation that Governors in Wales will attend mandatory training is underlined by the threat of punitive action should they choose to ignore their training responsibilities. Should any Governor fail to complete the expected training, then the CoG is expected to issue a six-month suspension, with the stipulation that if they do not complete the training within the sixth month period, they will then be removed from the governing body and disqualified from holding a position as Governor (Welsh government, 2013a). This stipulation also applies to Chairs of Governing bodies, with the additional punitive action that they may not stand for the position of CoG until they have completed all training. However, there are also exemptions to mandatory training, which include

Governors who have been in the position for more than two years prior to September 2013, without a ‘break in service’, or who have completed mandatory training (Welsh government, 2013a).

Although there were clear concerns about the implementation of mandatory induction training, its implementation in Wales appears to suggest that whilst these concerns exist, they are outweighed by more positive considerations. The Welsh government acknowledged that training ensures Governors are equipped with the knowledge and confidence they need to be effective, as well as to have an understanding of educational issues and how they may impact the school (Welsh government, 2013a). Additionally, they hope that attending induction training means Governors will realise the importance of remaining up to date by attending future training.

Whilst there appear to be mixed feelings in terms of mandatory induction, training is, in general, well received (McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011). However, it is not a system without flaws. Several areas were considered to negatively impact governors’ abilities to attend training (McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011). Time impacted a Governor’s ability to train in several ways, with McCrone, Southcott and George (2011) sharing that 85% of their coordinator respondents selected this as a barrier to training. Factoring in training on top of general governing body commitments suggests a greater impact on the Governor’s time, which may not have been considered when taking on the role. If training were held in the evening or on weekends, it could impact family time and create logistical challenges related to caring responsibilities. However, if the training were held during the daytime, it might impact work commitments and would depend on the supportiveness of the employer. Additionally, there may be financial influences, both on a personal and school level.

Governors may not receive paid time off from work to attend training sessions, which creates the potential for financial hardship to arise. It also potentially leads to 'gate-keeping', possibly impacting recruitment from those with a lower socio-economic status who cannot afford to take unpaid leave from work. In terms of the financial impact on the school, Governors may be unwilling to use school funds to support their training needs, particularly if the school is in financial need (McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011).

Difficulties were not solely limited to physical impediments, such as time, finance, and general logistics. There were also Governor-specific difficulties in ensuring training was attended. Jones (1998) discusses the impact on attendance by more experienced Governors, who perhaps felt less inclined to attend as a result of attending earlier training. Another aspect that impacted attendance, according to Jones (1998), was the preference of some to have a school-based, contextualised approach to training as opposed to more formal, external training, something also identified by Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991).

It is clear that the difficulties that have been experienced in terms of ensuring Governors can/want to access training are varied. This naturally raises questions on how best to tackle the situation. McCrone, Southcott and George (2011) identified the use of technology as a potential counter to some of the barriers, noting that the benefits included flexibility for Governors in terms of when they undertook their training, thereby allowing those Governors with external commitments to continue their professional Governor development. Additionally, when considering the cost and labour involved in producing training sessions, being able to provide training online could essentially be "a less resource-intensive approach to delivering training" (McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011, p. 21). Although there were some

Governors who suggested that access to technology may not be as easy as initially thought, with concerns that online training may in itself be a barrier (McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011), which included the potential impact on workload as it may need some form of monitoring.

In terms of addressing financial concerns around the cost of Governor training, McCrone, Southcott and George (2011) noted that some 'coordinators' suggested that schools needed to be made aware of the false economy in reducing access to Governor training, given the fact that governing body responsibilities have significantly increased. It could be argued that this approach could also be used to ensure that those Governors who do not attend because they are potentially 'more experienced', are aware of how training can enable a governing body to "function effectively" (Jones, 1998, p. 349). Unfortunately, in terms of countering the personal financial impact on Governors through missing work, there is still little guidance available. Whilst legally most Governors are entitled to take time off work, there is still nothing that legally requires that this leave should be paid (Lee, 2019). However, schools are allowed to reimburse any out-of-pocket expenses, such as childcare or travel costs, as long as they have a policy to do so. Although it should be noted that this is optional.

Whilst there are clear attempts to help support Governor access to training, it would appear that it is far more complex than perhaps initially considered, suggesting that the best approach currently would be to provide a mixture of opportunities.

2.3.14 What Training Is Available

As governance has developed, a need has arisen for external support for both individual Governors and governing bodies as a whole. Additionally, it has been

noted that the voluntary nature of governance can lead to a deficit of relevant knowledge, which would require additional training (Field, 1990; Brennan, 2011; Gerrard and Savage, 2022). However, prior to 1990, the support offered to Governors, via the LEA, consisted of short, non-standardised, non-accredited courses that were optional (Thody, 1998). Although post-1990 the format of the courses remained unchanged, there was a shift in the focus of these courses, with Thody (1998) noting that training evolved from understanding the legalities involved in governance to training that could support raising standards and holding the SLT to account. This evolved training, therefore, centred more around developing a deeper understanding of education (Thody, 1998). Local Authorities (LAs) are still involved in Governor training, with each LA having a section that specifically deals with 'Governor Services'. However, 21st Century Governor training now encompasses a wider selection of topics and qualifications (see Appendix 6).

Government-based support is not the only option available to Governors and governing bodies. In addition to the growth of Governor services, the number of non-governmental agencies designed to support Governors, such as the NGA, Freedom and Autonomy for schools – National Association, The Key for School Governors (formerly known as Ten Governor Support), School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS), The School Bus, and Modern Governor and governing bodies, has increased. Further to this, there are collegial gatherings at conferences specifically aimed at Governors, such as the NGA Summer Conference, as well as several regional conferences. However, it is not only formal methods that Governors use for developing their knowledge and understanding. Several groups have been established on social media, intended to not only educate through peer interaction but also to support Governors at a pastoral level. Designed to be a safe, non-

judgemental environment, the groups allow Governors to ask questions they might feel uncomfortable asking their own GB, or to share experiences and elicit advice.

However, whilst training supports overall development and can provide pastoral support, it has been suggested that there are some potential difficulties, particularly in terms of logistics. Earley and Weindling (2004) suggested that the effectiveness of new Governor training can be impacted by the high turnover rate, stating that it could take up to two years to "…get to grips with their role…" (Earley and Weindling, 2004, p. 152). They further argue that out of the average term of four years, new Governors would potentially only be effective for two years. Therefore, to ensure that Governors and governing bodies get the most out of their training, it is essential to begin Governor induction as soon as possible. This differs from the advice given by some Governor services, who advise that their new Governor training is designed for Governors who have served at least one full term as a Governor (SMBC, 2019).

It would appear to be the intention of current training to create a professional governing body who have the ability to challenge the SLT, ensuring that the guidelines and expectations dictated by the government, and monitored by Ofsted, are adhered to with Governors acutely aware of the potential negative outcomes if they do not monitor effectively (Ranson, 2011; James et al., 2013; Wilkins, 2015; Baxter, 2017).

Given the nature of the training Governors receive, with the expectation placed on holding SLT to account, it raises questions on whether the training creates an effective governing body or one that is co-dependent with the Government. Waring (1992, p. 77) explored the positioning of Governor training as a conduit of either

“empowerment or emasculation”, arguing that there is a disparity between two specific expectations of governors:

> ”On the one hand, Governors are supposed to be the voice of everyday experience, a repository of common sense to be set against the professionals' alleged preoccupation with matters divorced from the 'real-world'…On the other hand, the tasks allotted to Governors of financial, personnel and curriculum management would appear to require a degree of knowledge, skill and experience which, once acquired, might render their holder virtually indistinguishable from the professional. What, then, becomes of the 'authentic' voice of the 'person in the street?”

Waring (1992) acknowledges the dichotomy and questions whether there would be less impact in terms of challenge, notably because there is the potential that the Governors might lose the outsider perspective, becoming more “sympathetic and supportive” (Waring, 1992, p. 82). However, Waring’s use of the word ‘empowerment’ suggests that there is potentially a more positive lens in which to view the transition from layperson to semi-professional. Essentially, a Governor who is trained is a Governor who is prepared. Even the most rudimentary training could potentially enable Governors to challenge the SLT more confidently and more effectively. The importance of challenge as a prominent characteristic of effective governance has not diminished in the 33 years since Waring’s (1992) paper was published, instead it has become the central focus, with high-stakes consequences.

2.3.15 Summary

The intention of this literature review was to explore the literature around the development of school governance. Beginning by examining the history of school governance in the UK, it was noted that in the centuries that school governance has existed, it has undergone some immense changes. The amount of power school Governors have been awarded has varied, depending on the era and political

environment in which they existed. In the 1970s, there was a move to create balance in the power by increasing representation on the governing body, as well as attempting to clarify roles and responsibilities. As governance continued to develop, the role of the individual Governor also evolved, ultimately leading to 21st-century Governors with a greater level of accountability.

The significant changes in roles and responsibilities, along with the need for governors capable of meeting the resulting challenges, led to a shift away from the representative, stakeholder model toward a governance model based on professional skills—namely, the skills-based model. It was a model that was heavily supported by the government, with ministers openly advocating for a more professionalised governing body, with promises of support to recruit skilled Governors and encourage induction training. Additionally, some argued that the position of school governor should transition to a paid role. However, many emphasised the importance of keeping some element of representation whilst balancing the need to recruit Governors with skills that could match the new level of accountability.

Despite the increased focus on the professionalisation of governing bodies and the importance of recruiting skilled Governors, there were still some who felt that Governors were well-meaning but ineffective. Moreover, an example was seen of a governing body predominantly comprised of high-level professionals, whose school was subsequently rated as ‘inadequate’ by Ofsted. This suggests that despite bringing professional skills to their role, there is still potentially a need for specific governing training to monitor effectively and support the school’s overall development. Combining external professional skills with specific educational knowledge would allow Governors to be fully informed, and this in turn would enable

them to feel better prepared to challenge, to be a more effective part of accountability measures, and support their schools as they aim to meet the ever-evolving demands placed on modern schools.

Expectations placed on modern schools lead them to constantly strive for acknowledgement of ‘outstanding’ provision. It is this need to achieve, or be seen to achieve, the politically constructed notion of perfection that leads schools to constantly reflect on how they can improve. However, it has been noted that research around school improvement was initially neglected. It took time for this area to be acknowledged, with Ofsted and others eventually acknowledging a link between good governance and school improvement, as well as higher levels of attainment. Whilst there is literature supporting governance as a key factor in school improvement, with suggestions that it is one of eight factors surrounding school improvement, some placed an important caveat: for governance to play its part within school improvement, Governor training had to be taking place regularly.

The literature has often acknowledged the importance of training in producing an effective governing body, with some reflecting on the deficit of knowledge created by relying on volunteers in a highly accountable role. The only solution for some is attendance at additional, Governor-specific training. Many argued that the positives included developing a greater understanding of the educational landscape, as well as allowing Governors to better understand their roles and responsibilities, which in turn can increase participation within their governing body. Aside from the academic development of knowledge, it was acknowledged that training allowed Governors the opportunity to network, a byproduct of which is the creation of informal support and opportunities to share experiences. Whilst the role of training was generally considered a mostly positive experience, there were some negatives identified.

Some considered the lack of a clear definition of what effective training is, or consists of, to be a barrier, as it restricts the ability to standardise training. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that most negatives associated with Governor training revolved around the quality of the training. However, it should also be noted that there were some concerns raised about the time training takes, particularly for those who consider themselves ‘time poor’, as well as the financial impact training might have on a school budget. However, there were suggestions that for the former, accessing training online might help to address this difficulty. For the latter, the focus was on ensuring that schools and governing bodies understood the false economy in reducing access to training.

Predominantly, concerns around training were focused on the quality of the content/instructor’s knowledge and the lack of practical sessions, which would support contextualisation of the information and allow the Governors to embed their new knowledge. Despite the primarily positive conversation around training, it was also noted that training appeared to be less of a consideration for more experienced Governors, with reference made to those more experienced being less likely to attend further training. This reluctance leads to the question of how best to ensure Governors remain well informed in terms of their role, with some discussion around developing a mandatory system of training.

One of the arguments put forward within the literature for mandatory training was that it would ensure that new Governors were able to begin their roles well informed. However, even though mandatory training has existed for a substantial period of time in Wales, there are still concerns around the impact that making training mandatory would have on recruitment and retention. One approach to make training more manageable for Governors, possibly reducing the impact on retention and

recruitment, would be to make the training more flexible in terms of time. As noted above, one method would be to create an online training system, allowing Governors to undertake training at a time that would fit better within their schedule, covering core modules and optional professional development opportunities.

The amount and type of training have, like governance itself, evolved. Training today is more representative of the increased expectations placed on governing bodies. Whilst the LA are still involved in training, providing access to ‘Governor services’, there is now a wider range of provision, including non-government-based providers and more informally via peer support on social media groups. There have also been options to gain qualifications, and more recently, attend training online. Additionally, the topics available have increased substantially. However, despite the perceived improvements, there are still some difficulties. In addition to considerations of whether training should be mandatory, some literature identified the need to consider when training should begin. It was felt by some that, given the relatively short tenure of 4 years, training – especially induction – should begin immediately, which currently differs from the recommendation of some LAs, who insist on Governors undertaking their role for at least a term before attending induction training. It could also be argued that attending training at an earlier stage would allow Governors to fully appreciate the role they are about to undertake.

The literature identifies the importance of training, with some even highlighting that Governors are aware of the need for training to avoid the negative outcomes of ineffective monitoring. However, there have also been concerns raised on whether training, despite evidence showing its impact on creating an effective governing body, creates one that is co-dependent on the government in terms of how it monitors. Furthermore, the question arose over whether training, whilst preparing the

Governor to perform their duties, would remove the ‘lay-person’ oversight that school governance originally considered a benefit of the governance system.

The shift from ‘lay-person’ oversight to a more ‘managerial’ approach carries both advantages and disadvantages. It has been acknowledged that SLT may find working with inexperienced Governors difficult, possibly as a result of perceived ineptitude and lack of educational background, which could create a level of friction that could potentially be avoided by working with professional people. Conversely, it has also been suggested that professionals who become Governors could struggle with the strategic/operational division expected within the role, particularly if government guidance suggests there are situations in which they are expected to intervene in the operational side. Both could create an environment in which there is a struggle for power. However, the literature clearly demonstrated that the overall relationship of the governing body was important to school improvement, highlighting the fact that more effective governance was based on governing bodies that had a more democratic overarching philosophy, with power equally distributed.

To address these, it has been suggested that both sides should have a solid understanding of the role of individual Governors, as well as the role they play within the wider governing body. Clearly defined roles, or ‘job descriptions’, would help to reduce confusion and anxiety over boundaries and how they, as Governors, can contribute to their school’s improvement. Boundaries within governance have often been a focus of discussion, with some noting that the most basic level of understanding is set on the concept of a strategic/operational divide. As previously noted, crossing boundaries, whether deliberately or inadvertently, can cause serious conflict between all those involved, with some noting that maintaining boundaries is incredibly difficult. However, it has been argued that through specific role

descriptions and training to reinforce these role descriptions, it is possible to reduce the potentially negative environment created when two or more powers are at play. Although it should be noted that there were also discussions around whose responsibility it was to clarify the roles: the government or individual schools.

In addition to more traditional training on clarifying roles and responsibilities, mentoring was also considered a beneficial approach to professional development, with some even suggesting that it was the preferred option. Mentoring created a safe space for Governors and allowed free dialogue between mentor and mentee, potentially providing the Governor with another avenue to clarify their role. However, there was not one specific approach to mentoring, with the literature showing two specific types: traditional and informal. Traditional was more formal and involved information being passed on to the mentee from the more experienced mentor, whilst informal had a more equitable relationship between mentor and mentee, allowing the aforementioned dialogue to be established. There is an argument that educative mentoring, which is a less formal, more open form of mentoring, can allow Governors to develop the skills needed to become independent, reflective, critical thinkers. It would allow Governors to move from passive learners, adopting the information fed to them via training, to active participants in their own learning who are then able to challenge more effectively.

Throughout the literature, challenge was considered an essential part of ‘good’ governance. However, the increased level of accountability was noted to create a level of performativity, with challenge regularly documented to demonstrate to Ofsted that challenge was taking place. Concerns over aspects of performativity notwithstanding, there were also concerns raised over the quality of the challenge being provided by Governors in terms of the ability of non-educationalists to either

ask appropriate questions or even to understand information presented to them. Challenge was also noted to be affected by the type of governing body, with those in SLT-led governing bodies less likely to ask questions, possibly because they feel intimidated or mistakenly believe they are there to ‘rubber stamp’ decisions made by the SLT. However, it was also noted that whilst challenge was important, it was only part of the role, with some literature identifying the need to have a balance between challenge and support.

Whilst there is a lot of emphasis on the need for governing bodies to challenge, or be seen to challenge, the literature also showed the importance of providing support. Within the literature, there were two specific approaches to support: how are Governors supported to do their role, and how do Governors provide support. As already discussed, there are multiple approaches available to support Governors to actively take part in their roles, such as LA/private training, in-school support, and informal peer support. In terms of the support that they provide, this differs depending on the situation. During the Covid-19 pandemic, support overtook the challenge aspect, an area already recognised as an important indicator of ‘good’ governance. Nonetheless, the literature shows that during the pandemic, as SLT had to adapt and take on roles that were not traditionally associated with their position, Governors also had to adapt to a more pastoral role. Governors became a ‘sounding board’ and support network, with other responsibilities such as monitoring data seen as less important.

The purpose of this literature review was to explore the origins of school governance and how it has evolved. What is clear throughout the literature is the need to provide clarity in terms of the roles and responsibilities, both through training and specific role descriptions. In addition to establishing clear roles, it is also important to

consider the overall relationship between the governing body and SLT, with some literature noting that governing bodies that have a more equal balance of power perform more adequately than those dominated by SLT.

Despite concerns, training was generally seen to be a positive contribution to supporting Governor development. However, it would be beneficial to explore how to standardise role descriptions and ensure that these are disseminated within training. Furthermore, given the concerns raised over the quality of training currently, further research into how to provide a base level of Governor training, with standardised content that guarantees coverage of the core functions of school governance, is essential. Finally, to encourage a more equal distribution of power, which has been identified as a characteristic within more adequately performing governing bodies, research that explores both how to raise governors' profiles as partners in improvement, as well as how to remove SLT's concerns over working with non-education based colleagues, is highly suggested. This research intends to explore the role of training in helping to achieve an effective governing body, whilst hopefully addressing some of the concerns identified within the literature.

3 Research Design And Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter intends to present the research design and methodology used within this research and to rationalise the use of the chosen design and methods, establishing why they have been chosen and how they have benefitted the research. It will begin by examining the aims of the research, looking at the overarching research question and the four sub-research questions in more detail. It will explain the reasoning behind their development and exactly where they sit within wider educational research. Further to this, the chapter will explore the philosophical approach taken, clarifying the ontological and epistemological position of the research. Additionally, the methodology will be evaluated through the examination of the characteristics of the chosen methodologies, cross-sectional study and mixed-methods research, appraising their suitability. Furthermore, it will explore how their use is intended to advance educational research on primary school Governor training. The chapter will then move on to explore the role of the researcher, noting any issues with bias that may exist.

To ensure that this research is robust, it is prudent to also examine the research methods chosen. Therefore, this chapter will also provide a list of methods adopted and the phases in which they will be utilised. Additionally, as a further, measure there will be an exploration of each method used and why they have been deemed appropriate. Furthermore, there will be a discussion on data retrieval and analysis, and how research validity and reliability will be supported. Further to this, there will be an analysis of limitations and ethical considerations. The chapter will then be summarised to provide a succinct overview.

3.2 Aims Of The Research

When examined, the history of governance clearly shows the evolution of the governing body from the original concept of ‘well-meaning’ volunteers gathered within a ‘stakeholder’ model of governance, a notion condemned by Michael Gove (2012), to one with skills at the heart of the governing body. This led to the ‘stakeholder’ model of governance being usurped by the ‘skills-based’ model. When viewed in conjunction with the government’s attempts to increase the autonomy of schools, in which more powers were handed to governing bodies, the question arises of whether it is sufficient to simply amend the governing body by including those deemed to have the appropriate skillset or whether regardless of the skills around the table, additional training would be required. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore the type and amount of provision currently available, as well as how those who access that training, whether by attending and utilising it (Governors) or witnessing how it is utilised (SLT), perceive it in terms of its usefulness. To answer this, four research questions have been developed:

- What is the present provision for Governor training in England?
- How do serving Governors assess their own training?
- How do senior leaders assess the training of Governors based on their performance in meetings?
- Which strong claims could be made to improve the quality of Governor training?

3.3 Wider Framework

Whilst school governance has not been explored as extensively as other areas of education, there is a burgeoning interest in this previously overlooked aspect of leadership. Most notably, research has primarily focussed on the role of the Governor within the constantly evolving educational landscape, exploring the role of professionalisation following the move from a stakeholder model of governance to a skills-based model (James et al., 2014; Gann, 2015; Wilkins, 2015; Connolly, Farrell and James, 2017). Additionally, there has been increased scrutiny of the role governance has played in the marketisation of education, whilst simultaneously evaluating their role in school improvement (Scanlon, Earley and Evans, 1999; Ranson et al., 2005a; Earley, 2013), monitoring of performance and behaviour in schools and how these fit with the expectations of Headteachers and Ofsted (Baxter, 2017). However, little research has been written on the impact that governor training has on the effectiveness of governing bodies to perform their duties, particularly in light of the increased professionalisation of one of the largest volunteer forces to date. This research intends to contribute to this vastly under-researched area.

3.4 Philosophical Approach

3.4.1 Ontology

It is widely accepted that ontology focuses on the reality of knowledge (Scotland, 2012; Lowndes, Marsh and Stoker, 2018; Berryman, 2019), with two main strands being realism, in which there is a discoverable truth, and constructivism in which truth is constructed through multiple realities (Berryman, 2019). Moon and Blackman (2014), however, see it as a spectrum (Figure 7), in which one absolute reality exists under Naïve Realism, while at the other end of the spectrum, Relativism accepts multiple realities. Between these two polar positions are Structural Realism, Critical

Realism, and Bounded Relativism – all with varying degrees of acceptance regarding the tolerance of multiple realities. Another line of thought is noted by Tuli (2011), who posits that interpretivists do not acknowledge a reality that is not impacted by society and that a constructionist ontology allows assumptions to be made that view reality as a construct of human society and societal processes.

Kivunja (2017) argues that ontology is indispensable as it enables not only the researcher but also those reading the research to understand the assumptions made about the nature of reality as it applies to the research conducted. In respect to this research, the ontological position is based on the belief that reality is a human, socially constructed concept that provides multiple realities and is therefore open to interpretation (Tuli, 2011; Chowdhury, 2014; Moon and Blackman, 2014; Hiller, 2016; Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Ryan, 2018; Berryman, 2019; Bleiker et al., 2019; Wang, 2020).

The research questions designed within this research are not intended to establish a single truth but rather examine the multiple realities as perceived by the respondents and participants (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Lowndes, Marsh and Stoker, 2018) and through this, construct an overview of the current situation within primary school Governor training.

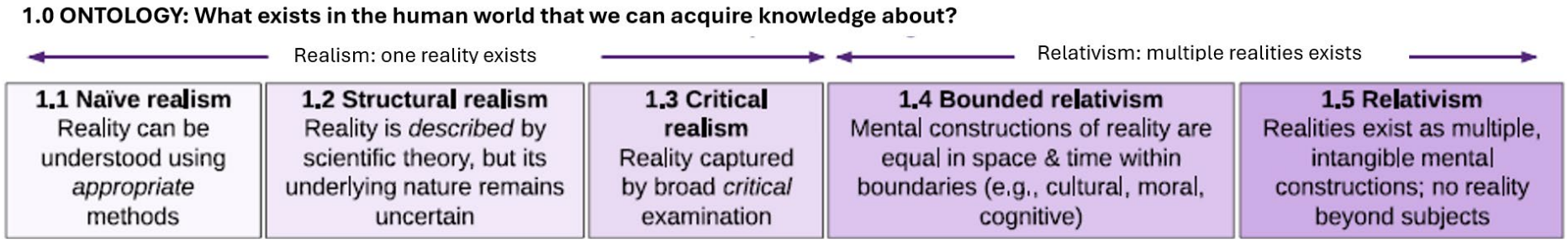


Figure 7 Excerpt from Social Science Research Guide (Moon and Blackman, 2014, p. 1169)

3.4.2 Epistemology

The epistemological stance within a study relays the “process through which a researcher may establish or determine reality” (Ansari, Panhwar and Mahesar, 2017, p. 135) – namely, how the knowledge is seen (Della Porta and Keating, 2008). This research acknowledges that the knowledge gained is subjective – that knowledge exists but is socially constructed (Della Porta and Keating, 2008; Scotland, 2012; Berryman, 2019).

Whilst there are some who note that empirical studies avoid specifically naming their epistemological stance (Alise and Teddlie, 2010; McChesney and Aldridge, 2019), McChesney and Aldridge (McChesney and Aldridge, 2019) argue that for a study to be robust, it is essential to acknowledge the epistemological position. As previously noted, this research examines the perceptions of current Governor training from the view of both SLT and serving Governors. The intent to understand leads this research directly to an interpretivist epistemology.

It is essential that any piece of interpretive research is reflexive, and part of this reflexivity is identifying the epistemological stance of the research. This not only allows the researcher to reflect on their choices but also ensures that the research choices are explicit to those accessing it, allowing them to fully understand the overarching research design in the context of the researcher's assumptions (Moon and Blackman, 2014; Waring, 2017; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). It is with this in mind that the next section explores the rationale behind choosing an interpretive epistemology for this research.

Unlike positivism, which focusses on a single, external reality, interpretivism is focussed on the lived experience as it is understood by the actors specifically

involved in the phenomenon being explored (Ryan, 2018; Berryman, 2019; Wang, 2020). The focus on lived experiences means that there are considered to be many realities, with the researcher adopting the role of interpreter (Robson and McCartan, 2011; Denscombe, 2017; Kelly, Dowling and Millar, 2018; Rapley, 2018).

The epistemology of any research will guide both the method and methodology of the research (Rapley, 2018; Berryman, 2019; Bleiker et al., 2019; Al-Ababneh, 2020), which is another reason to ensure full disclosure of epistemological choices. Having an interpretivist epistemology means there is a need for methods that afford the research the necessary depth to explore the chosen phenomenon. Thick descriptions obtained through interviews, for example, will allow the research to represent the complex, lived experience of those within the focus of the research (Berryman, 2019; Al-Ababneh, 2020). Although there has been a general increase in the recognition of interpretive research (Funk, 2019), criticism is still levied at the validity, reliability, and generalisability of any interpretivist findings (Chowdhury, 2014). However, interpretivists do not rely on these more positivistic criteria within interpretivist research. This does not mean that interpretivist research lacks rigour or quality control, rather that it instead focusses on the four main criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Nassaji, 2020).

With four aspects of trustworthiness and authenticity to support and guide this research, how does it make an impact in a practical sense? The credibility of the research relates to the trustworthiness of the data and conclusions (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Nassaji, 2020) – does the data reflect the participants' lived experience? To ensure the credibility of this research, the decision was made to adopt a reflexive approach within the interviews and allow the participants to validate

and clarify their thoughts during the interview process (Berryman, 2019; Irshaidat, 2019). The use of probing questions allowed the researcher to ensure that the participants' true thoughts were expressed and recorded accurately. Additionally, the use of multiple sources of data, such as Governor training schedules, for example, or the use of an initial survey, has allowed an element of triangulation to occur (Irshaidat, 2019; Nassaji, 2020). The process of clarifying the participants' true meaning and the use of additional data collection methods has ensured that this research has credibility, but does it have dependability?

For a study to meet the dependability criterion, those reading the research ought to be able to reach the same or similar conclusions from the research data presented. For this to happen, all research activities within this research have been documented, along with any changes that occurred and the reasons why. This includes but is not limited to field notes from interviews and terms used within internet searches for prior literature. Additionally, all interviews have been transcribed. The provision of the documentation of these activities and decisions made throughout the process will provide a clear overview for any external researcher. Furthermore, by describing processes in detail and providing an audit trail (Nassaji, 2020), it allows this research to meet the criterion of confirmability, in which those external to the research can confirm that it is an accurate representation.

Having explored the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of this research, the question arises of the level of transferability of the findings. Interpretive research does not guarantee generalisability and focuses more on the transferability of its findings. This is done by providing an extensive overview of the context of the study, which would then allow others to relate it to their own contexts (Kivunja and Kuyini,

2017; Nassaji, 2020). Providing rich contextual data such as the position of the participant (Headteacher/CoG/Governor), length of time in the role, and where they are based, as well as the theoretical underpinnings of this research and how it has impacted on the choice of methodology and methods, gives a level of transferability to this research.

The decision to place this research within an interpretivist epistemological frame arose from the need to explore the lived experiences of both Headteachers and Governors relating to school governance and training. Attempting to understand the perception of Governor training from two distinct viewpoints – Headteachers and Governors – means there are immediately two realities presented. However, it is unlikely that each group will have its own, single reality, shared by the member actors of that particular group. Instead, a more realistic understanding, or assumption, would be that within each group there are multiple realities based on lived experiences, observations, and independent interpretations of each actor (Check and Schutt, 2012; Flick, 2015; Waring, 2017; Lowndes, Marsh and Stoker, 2018).

A Headteacher will experience governance differently to that of a Governor. Headteachers will view governance through the lens of someone fully enmeshed in the world of education, who understands both the explicit and implicit language of education, as well as the wider educational landscape. Governors, are less likely to approach their role with the same knowledge and understanding. Although they will bring skills from their own professional background, neither group will approach governance from the same starting point or view it through the same lens.

Governors are there to be a ‘critical friend’, to hold the school and, by extension the Headteachers, to account. Therefore, the lens through which governance is viewed will naturally be different and will impact how governance is experienced. An interpretive epistemology, where there is no objective truth, allows a deeper exploration of the socially constructed multiple realities experienced by both Headteachers and Governors (Lowndes, Marsh and Stoker, 2018). Pulla and Carter (2018), Irshaidat (2019), and Ryan (2018) all note the impact life experiences and interactions can have on the lens through which individuals - ‘actors’ – view others and the world around. Utilising an interpretivist pathway, will help to understand the perspectives of the realities presented (Chowdhury, 2014; Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Pulla and Carter, 2018; McChesney and Aldridge, 2019; Wang, 2020).

3.4.3 Theoretical Lens

The theoretical writings of Paulo Freire (1970) would appear to be most pertinent to the nature of this research. A prominent educator and philosopher (Giroux, 2010; Stinson, 2016; Darder, 2018), Freire has written in depth on the oppressors and the oppressed within education. He ruminates on the oppressed-oppressor contradiction, noting that this contradiction is cemented within capitalist society through attitudes, relationships, and practices and subsequently, through which authentic human existence is precluded (Darder, 2018). To Freire, education and knowledge enable a more just society, one in which the authentic human existence is a possibility (Stinson, 2016).

Freire (1970) explores how the oppressed internalise the ideologies of the oppressors and how, through this, there occurs the loss of the oppressed’s humanity (Freire, 1970; Darder, 2018). Furthermore, he argues that despite the possible hostility of the oppressors, the oppressed actually want to imitate or adopt the voice

of the oppressor (Freire, 1970; Cho and Lewis, 2005; Beabout, 2008; Darder, 2018). In terms of governance, it is possible to see Freire's (1970) argument when looking at the relationship between Ofsted and the governing body. The potential for a 'poor' Ofsted judgment if deemed to be performing below the standards of Ofsted, means that the governing body adopts the ruling ideology out of fear of being judged 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate', thereby becoming part of the system of oppression. Ultimately, whilst this is borne from the Governors' desire to support their school, students, and staff, it is initiated by the specifications and expectations of the oppressors' system of oversight. The desire to be deemed 'Good' or 'Outstanding', for example, can potentially lead to the Governors distrusting their own knowledge, believing the oppressors to be invulnerable (Freire, 1970; Darder, 2018). Darder (2018) notes that Freire (1970) held the conviction that a belief in invulnerability can lead to a fear of freedom. When aligning this theory to school governance, it can be noted that the adherence to the 'rules' was so strong in some governing bodies, potentially out of fear of being deemed 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate', that even 'myths' of what Ofsted expected were adhered to, which led to the production of a 'myth buster' from Ofsted (2018). Freire (2008, p. 209) argues that "When we are faced with concrete fears, such as losing our jobs or of not being promoted, we feel the need to set certain limits to our fear", further arguing that it is essential to avoid hiding those fears and instead, educate them.

The fear of 'authentic freedom' (Freire, 1970; Darder, 2003, 2018) is not only restricted to the oppressed – Freire argued that it was a fear present on both sides, that of the oppressor and oppressed. Whilst the oppressed have internalised the ruling class ideology and adhered to the concept of conformity, with an almost fatalistic acceptance of the situation, the oppressors have a fear of losing power to

the oppressed. It has previously been discussed that governing bodies could have a fear of demotion in terms of school gradings, but why do the oppressors, in this case the government and Ofsted, fear losing power? Arguably, it is because they are held accountable for the performance of schools on a national scale. Notably, following the introduction of free schools and academies, as well as the devolution of the Local Authority (LA), the government relied on the governing body to provide monitoring and accountability at school and Trust level.

It is a main theme within Freire's writings that education can awaken the oppressed to the world and lead to their liberation (Freire, 1970; Darder, 2018). However, Freire does argue that the oppressed must fight for this liberation and not be dependent on others to liberate them – that the oppressed must take an active part in their liberation (Freire, 1970, 1998; Miller, Brown and Hopson, 2011). The government provide a handbook to guide governing bodies on their roles and responsibilities, as well as a competency framework (DfE, 2017a, 2019), however training has to be bought in by the school, either through Governor services or privately, meaning that what may initially seem to be 'true generosity' is actually 'false generosity' (Freire, 1970; Darder, 2018), an attempt to be seen as less oppressive to the oppressed. The fact that the oppressor could potentially be seen as benevolent by providing support and guidance is negated by the fact that schools have to pay for the training, a situation further exacerbated by school funding being a point of contention in today's educational landscape. It is argued by Freire (1970) for oppressors to continually be seen as expressing their generosity, they must also control and maintain the status quo of the injustice that is occurring, suggesting that although support and guidance is offered, it is potentially a 'false generosity' given the financial impact it may have. Darder (2018, p. 100) notes that "Within the dynamics

of a true generosity, the oppressed are never expected to humiliate and erode their dignity, in supplication for that which should rightly be ours". Although it could be argued that there is little to suggest that presenting Governors with a handbook or competency framework is intended to 'humiliate', it could be suggested that by enforcing a competency framework without ensuring access to adequate training, whilst simultaneously imposing 'quiet violence' through the use of hegemonic discourse and imagery (Ofsted reports and grades), the oppressors are keeping the oppressed in a position of dependency (Freire, 1970; Kress, 2011; Darder, 2018).

The potential for manipulation is another area explored by Freire (1970), where the oppressed are brought into hegemonic conformity with the ideology of the oppressor. Governing bodies, as discussed previously, are brought into line with government expectation through the use of Ofsted grades, either as an incentive where a school could be deemed 'Good' or 'Outstanding', or as a punishment, where grades awarded reflect the belief that the school is 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'. The development of what is referred to by Freire (1970) as conscientização - the critical consciousness – allows the oppressed to 'intervene' in their reality, to ensure that, as humans, our emancipatory needs are fulfilled to enable participation within our cognitive and narrative journeys. In terms of governance, whilst presented with a handbook and competency framework, the development of Governor training programmes has created an opportunity for governing bodies to 'intervene' in their own reality and ensure that they are not simply following the dictates of the government but are active participants in their own governance journey, liberating them from the oppressed-oppressor contradiction and enabling them to challenge government expectations. Although increasing access to training is a promising step towards freeing Governors from oppression, allowing Governor growth and the

development of conscientização, it is potentially impeded by external factors, such as the financial cost of training highlighted previously.

In utilising Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy as a lens for this research, it is possible to explore the effect that Governor training has on the role of the oppressed-oppressor relationship within school governance. By exploring the nature of advantage and disadvantage and looking at the 'why' of a situation (Kress, 2011), it will be possible to explore the difficulties associated with participation (a limit-situation) and identify potential resolutions (a limit-act) to enable Governors to live their authentic human existence (Freire, 1970).

3.5 Methodology

3.5.1 Mixed Methods

It is widely noted that there are three main approaches to research: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007; Denscombe, 2017; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). However, the years between the 1950s and 1980s saw a burgeoning interest in a mixed method approach to research, with several authors supporting the argument for a mixed methods (Campbell and Fiske, 1959; Sieber, 1973; Cook and Reichardt, 1979; Jick, 1979; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). Notably, Sieber (1973, p. 1337) argues that "If each technique has an inherent weakness, it also has an inherent strength unmatched by other technique". Sieber's belief is seemingly supported by Jick (1979), who contended that any interpretations would be strengthened through triangulating methods.

Considered by some, a "natural complement to traditional qualitative and quantitative research" (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 14; Creswell and Plano Clark,

2007), Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) have gone so far as to claim that the eclectic nature of mixed methods research, when compared with a single method, produces “superior research” (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 14). Furthermore, they conjecture that through mixed methods, researchers gain an understanding of strengths and weaknesses of both singular paradigms of research, enabling them to make an informed choice when developing their own research strategies. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) highlight that those who follow this strategy, noted by Johnson and Turner (2003) as the “fundamental principle of mixed research” (Johnson and Turner, 2003, p. 299; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 18), are able to combine methods which complement each other.

The nature of the research presented here suggests that it would be beneficial to utilise a mixed method design, allowing the eclectic nature of the design to help produce a robust piece of research by using methods that complement each other’s strengths. Using a quantitative initial approach allows the generation of themes that can subsequently be explored further in the qualitative interview phase of the research.

The focus of this research is Governor training and whether both the mode of delivery and the actual content are fit for purpose. To answer this overarching question, four sub-research questions have been developed, which examine not only what training is available but also how effective it is. It is the intention of this research to answer these questions by developing a confidence index, through which Governors can self-assess how confident they feel performing their duties, and headteachers can express how they perceive the performance of governors. Therefore, a research design that acknowledges and allows for the complexity and depth involved in a study examining perceptions of confidence is essential.

Quantitative, whilst enabling statistical data to be collated, would not facilitate a deeper understanding of a situation, for example, it would be possible to ascertain how many Governors feel dissatisfied with the training available but not why, to any depth, they are dissatisfied. Therefore, to ensure that we can fully understand the reasoning behind the responses, it is vital to have a qualitative aspect to the research. This suggests that the most appropriate avenue to pursue to achieve the aims of the research and answer the research questions, would be a mixed method design – more specifically, one that is an explanatory sequential mixed method approach, as neither quantitative nor qualitative are capable of providing the depth required as individual approaches, whilst mixed method will allow this research to "…generalize the findings to a population as well as develop a detailed view" (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 19).

Several matrices now exist to help the researcher define their mixed-methods design. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) have designed a prioritising matrix (Figure 8) which examines the time order of each phase as well as whether the paradigms have equal or dominant status. The use of + and → denotes whether it is a concurrent order (+) or sequential (→). Capital letters and lower case have been used to emphasise weighting, with those in capitals considered a higher weight.

		Time Order Decision	
		Concurrent	Sequential
Paradigm Emphasis Decision	Equal Status	QUAL + QUAN	QUAL → QUAN QUAN → QUAL
	Dominant Status	QUAL + quan QUAN + qual	QUAL → quan qual → QUAN QUAN → qual quan → QUAL

Figure 8 Mixed method matrix (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 22)

As noted by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), this matrix can be adapted to show more specific or complex designs. To understand the matrix required to guide this design, the four sub-research questions have been broken down, showing the methods used to answer them. Documentary analysis and survey will be used to answer: 'What is the present provision for Governor training in England?'. Survey, interviews, and content analysis will be used to answer the final three sub-questions: 'How do serving governors assess their own training?' 'How do senior leaders assess the training of governors based on their performance in meetings?' and 'Which strong claims could be made to improve the quality of governor training?'.

Implementing a mixed-methods methodology allows this research to adopt both qualitative and quantitative data to achieve a more holistic understanding of the overarching question of whether Governor training is fit for purpose. As a result, of adopting this approach, the research will be segmented into phases (Figure 9), beginning with phase one – a nationwide survey and documentary analysis.

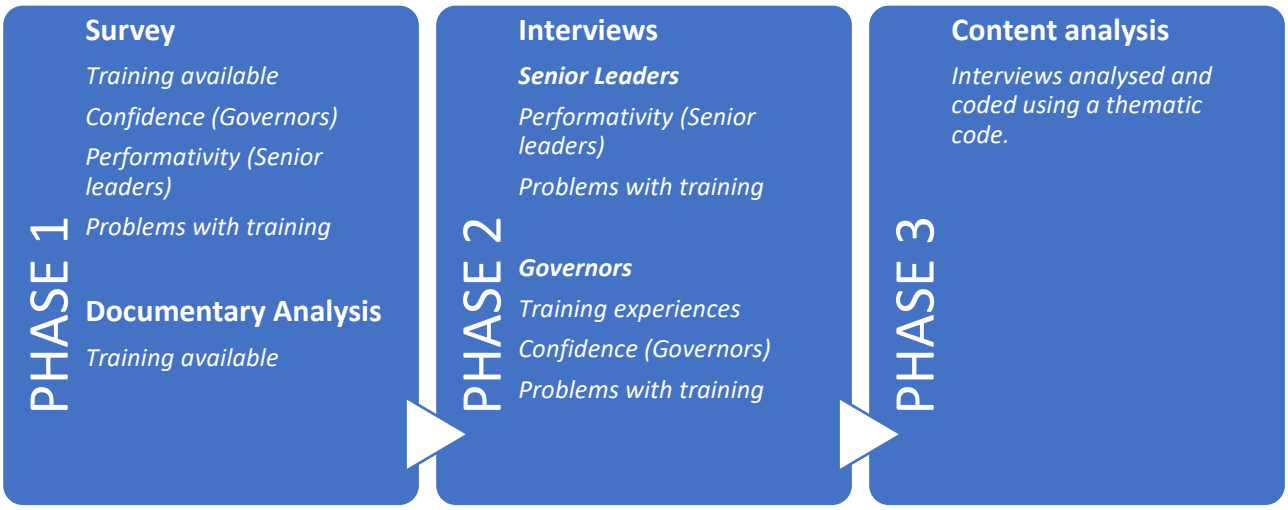


Figure 9 Research Phases

By breaking down the questions into sections and allocating the most suitable method to each, it is clear that qualitative methods are the most prominent, Therefore, according to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's (2004) matrix, it is the more

dominant paradigm. Additionally, the research begins with a quantitative approach and progresses to a more qualitative phase, which places this research in the lower right quadrant of Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's (2004) matrix, establishing this research is quan → QUAL.

In an explanatory sequential design, it is possible to use the qualitative to further explain the quantitative results (Denscombe, 2017). Linking the methods in this way is not only advantageous in terms of what the research can achieve, but it is also essential in producing a robust mixed-methods approach (Denscombe, 2017; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Denscombe (2017) notes that it is important to explain how each component within mixed method research interacts with the other components; do they enable findings to be compared; does one component create a more complete picture; does one component enable the researcher to guide the direction another component takes, thus leading the research in a specific direction? When examining Denscombe's ideology within the context of this research, it can be noted that the initial phase is intended to gather information to provide an overview of what training is available to Governors, as well as the confidence level for both Governors and Headteachers. Phase two is intended to build on and develop further the findings of phase one by identifying issues perceived to exist within Governor training, and to an extent, the performance of governors. Additionally, using a quantitative/qualitative approach will allow for an element of triangulation, in the broader sense that it will "provide a fuller understanding and produce alternative kinds of information which move things towards the complete picture" (Denscombe, 2017, p. 171), allowing a degree of generalisation to be applied to the findings. The qualitative interviews conducted as part of this research will enable a level of depth that the cross-sectional design alone cannot provide.

3.5.2 Cross-Sectional Design

Whilst there are no “good or bad” research designs, it should be noted that some designs are more appropriate than others for specific types of research (Gorard, 2013, p. 25). By utilising a cross-sectional research design, not only does it allow the research to “capture the state of things at the moment of the study” (Flick, 2015, p. 97), but it also creates the potential for the findings to be generalised within the population being studied. Additionally, it enables the researcher to examine the prevalence of opinion within the primary school governance population regarding whether training is delivered effectively and of what quality (Mann, 2003).

It is contended by Gorard (2013) and Levin (2006) that a cross-sectional approach works well for research of a descriptive nature. Furthermore, Gorard (2013) defines it as an attempt to determine differences or similarities between two groups. As this research directly compares the perceptions of governor training from the perspectives of current governors and headteachers, it can be argued that Gorard’s (2013) criteria for the effective use of a cross-sectional approach are well suited to this context.

As with all cross-sectional data, the approach relies on the analysis of multiple cases with common variables (De Vaus, 2001). Two online surveys were distributed – one to serving Governors and one to Headteachers. Questions explored the type of training available and how this training is regarded in terms of developing both the hard and soft skills of governors. Additionally, respondents were asked whether any improvements are needed in the current Governor training provision.

To avoid “response burden” and question fatigue (Denscombe, 2017, p. 186), it is important to consider the length of the survey. As such, the survey consisted of no

more than twenty questions, using a blend of response formats such as multiple choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions. Moreover, to ensure that the research is “asking the right questions” (Denscombe, 2017, p. 300) and collecting the most appropriate data, a pilot survey and interview were conducted to allow for feedback and necessary revisions.

De Vaus (2001) argues that, with regard to validity, there are two main threats: the establishment of causality without a time element, and issues with understanding the level of meaning. The former is of little concern to this study, as it examines current insights into Governor training, whilst the latter can be mitigated by asking for clarification during the interview stage (De Vaus, 2001).

With respect to external validity, “Cross-sectional designs can have more success than other designs in achieving representativeness” (De Vaus, 2001, p. 184), which in turn supports generalisability.

A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to ensure that the results are representative of the population (SLT and governors), and therefore provide an indicative replication of that population. However, it is imperative that “Strenuous efforts must be made to maximise the numbers who do respond” (Mann, 2003, p. 56). To this end, all possible dissemination routes for the survey link will be explored, including social media, Governor Support Services, and direct distribution to schools.

3.6 Methods

3.6.1 Document Analysis

Documentary analysis has long been used as a qualitative research method, although Bowen (2009) argues that it has not always been used effectively, noting that although there has been an increase in the use of document analysis within

journals and articles, there is a significant deficiency in clear explanations of either the procedures or outcomes.

As a method for research, it is considered to be the systematic analysis of texts, documents and visual records, such as photos, although Flick (2015) argues that the relevancy of documents is dependent upon the interpretation of the document by the researcher (Bowen, 2009; Lowndes, Marsh and Stoker, 2018). Considering Flick's (2015) commentary on the interpretation of documents and their subsequent relevancy to the researcher, it is essential to consider and be explicit about why the documents have been selected (Bowen, 2009; Robson and McCartan, 2011; Flick, 2015). Robson and McCarten (2011) discuss the importance of establishing criteria for document selection, a thought supported by Bowen (2009), who highlighted 5 specific functions of documents: background/context; raising questions; supplementary research data; tracking changes or developments; verification of findings or corroboration of evidence.

In addition to ensuring that there are criteria in place for selecting documents, it is essential that documents selected are viewed through a critical lens to establish the meaning, authenticity, representativeness, accuracy, credibility and relevance (Bowen, 2009; Flick, 2015; Walliman, 2017; Waring, 2017).

Whilst documentary analysis is often seen to be a systematic review of documentary material (Bowen, 2009), where patterns, themes and categories are identified, and potentially quantified, Bowen (2009) argues that it does not always have to be used in this manner. He posits that document analysis does not need to use a quantifiable content analysis but rather a first-pass document analysis version of content analysis – one in which the researcher can identify text or data that is pertinent to the

research. It is the approach suggested by Bowen (2009) that will be most suitable to this research, as it is the intention to use documents to assess the nature (e.g. safeguarding), type (in person/online), and frequency of Governor training that is currently available. Following the recommendations by Bowen (2009) and Robson & McCarten (2011), all documents used within the research will be selected based on specific criteria. The documents will include official government documents on the roles and responsibilities of Governors, including but not limited to the Governors Handbook and Competency Framework (DfE, 2017a, 2019), as well as any documents pertaining to Governor training, such as Governor training schedules or advertising related to Governor training, which will enable the background and context of current Governor training. The documents will also be used to triangulate and verify findings (Bowen, 2009; Robson and McCartan, 2011).

3.6.2 Content Analysis

Traditionally considered a quantitative method, Content Analysis has moved past simply quantifying the features of a phenomenon, with the term Qualitative Content Analysis developing around the mid-20th Century (Cho and Lee, 2014; Kuckartz, 2019). Whilst Content Analysis is often defined as a method inherently of a positivistic nature in which data is reduced and quantified (Robson and McCartan, 2011; Elo et al., 2014; Flick, 2015; Graneheim, Lindgren and Lundman, 2017; Marvasti, 2019), Qualitative Content Analysis is defined as a method which not only reduces and quantifies data but which also involves the systematic but subjective interpretation of the data (Morgan, 1993; Mayring, 2000; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Elo et al., 2014; Mackieson, Shlonsky and Connolly, 2019; Marvasti, 2019).

As a method, Qualitative Content Analysis can be considered to be positioned between quantitative and qualitative (Marvasti, 2019), with many noting that it can be

inductive, deductive or even abductive in its methodological approach (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008; Cho and Lee, 2014; Graneheim, Lindgren and Lundman, 2017). Graneheim et al. (2017) define all three approaches, beginning with inductive, which is defined as a data to theoretical understanding approach, in which the data is searched for patterns. This contrasts with the deductive approach, which has been defined as ‘concept-driven’ - moving from theory to data. Finally, abductive is noted to be a constant movement between inductive and deductive approaches, with the intent to identify meaningful patterns. Želinský (2020, p. 3) argues that the latter is a “fundamentally creative, fruitful alternative to the induction/deduction dichotomy”.

As noted previously, it is not the intention of this research to focus on or identify one truth but rather to examine the multiple realities of the respondents and participants. Qualitative Content Analysis, by its very nature, is an interpretative method which explores multiple realities that are co-created by both the participant and interviewer and the researcher and text, and as such would suit the purpose of this research (Graneheim, Lindgren and Lundman, 2017).

Following the same methodological foundations and rules as Quantitative Content Analysis, Qualitative Content Analysis varies in the use of interpretively assigned categories (Mayring, 2014). However, to be considered a rigorous study, Mayring (2014) argues that it is essential to follow seven specific steps, beginning with ensuring a specific research question is established to which the results can be directly related. Following this, the research question should be linked to theory and subsequently utilising the hermeneutical circle to modify theoretical expectations as needed.

Step three of Mayring's (2014) guidance explores the importance of defining the Qualitative Content Analysis research design – is it mixed, causal, relational, descriptive, or explorative? The nature of this research would suggest that the descriptive Qualitative Content Analysis research design would be most applicable. Through the reduction of data and the creation of themes, the constructed meanings of the phenomena will be allowed to emerge (Thomas, 2017).

3.6.3 Survey

The fact that cross-sectional data relies on analysing multiple cases through the use of variables that are the same (De Vaus, 2001) means that the initial data collection was done through an online survey with two links – one for Headteachers and one for governors. The survey questions have been designed not only to understand the training that is currently available to serving Governors but also to establish whether Headteachers and Governors regard this training as 'appropriate' or whether there is a need for improvements.

Respondents were required to select from a pre-determined list of training, any that they have attended. However, to ensure that all potential training is identified, an option for 'other' responses was made available, where the respondent could list any other training they had received.

As this research is also trying to identify the level of confidence in relation to the effectiveness of Governor training, a Likert scale was used, with 0 representing no confidence and 10 demonstrating a high level of confidence. Additionally, Headteachers and Governors were asked to explain in their own words, anything they felt would be of benefit to improve the quality of training, Governor confidence

(Governor perception), and the performance of Governors within meetings (Headteacher perception).

Prior to conducting the online survey, it was essential to establish whether we were "asking the right questions" (Denscombe, 2017, p. 300) to obtain the most appropriate data. To achieve this, a pilot survey and interview were conducted, with the respondents and participants asked for feedback on the clarity and content of the questions. Additionally, by conducting a pilot, it ensured that "response burden" (Denscombe, 2017, p. 186) was reduced, as it was possible to establish from feedback whether the length of the survey was appropriate and whether there was any question fatigue.

3.6.4 Sampling

To reduce the impact of time restraints and funding issues within the research, as well as the impact of Covid-19 on in-person events, Phase 1 – the survey – was conducted online. A link was disseminated to the research population via LA Governor Services, autonomous Governor support services such as the National Governors Association (NGA) and The School Bus, directly to schools, and finally via "research populations" (Denscombe, 2017, p. 18) on social media, such as Governor and leadership support groups.

As is typical of a cross-sectional design, data were collected within a specific time frame, meaning that the analysis was contingent upon differences within the sampled groups, rather than differences over time (De Vaus, 2001; Mann, 2003). This research explored the perception of Governor training from the perspective of Headteachers and Governors - two distinct but relatable groups.

The nature of this research, that is, the exploration of the perception of Governor training from the perspective of the Headteacher and Governors, suggested that a very specific knowledge set was required from the sample. The requirement for a specific knowledge set, as well as the previously noted reliance of cross-sectional studies upon pre-existing differences within groups, indicates that random group allocation was not suitable (De Vaus, 2001). As such, a purposive sample was considered the most appropriate, with the criteria for inclusion being twofold; respondents must be either a serving Governor or senior leader involved in governance. Whilst the sample was predominantly purposive in relation to the Phase 1 survey, the interviews that arose from the survey were a result of convenience sampling, with those selected for interview chosen from those who self-identified as willing participants within Phase 1. Additionally, a further selection criterion was the participant's geographical location within the United Kingdom, with a specific focus on those in England. Both stipulations subsequently meet the needs of the researcher (Robson and McCartan, 2011; Denscombe, 2017). Table 10 below is an overview of the demographics within the survey, with further reflections on these statistics in section 4.3.1.

	Frequency	**Percent**
AGE		
21 - 25	1	0.6
26 - 30	2	1.2
31 - 35	4	2.3
36 - 40	10	5.8
41 - 45	12	7
46 - 50	21	12.3
50+	32	18.7
EDUCATION		
GCSE/Equivalent	4	2.3
A Level	7	4.1
Degree	35	20.5
Masters degree	24	14

Doctoral Degree	5	2.9
Other	7	4.1
PHASE		
Infant	2	1.2
Junior	5	2.9
Primary	58	33.9
Secondary	3	1.8
All Phases (FS - Yr13)	6	3.5
Other	8	4.7
SCHOOL DESIGNATION		
Mainstream	79	46.2
Special	1	0.6
Other	2	1.2
SCHOOL TYPE		
Community	41	24
Foundation	5	2.9
Voluntary	2	1.2
Academy	16	9.4
Private	1	0.6
Other	17	9.9

Table 10 Overview of the demographics in the survey

3.6.5 Interviews

Whilst interviews allow the researcher to study the views and opinions of members of a population in more detail (Gill et al., 2008; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015), it is important to note that the type of interview used can have a bearing on this. Punch (2014) maintains that all three types of interviews - structured, unstructured, or semi-structured - should be viewed on a spectrum (Figure 10), whilst Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) argue that interviews should be seen in terms of standardised and non-standardised (Figure 11).

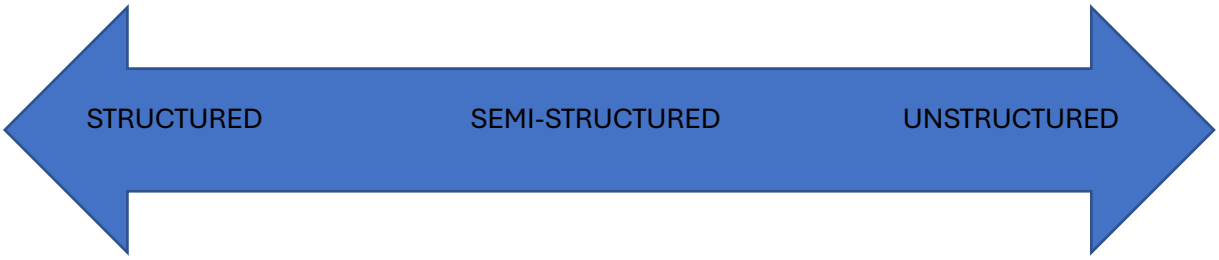


Figure 10 Interview spectrum based on Punch (2014)

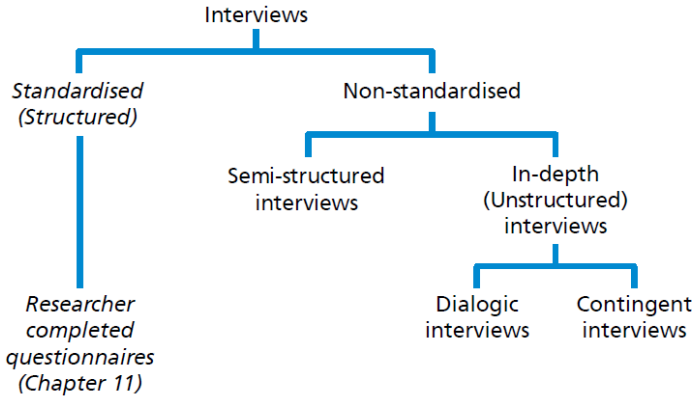


Figure 11 Interview Structures (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 437)

Quantifiable results can be obtained from pre-planned, pre-coded questions within a structured interview, leading to comparisons with questionnaires. However, it is acknowledged that structured interviews often lack depth (Punch, 2014; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Whilst acknowledging the role that quantifiable results will have in this research, such as establishing the number of Governors who have accessed training, it is not the focus of the research. Additionally, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) argue that when choosing the type of interview that will be used, it is essential to acknowledge the purpose of the research, which in this particular case is an exploratory study with a deductive approach.

The overarching intent of this research is to develop a shared knowledge of the role governing training has in the production of effective governing bodies, suggesting that structured interviews with limited, shallow responses would not be beneficial. To develop this shared knowledge, structured interviews were discounted as a viable option, in order to select an interview method that would allow a dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee.

Utilising Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill's (2019) model (Figure 11), it was clear that there were two further options – both non-standardised: semi-structured and in-depth

(unstructured). An unstructured (in-depth) interview is the opposite end of the interview spectrum from structured, and whilst structured interviews are recognised to limit the amount of data produced, the opposite can be said for unstructured (Punch, 2014). Notably, the participant in an unstructured interview is encouraged to share their experiences and thoughts far more freely, potentially leading to the production of disproportionate amounts of data, which could conceivably be too general to address the research questions. To reduce the burden on time that results from the collection of large data quantities, in addition to ensuring that the focus of the research was maintained, the decision was made to conduct semi-structured interviews in Phase 2, with a loose framework of questions and probes (Freebody, 2003; Robson and McCartan, 2011).

The decision to utilise a semi-structured interview approach allowed both the participant and interviewer an element of freedom. The participant could expand on their responses whilst the interviewer could adapt or remove questions or themes as deemed necessary (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

With the selection of non-standardised, semi-structured interviews for Phase 2, further exploration of how the interviews would be conducted was required, with Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) identifying three ways in which this could be achieved (Figure 12).

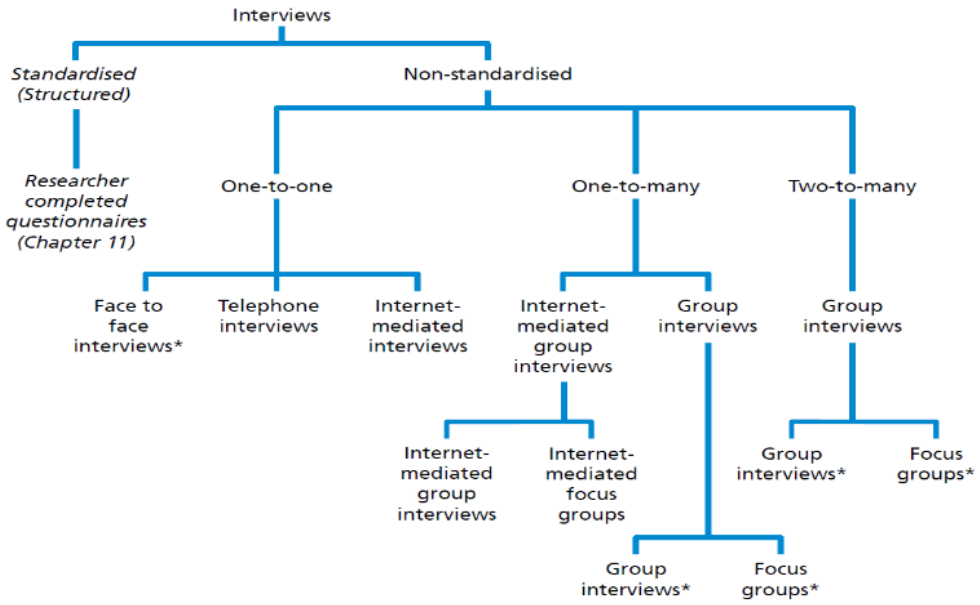


Figure 12 Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019, p. 443)

Denscombe (2017) notes that the most universally adopted interview approach is one-to-one as it is easier to organise in terms of addressing time commitments, allows the researcher to concentrate on the views of that person, the physical interview is easier to regulate and navigate, and the transcription easier to execute. Furthermore, by selecting a one-to-one interview approach, the researcher can avoid behaviours, such as “risky shift phenomenon” (Thomas, 2017, p. 212), in which behaviour changes within a group setting. Additionally, one-to-one interviews enabled the interviewer to monitor visual cues, enabling the use of non-verbal responses in the further exploration of specific aspects of the interview (Robson and McCartan, 2011).

Whilst there are potential difficulties with a one-to-one approach, such as theoretically restricting access to other views, through one-to-many interviews for example, the benefits addressed here were deemed to outweigh those concerns. This led to the conclusion that a one-to-one, semi-structured interview approach would be the most beneficial to this research. An interview schedule was

subsequently developed (Appendix 4), which comprised 19 questions and 28 probes, with notes made linking questions back to the initial survey results. The schedule began with a short introduction reiterating the purpose of the research and reinforcing the ethical guidelines on informed consent, which was initially given to them in the letter of participation that they had signed (Gill et al., 2008; Brooks, te Riele and Maguire, 2014; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; BERA, 2024). As part of the reflexive approach guiding this research, it was deemed important to continuously revisit consent, to address any changes in the respondents/participants situation (Mueller and Instone, 2008; Klykken, 2022) and through verbally reiterating the role of informed consent prior to the interviews, it was possible to ensure the participants understood their right to withdraw should they wish to.

In addition to the physical practicalities of the interviews in terms of the overall structure and participants involved, as a reflexive piece of research, it was important to reflect on the interview process itself. Approaching the interviews reflectively allowed the researcher to explore the techniques used, develop their skillset, and potentially the ability to connect more fully with the participants (Symon and Cassell, 2012; Reissner, 2018). This reflection can facilitate a level of quality assurance (Symon and Cassell, 2012). As part of the process, it was important to reflect on the clarity of the questions, whether they were leading in any way, and the overall balance of the interview, specifically, whether the interviewer, the participant, or neither dominated the discussion. Listening to the interviews and reading through both the transcripts and interview notes, most questions were value-free and generally clearly understood. However, there were some issues with the phrasing of question 9 (Figure 13). This suggests that it may have been judicious to create a research schedule with overarching academic questions that contained a ‘translation’

into “an easy going, colloquial form” (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 158) to allow participants a better understanding of what they are being asked.

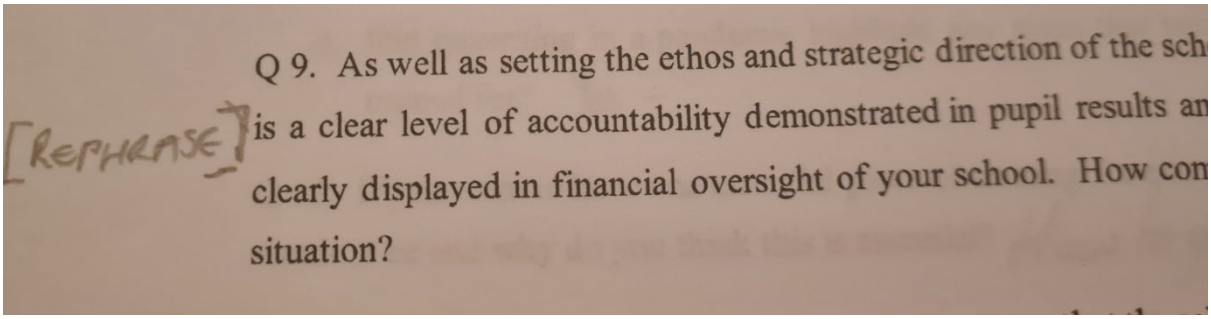


Figure 13 Reflecting on interview questions - an example of field notes

In addition to reflecting on the clarity of the questions and identifying any bias, it was also important to be aware of interviewer/participant interaction. To do this, a visual analysis of the first interview was conducted, following Reissner’s (2018) mapping and analysis of conversational space. This produced a visual representation of the first interview, referred to as a conversational space map (CSM) by Reissner.

Visually analysing the first interview, each statement made by both the interviewer and the participant was entered into an Excel document, along with the following formulas:

- =IF(LEN(TRIM(B2))=0,0,LEN(TRIM(B2))-LEN(SUBSTITUTE(B2," ",""))+1)*-1 (Interviewer)
- =IF(LEN(TRIM(E3))=0,0,LEN(TRIM(E3))-LEN(SUBSTITUTE(E3," ",""))+1) (Participant).

Once all statements had been added, a cluster bar chart (CSM) was created (Figure 11), allowing a visual analysis to take place. The result of this analysis was the visual representation of the interviewer/participant interactional pattern.

Reissner (2018) notes that there are four main interactional patterns: short-short, short-long, long-short, and long-long. They further note that none of these patterns are ‘better’ than the other but rather play their own roles in interviewing. Reading the chart (the bottom to top) for the first interview, it was clear that the overall pattern was short-long, which is often “regarded as the ideal in qualitative research interviews” (Reissner, 2018, p. 212).

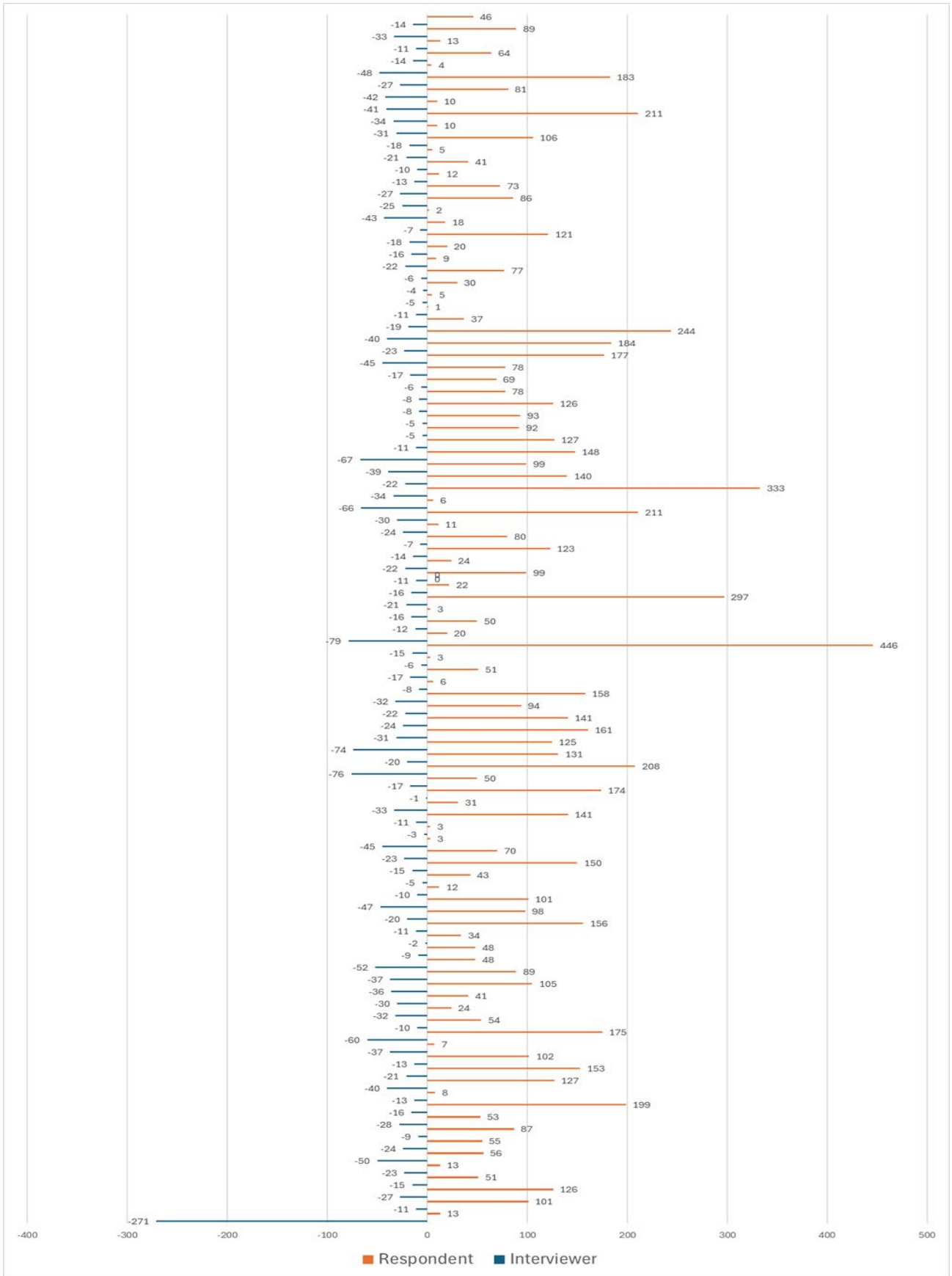


Figure 14 Conversational space map (CSM) of interview 1

3.7 Bias And Rigour

The potential for issues with bias and rigour can increase exponentially by the simple inclusion of people within the research (Robson and McCartan, 2011). However, there are ways to ensure that the impact of any issue is minimised. Utilising both triangulation and audit trail strategies within this research, it is hoped that this will ensure that any potential issues with bias or rigour are addressed.

Triangulation, noted by Denzin (1989) to have four distinct types: data, observer, methodological, and theory, is a strategy widely acknowledged to help ensure rigour and tackle any threat to validity within research. However, as noted by Flick, Von Kardorff and Steinki (2004), there were criticisms of this approach, and subsequently Denzin adapted his belief that triangulation was a validating factor in the search for objective truth to one that acknowledges the role triangulation plays in justifying existing knowledge by uncovering other knowledge. This is not to suggest that the initial four types identified by Denzin should not be utilised; Flick, Von Kardorff and Steinki (2004) suggest that they could be used as a way to begin to underpin knowledge. For the purposes of this research, the methods of triangulation used are data and methodological.

As stated previously, the overall design of this research is mixed methods, so naturally it will comprise both qualitative and quantitative data. The intention is to triangulate between the two types, comparing the verbal data that is gathered through semi-structured interviews, with the overall discrete data that is obtained through the phase 1 survey. Closely related to the data triangulation, the methodological triangulation, more specifically the between-method triangulation (Flick, Von Kardorff and Steinki, 2004), within this research uses qualitative methods

and quantitative methods to achieve a greater depth of knowledge and ensure that all potential aspects are covered.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The research follows the British Ethical Research Association (BERA) (BERA, 2024) guidelines and has endeavoured to ensure that any potential ethical issues were identified. Although the research should be constantly evaluated for ethical concerns, as it is generally acknowledged that ethical issues can occur at any time within the research (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013), it should be noted that the most essential areas to address are informed consent, the right to withdraw, and privacy. To address these areas, the initial page of the survey contained a letter detailing the purpose of the research and clarifying the respondent's right to withdraw at any point (BERA, 2024). Additionally, it explained that whilst the survey itself was not anonymous, all respondents would be allocated a respondent number and that the subsequent data would be anonymised. Furthermore, they were informed that they were only required to supply further contact details if they wished to volunteer for the follow-up interviews.

Prior to the interviews being conducted, a letter was given which reiterated the participant's right to withdraw and how the research would ensure their privacy. In the case of both the survey and interview recordings/transcripts, all data will be stored within an encrypted system and destroyed ten years after the completion date of the research. Following an application for ethical review for this research to the University of Birmingham's Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee, ethical approval was granted on the 17th December 2020.

3.9 Limitations

Sample size and selection:

To explore the effectiveness of Governor training, it is essential to explore the perceptions of training from the viewpoint of those it impacts the most – Governors and SLT. With this in mind, it was essential to ensure that the sample contained both SLT and Governors - people who had a specific knowledge set (Creswell, 2008; Check and Schutt, 2012; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017). This meant that using a purposive sample was the most appropriate approach for the initial survey in Phase 1, as it allowed the survey to be targeted. However, with purposive sampling there are concerns over generalisability (Check and Schutt, 2012; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017; Thomas, 2017).

Sampling for the second phase, whilst still purposive because the sample was taken from a population that encompassed Governors and SLT, was predominantly based on convenience sampling through 'volunteer' or 'self-selection' (Taherdoost, 2016; Sharma, 2017; Berndt, 2020; Andrade, 2021). Initially, this was because the interview participants were selected from those who had completed the initial survey and who had volunteered to proceed with Phase 2 interviews. However, upon initial inspection of the survey responses, it became clear that there were no senior leader responses. Therefore, to ensure that SLT were represented in the second phase, specific SLT who met the initial criteria were directly approached for an interview. Whilst this is an appropriate approach as it meets the needs of the researcher (Robson and McCartan, 2011; Denscombe, 2017), it is important to acknowledge that it can introduce representation bias and impact overall generalisability (Taherdoost, 2016; Andrade, 2021). However, it was the intention of this research to understand Governor training from the perspective of Governors and SLT, with a

focus on using “thick descriptions” (Check and Schutt, 2012; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2013, p. 48; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017) to understand the findings in greater depth as opposed to producing more generalisable results (Florczak, 2022).

In addition to acknowledging the perceived limitations in terms of sample selection, it is also important to consider sample size. As previously noted, the sample size for the survey was N=171, whilst the sample size for the interviews was N=20. It is noted by some (Robson and McCartan, 2011) that a small sample results in the inability to make predictions or generalisations about a population. Again, given the nature of this research and the focus on “thick descriptions” (Check and Schutt, 2012; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2013, p. 48; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017), the need to have a large sample size to enable generalisation was not essential. Whilst some might consider this a limitation (Robson and McCartan, 2011), Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007, p. 242) argue that smaller sample sizes can allow “thick, rich data” to be extracted more easily.

Scope and focus:

The overall focus of this research was the fitness and purpose of primary school Governor training in England, therefore findings will not apply to all levels of educational settings with the UK.

Data limitations:

As previously discussed, any research begins with the hope that it will collect data that is both complete and valid. Unfortunately, this is not always possible, and researchers are met with data containing missing variables. There are numerous reasons for missing variables, including but not limited to survey fatigue, participants

inadvertently or by choice missing questions, or responses that are difficult to read due to the clarity of response or use of unknown acronyms. However, it is still important to acknowledge not only the missing data itself but also the “possibility of bias” (Field, 2018; Gorard, 2021, p. 169). To address missing data within this research, a valid default value, more specifically ‘0’, was used to recode the missing value (Gorard, 2021) and subsequently labelled to reflect its ‘Unknown’ status.

External factors:

Data collection began for this research at approximately the same time as the Covid-19 outbreak. This impacted both the quantitative and qualitative sides of this research. The survey release was delayed by approximately one year. In addition to the delay, it also impacted responses from SLT, with one response to the invitation to complete the survey noting that the Headteacher would be too busy to respond (Appendix 7) The notable absence of survey respondents from the SLT population meant that there were no volunteers for the second phase interviews This lead to the decision to target known SLT directly, to extend an offer to join the research for the Phase 2 interviews.

The impact of the pandemic also influenced the interviews in terms of how they were conducted (Owens, 2022). Intermittent lockdowns, coupled with the inability of the researcher to conduct face-to-face interviews because of a medical condition, led to the decision to conduct all interviews online. Whilst it is still possible to see visual cues and non-verbal reactions, often considered a benefit of face-to-face interviews, there are limitations that should be considered. Saarijärvi and Bratt (2021) argue that to interview participants, it is essential to have reliable technology and internet connections. Further to this, they also note that some participants may be excluded

as a result of the inability to access technology or because they do not feel comfortable using it. In addition to the more technologically based limitations, there is also the possibility that if they are interviewing in a room with another person, it may influence their responses. These are points also considered by Owens (2022), who reflects on technical issues including lagging data, and calls either being dropped or becoming seemingly indecipherable. However, he furthers the potential limitations by including consideration of cancellations or failure to attend by participants, refusal to use their cameras during the interview, and even the possible shift in power between the interviewer and the participant. To address these potential limitations, participants were offered the choice of the virtual platform in which the interview would take place. This ensured that they could not only access the interview but were accessing it on a platform that was both familiar and comfortable to them. In terms of addressing the potential for participants to miss their interview appointment, reminder e-mails were sent to participants prior to their appointment.

Whilst considering the potential for power imbalance, it was decided that during the opening of the interview, questions would be used to try to build rapport (Khan and MacEachen, 2022) with the participants, asking them to talk a little about themselves, for example, how long they had been a Governor and what were their favourite memories. This was done because it is important to try and establish a relationship between the participant and interviewer in the first few minutes of the interview (Gill et al., 2008; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; Denscombe, 2017; Thomas, 2017; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Although it was possible to pre-empt issues with choice and familiarity of platform, cancellation or failure to attend, and power imbalance, technological limitations were more difficult to predict. However, participants were advised that, should there be

any technical issues, an attempt would be made to reinstate the interview. Further to this, if it was not possible to continue the interview, a new time would be offered for interview via e- mail.

3.10 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to ensure that the rationale behind the research design and methodology of this research was clear to all. As such, this chapter has explored the aims of this research and how it fits into the wider framework. Additionally, to understand the reasoning behind the chosen methodology and methods, it was deemed essential to provide an overview of the philosophical approach that led to their selection. Furthermore, to ensure complete transparency in the research process, the potential for bias was discussed, along with the rigour of the research. Finally, to guarantee clarity of the ethical position of this research, there was an evaluation of potential ethical concerns, as well as an assurance that this research would adhere to BERA (2024) guidelines, with a declaration that the research had ethical approval from the University of Birmingham Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee.

4 Data

This chapter will explore the analysis of data from the Phase 1 survey, as well as data from the analysis of publicly available Governor training programmes. There are 8 sections, beginning with an overview of the process of data analysis in section 4.1. The chapter then moves on to section 4.2, which explains how missing data within the survey results was addressed. Section 4.3 provides a general overview of findings. The following section, 4.4, moves on to explore present provision for Governor training, before reporting the findings of governors' self-assessment of their own training experiences in section 4.5. Section 4.6 then reports on respondents' views on improving the quality of training. Finally, section 4.7 explores the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, before finishing with a summary in section 4.8.

4.1 Analysis Of Data

The Qualtrics survey was disseminated via multiple avenues, including "research populations" on social media (Denscombe, 2017, p. 18), autonomous Governor support services, directly to schools, and finally via LA Governor Services, which resulted in 171 responses. The results were exported into Excel before being analysed using both Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and NVivo analytical software. Before analysis could begin, the data was 'cleaned' – this included recoding all the quantitative response variables in the data to ensure the original data remained untouched. After this, each variable was checked for missing responses; any identified were recoded from SYSMIS to 0, and subsequently labelled as 'Unknown'. It is important to acknowledge and respond accordingly to this missing data, as missing data can create "a possibility of bias" (Field, 2018; Gorard, 2021, p. 169). Gorard suggests that an appropriate way to respond to missing data is by replacing missing values with a valid default value, which allows the researcher to

safely retain cases and avoid misrepresentation within findings. Graphs and tables were then produced to give a visual display of results. In the interest of transparency, the graphs were presented as both percentages and frequencies to allow those reading the research to completely understand the data represented.

As noted in chapter section 3.6.2, the decision was made to use qualitative content analysis to analyse the qualitative responses within the questionnaire, given the interpretive nature of the method (Morgan, 1993; Mayring, 2000; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Elo et al., 2014; Mackieson, Shlonsky and Connolly, 2019; Marvasti, 2019).

4.2 General Overview

This section will begin by looking at the demographics of the survey respondents, including age, education, and length of service in governance. Other demographics include school-related information, such as the phase, school designation, and school type. The remainder of this section will report on data that includes the reason that respondents became a governor; the level of respondents' knowledge in respect to their school data, staff, children, and community; how respondents feel performing their roles and how they assess their own performance. The final point of the section explores respondents' general opinions based on their responses to five statements regarding: the qualities of a strong chairperson; their understanding of the link governor role and its relevance to Ofsted inspections; the proportionality of time commitments; and clarity around who is responsible for monitoring governor training. The section finishes by examining the hours respondents reported working weekly.

4.2.1 Demographics

As part of the reflexive nature of this research, it is important to understand the demographics of the population taking part. It will allow those reading the research to better understand and contextualise the results, particularly if they wish to compare with other studies (Hammer, 2011).

The survey identified that most respondents were over 30 years old and were educated to at least undergraduate degree level. Furthermore, most had served 10 or more years as a governor and had governed within the Primary phase, and were predominantly based in mainstream and community schools. In terms of analysis, consideration should be given to the fact that the respondents are predominantly from an older population, educated to a higher level, and have served as governors for a longer length of time than most. This may have implications for the analysis as younger, less experienced governors, and those with a lower level of formal education are not as well represented. Arguably, whilst those who are not as well represented are possibly the ones most likely to need Governor training, the respondents who have served for a longer length of time can potentially bring a greater level of understanding over the quality of training that they have attended.

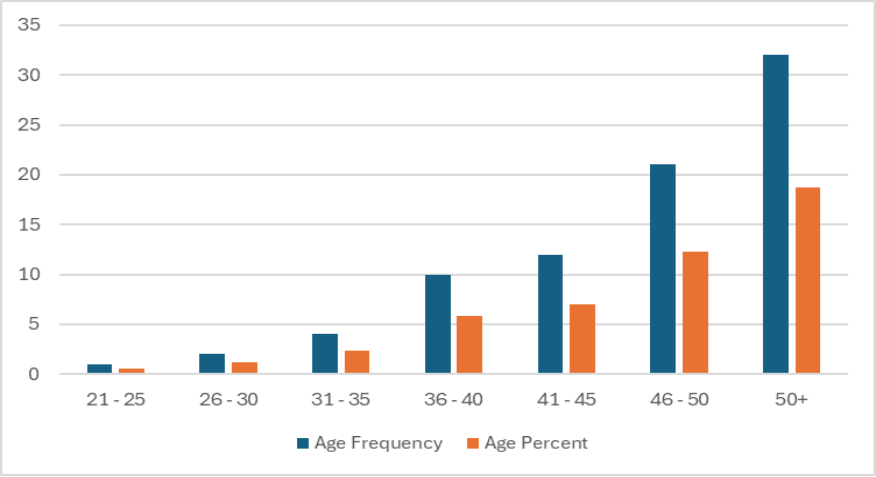


Figure 15 Age of survey respondents

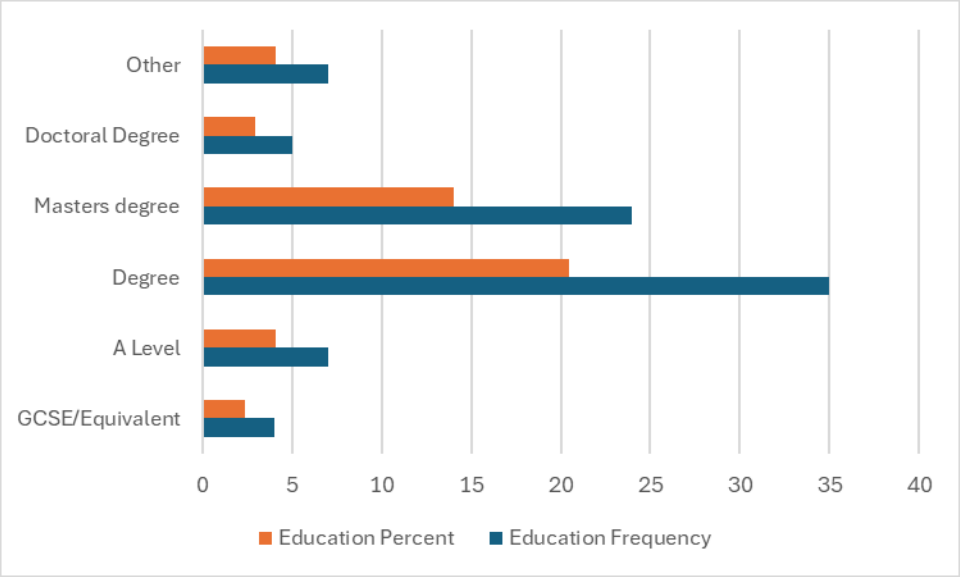


Figure 16 Respondents' level of education

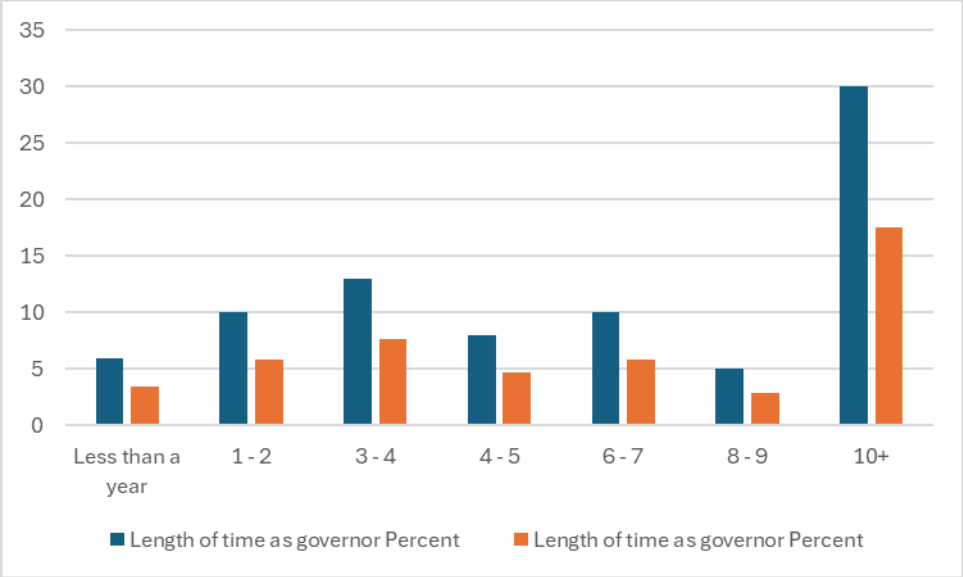


Figure 17 Length of time as a governor

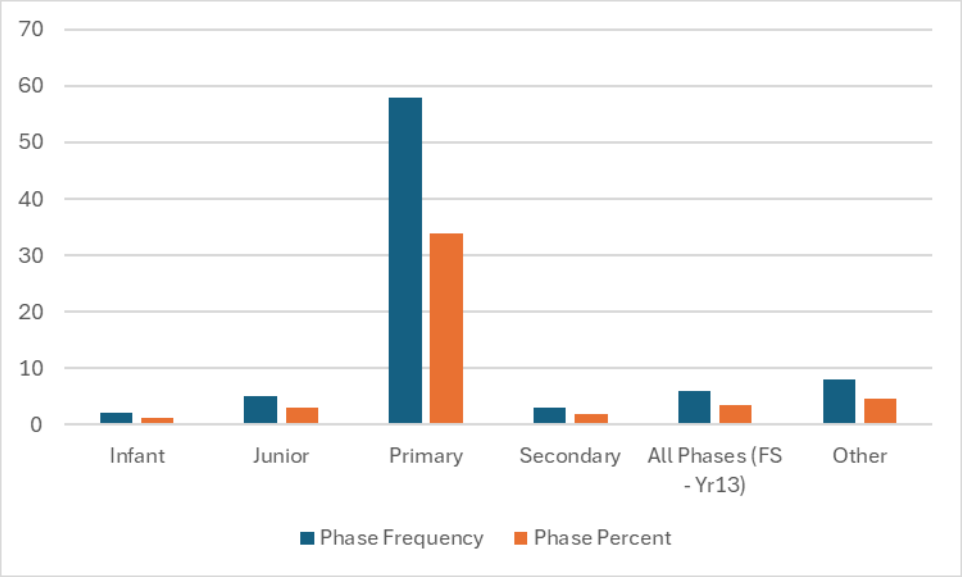


Figure 18 Phase of respondents' schools

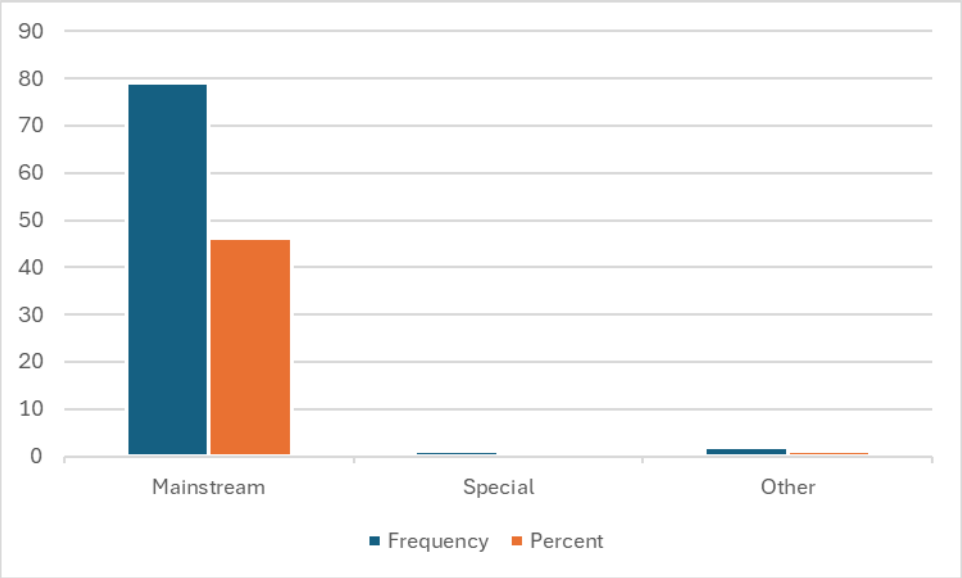


Figure 19 Designation of respondents' schools

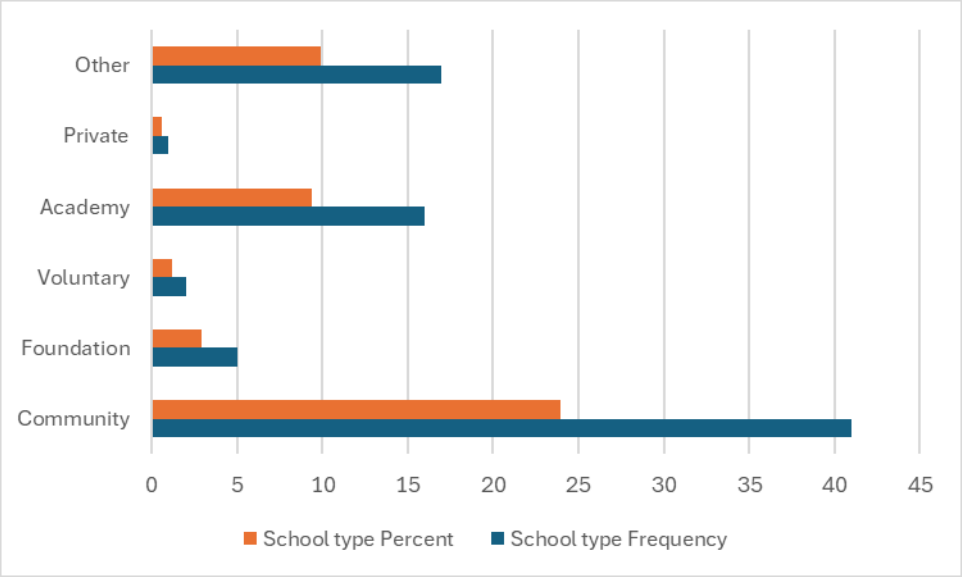


Figure 20 Type of school

4.2.2 Reasons For Becoming A Governor

The reasons expressed by respondents for becoming a governor, with a small proportion (N=12) selecting reasons other than the main three, were to 'Support my child(s) school', 'Support my community', and 'Career development'. The category of 'Other' included: 'Combination - professional parent', 'Previous family member was a governor', 'Retain links to previous career (Teaching)', 'Co-opted for skills', 'Religious', and 'Understand school decisions'.

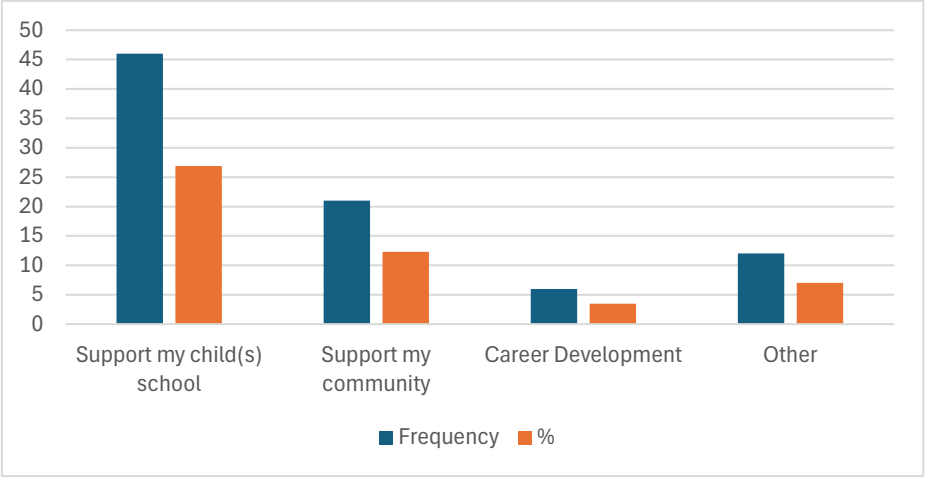


Figure 21 Reasons for becoming a governor

4.2.3 Governor Knowledge

Survey responses demonstrate that Governors felt a high level of confidence in their ability to understand key areas of school life, such as school data, staff, children, and community (Figures 22 - 25). Whilst school data notably elicited the highest levels of confidence among the four areas, there was also a broader spread of neutral to less confident responses regarding participants' understanding of children. This suggests a need for enhanced support to help Governors engage with pupil voice and gain a deeper understanding of the children in their school.

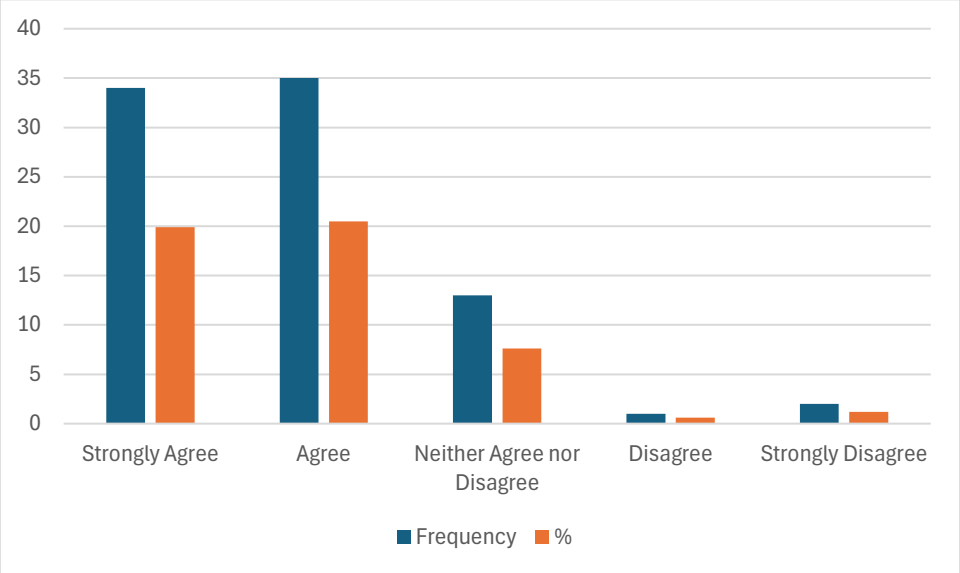


Figure 22 I have a good knowledge of school data

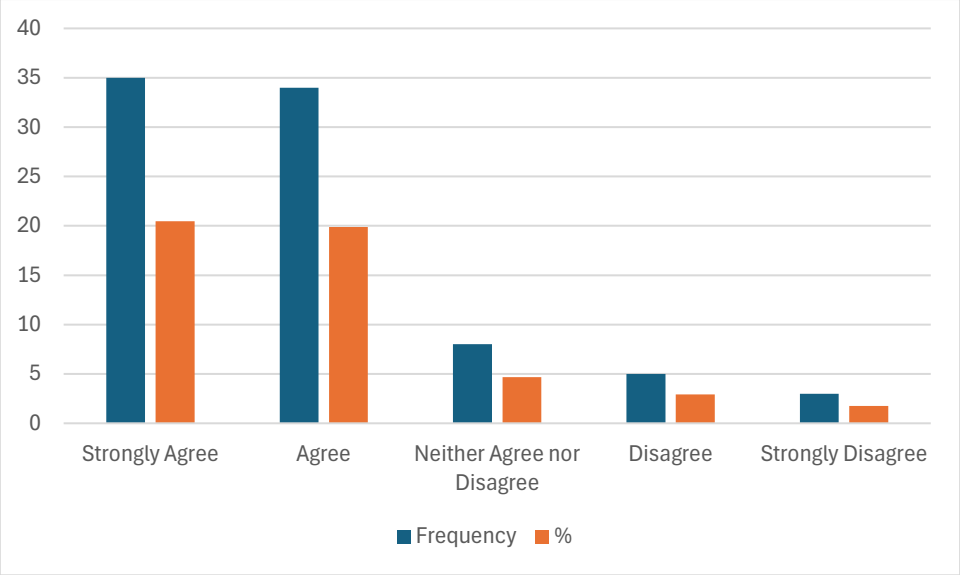


Figure 23 I have a good knowledge of staff

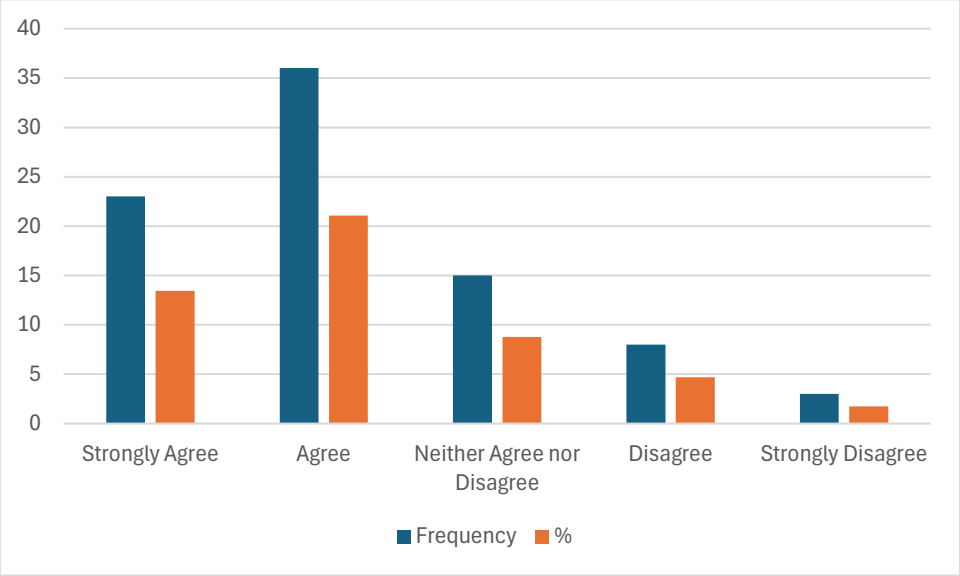


Figure 24 I have a good knowledge of children at the school

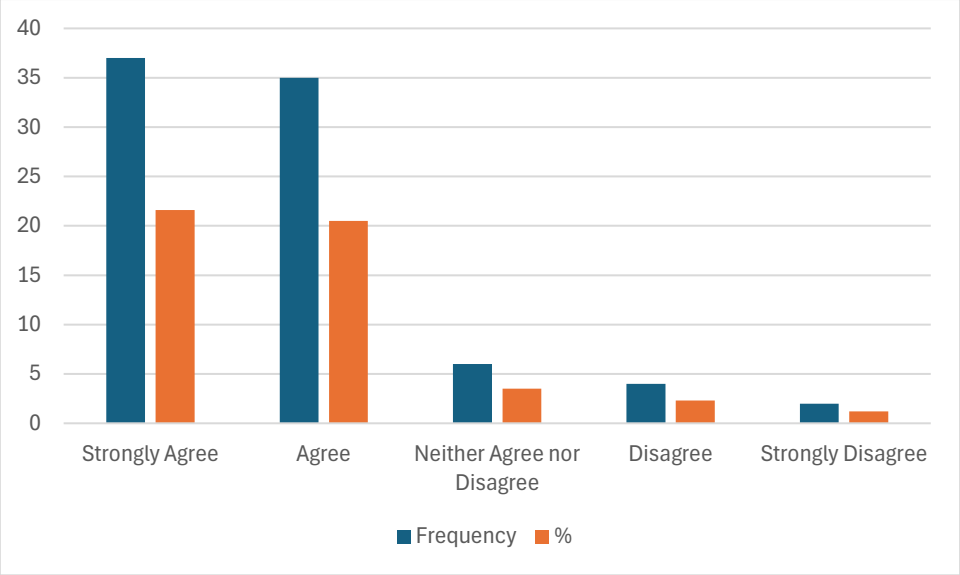


Figure 25 I have good knowledge of the community my school serves

4.2.4 Performing Their Roles

Most respondents selected 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' when responding to the statement 'I feel equipped to ask probing questions' and 'I have a solid understanding of my roles and responsibilities', with only a small proportion selecting 'Neither Agree nor Disagree', or 'Disagree' (Figure 26 and Figure 27).

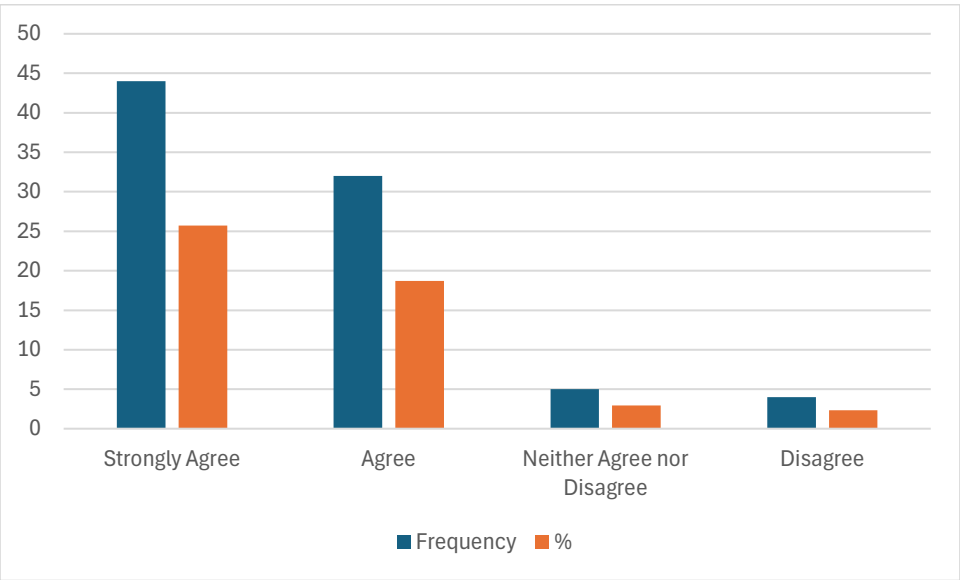


Figure 26 I feel equipped to ask probing questions

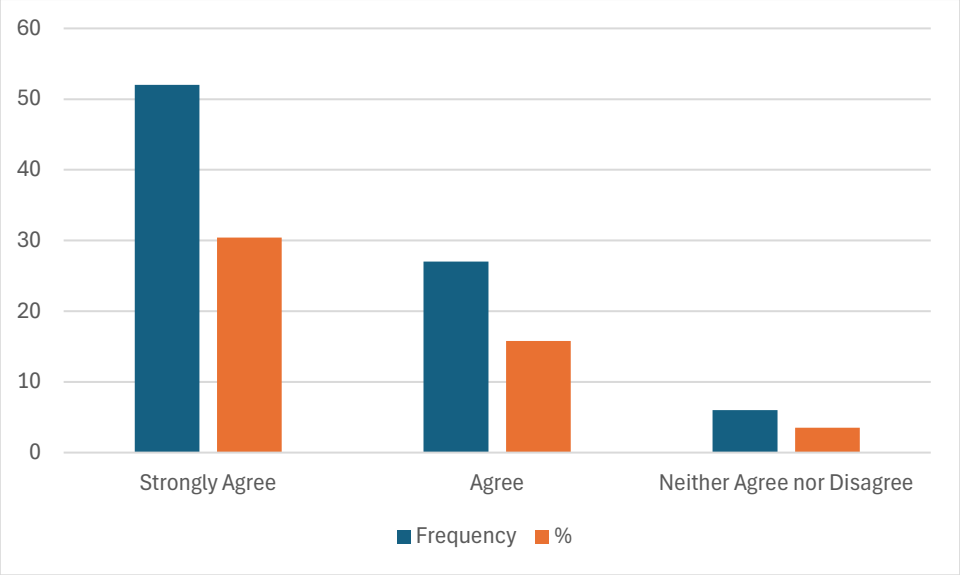


Figure 27 I have a solid understanding of my roles and responsibilities

4.2.5 Governor Assessment Of Their Performance In Meetings

Respondents predominantly selected either ‘Strongly Agree' or 'Agree’ for the statements ‘In Governor meetings, I actively participate in discussions’, ‘In Governor meetings, I feel my opinion is valued’, ‘In Governor meetings, I can freely express my opinions’ (Figure 28, Figure 29, Figure 30), with only a small amount of respondents selecting ‘Neither Agree nor Disagree’, ‘Disagree’, or ‘Strongly Disagree’.

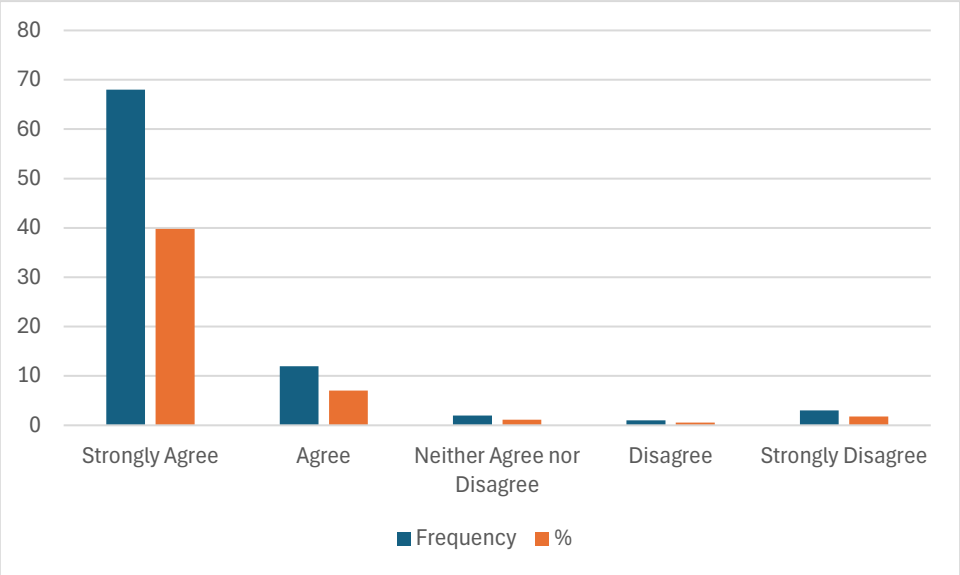


Figure 28 In Governor meetings, I actively participate in discussions

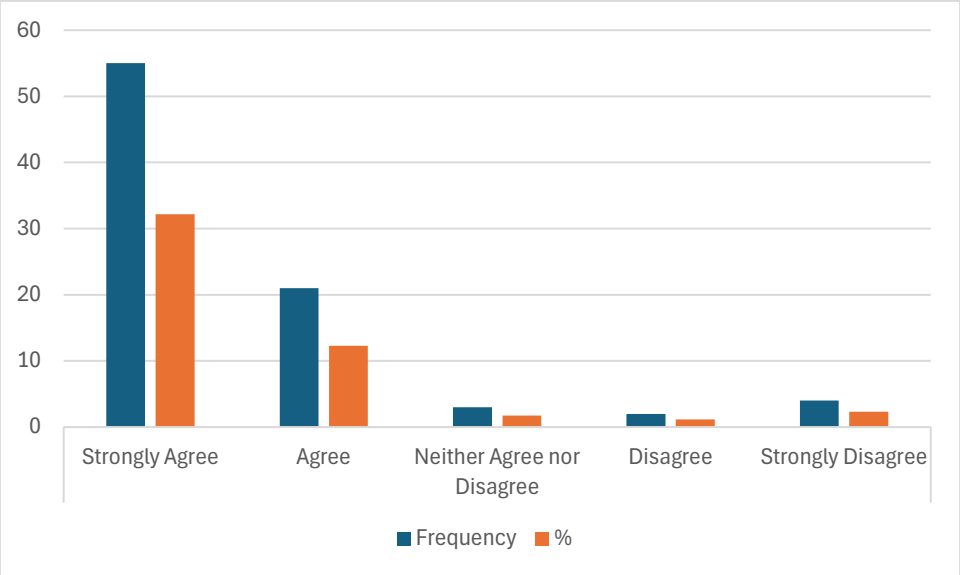


Figure 29 In Governor meetings, I feel my opinion is valued

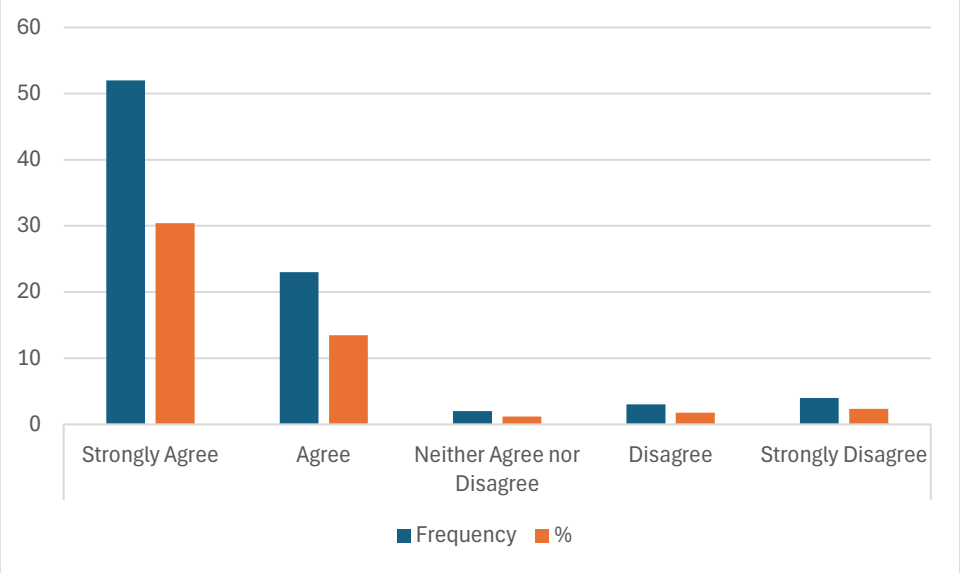


Figure 30 In Governor meetings, I can freely express my opinions

4.2.6 General Opinions

Establishing an understanding of current thoughts around general Governor beliefs was considered essential to developing a better understanding of how Governors felt about leadership and their own understanding of their roles. It was clear that the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a ‘strong chair’ was essential

(Figure 31), with a complete absence of respondents selecting ‘Neither Agree nor Disagree’, ‘Disagree’, or ‘Strongly Disagree’. However, the remaining 4 statements were more varied. Whilst respondents still overwhelmingly selected ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Agree’, there were clearly more respondents selecting ‘Neither Agree nor Disagree’, ‘Disagree’, or ‘Strongly Disagree’. It was evident that most respondents were confident in their understanding of link roles and Ofsted inspections, as well as knowing who monitored training. However, responses to whether the time commitment is proportional to responsibilities had a much smaller difference between the response options. There were clearly fewer respondents who had selected ‘Agree’ or ‘Strongly Agree’, with a noticeable increase in respondents selecting ‘Neither Agree nor Disagree’, ‘Disagree’, or ‘Strongly Disagree’, with the latter 3 options substantially greater for the statement ‘I feel the time commitment is proportional to the responsibilities’ in comparison to the other 4 statements (Figure 31).

As can be seen in Figure 32, most Governors spent between 3 – 6 hours per week on governance related activities, closely followed by Governors who spent between 1 – 2 hours per week. There was a small number of Governors who reported working on governance activities for between 16 – 20 hours per week (0.6%) and 24+ hours per week (0.6%).

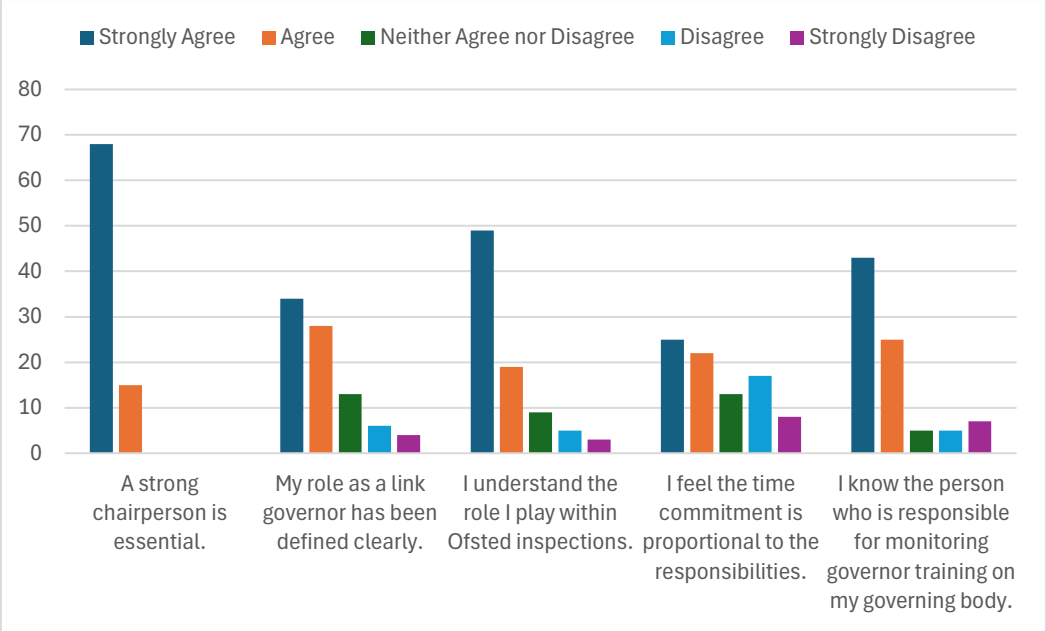


Figure 31 Respondents general opinions

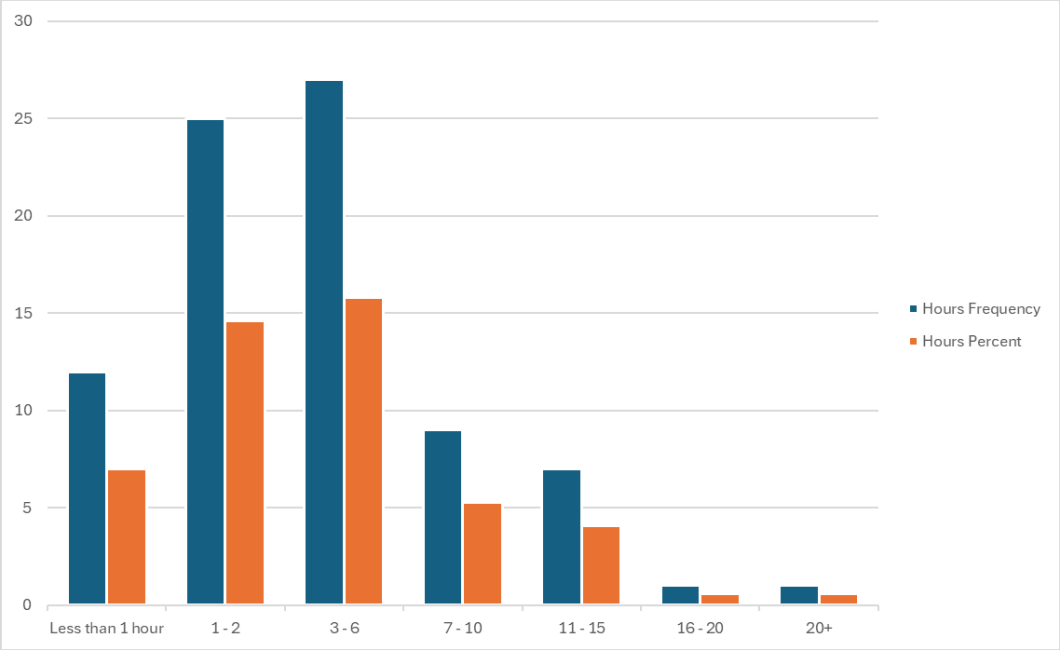


Figure 32 Hours spent per week on governance related activities (N=171)

When comparing those who feel that the time commitment is proportional to the responsibilities with the hours respondents have listed as their average working time on governance related activities (Figure 33), it is clear that the majority that of those

who selected ‘Strongly Agree’ or ‘Agree’ worked less than 15 hours per week on governing related work. Those who ‘Strongly Agree’ that the time commitment is proportional show a decrease from its highest point of 1-2 hours per week, through to the lowest point of 11-15 hours per week. Those who ‘Disagreed’ or ‘Strongly Disagreed’ worked between 1-2 hours per week and 20+ hours. The highest number of respondents who ‘Disagreed’ or ‘Strongly Disagreed’ was seen in those who worked between 3-6 hours per week.

In a comparison of the number of hours respondents reported working on governance related activities (Hours) and their response to the statement ‘I feel the time commitment is proportional to the responsibilities’ (Time Commitment), it was noted that there was a strong positive correlation, with statistical significance at p ≤.05 (Table 11). This suggests that there is a relationship between the two variables, in which changes in one correlate with changes in the other.

Correlations

		Hours	Time commitment
Hours	Pearson Correlation	1	.714**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	171	171
Time Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.714**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	171	171

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 11 Comparison of 'Hours' with 'Time' using Pearson correlation

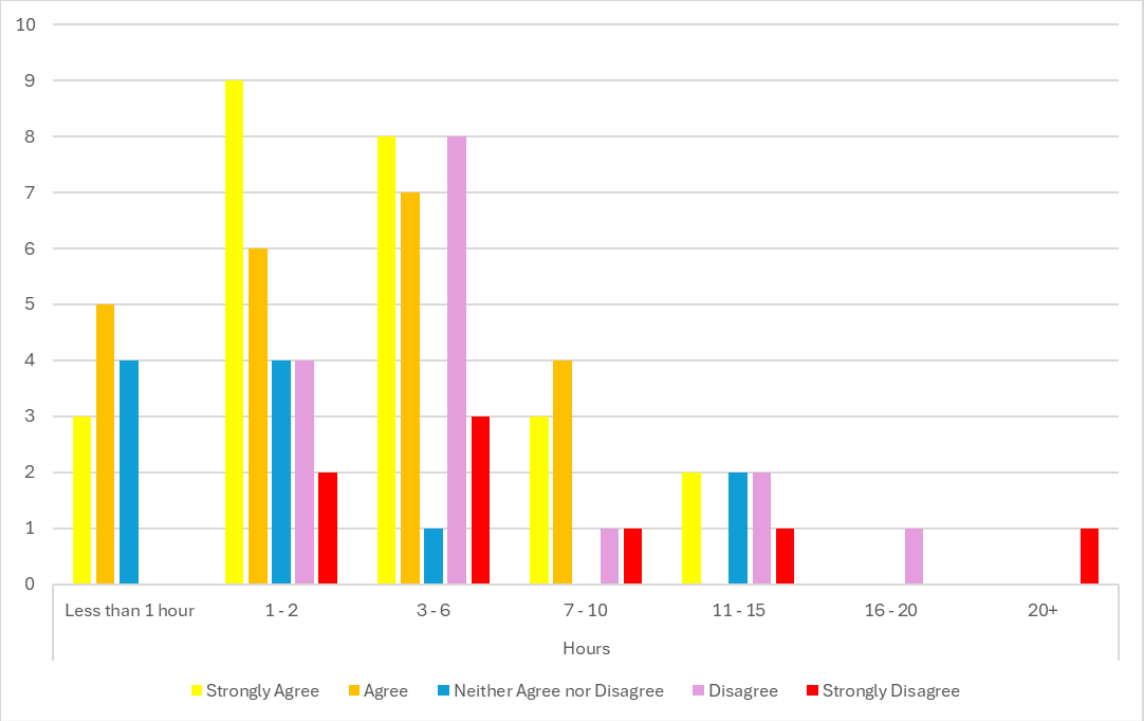


Figure 33 Comparison of hours worked with responses to the statement 'I feel the time commitment is proportional to the responsibilities'

4.3 Present provision for Governor training

Utilising the findings from a documentary analysis of available training programmes, in addition to an analysis of respondents' responses to questions on their experiences of training, this section begins by exploring the amount and quality of training provided. Following this, the section reports on the types of training available, including an in-depth look at induction provision. The section finishes by exploring the types of training that Governors themselves feel would be beneficial to their development as governors.

4.3.1 Amount And Quality Of Training

When considering the current provision for Governor training in England, it is important to consider two points: the amount of Governor training offered and the quality of that training. The amount of training offered was assessed through

examining official documents (Appendix 6), such as training schedules offered by both LA and private companies, and through the responses to the survey designed for this research. Reflecting on the analysis of official training documents, a total of 1,459 modules were identified from a total of 64 providers. This is not an exhaustive list as not all providers had publicly accessible training documents, with some also having limited information on their websites or websites that were inactive/contained broken links. As discussed previously, the documents were used to identify the nature and type of training available. It was not possible to identify the frequency of training for most modules. The modules were then placed into 50 overarching themes, as seen in Figure 34. It is clear that the overall quantity of training appears to be 'good', with a relatively wide range of topics available in multiple formats (online, in-person, hybrid). Within the modules identified, the most frequently represented were related to safeguarding, roles and responsibilities, induction, HR, and finance. These findings are similar to those seen in the survey responses, with Safeguarding training being both the most frequently offered and attended.

As is evident from Figure 35, the majority of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that the amount of training offered was good, with 19.3% of respondents selecting 'Agree' and 12.9% selecting 'Strongly Agree'. However, a minority of respondents selected 'Strongly Disagree' (2.3%) or 'Disagree' (8.2%) as the option most applicable to them. Respondent 75 agreed that the amount of training offered was good, but when reflecting on the quality of training, selected 'Neither agree nor disagree'. This respondent declared that they had "Not had training in last two years" [sic]. Two years is approximately half the standard term of office for a Governor, and so two years could be considered an exceptionally long time without training. It is quite possible that the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted both the availability of training, as

well as the quality, for Governors but additionally, Respondent 130 highlights time expectations - “Timing is always an issue, as Governors we give up a lot of time and then to have to give up more time for training that isn't of any great quality isn't ideal” [sic].

Reflecting on the quality of training, the graph below Figure 36 shows clearly that the majority of respondents felt that the quality of training they had received was good, with 15.2% selecting ‘Strongly Agree’ and 21.1% selecting ‘Agree’. However, 2.9% of respondents selected ‘Disagree’ and 4.1% selected ‘Strongly Disagree’ when presented with the statement ‘I have received good quality Governor training’. Respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed suggested in their responses that training was basic, generic, and in some cases inaccurate.

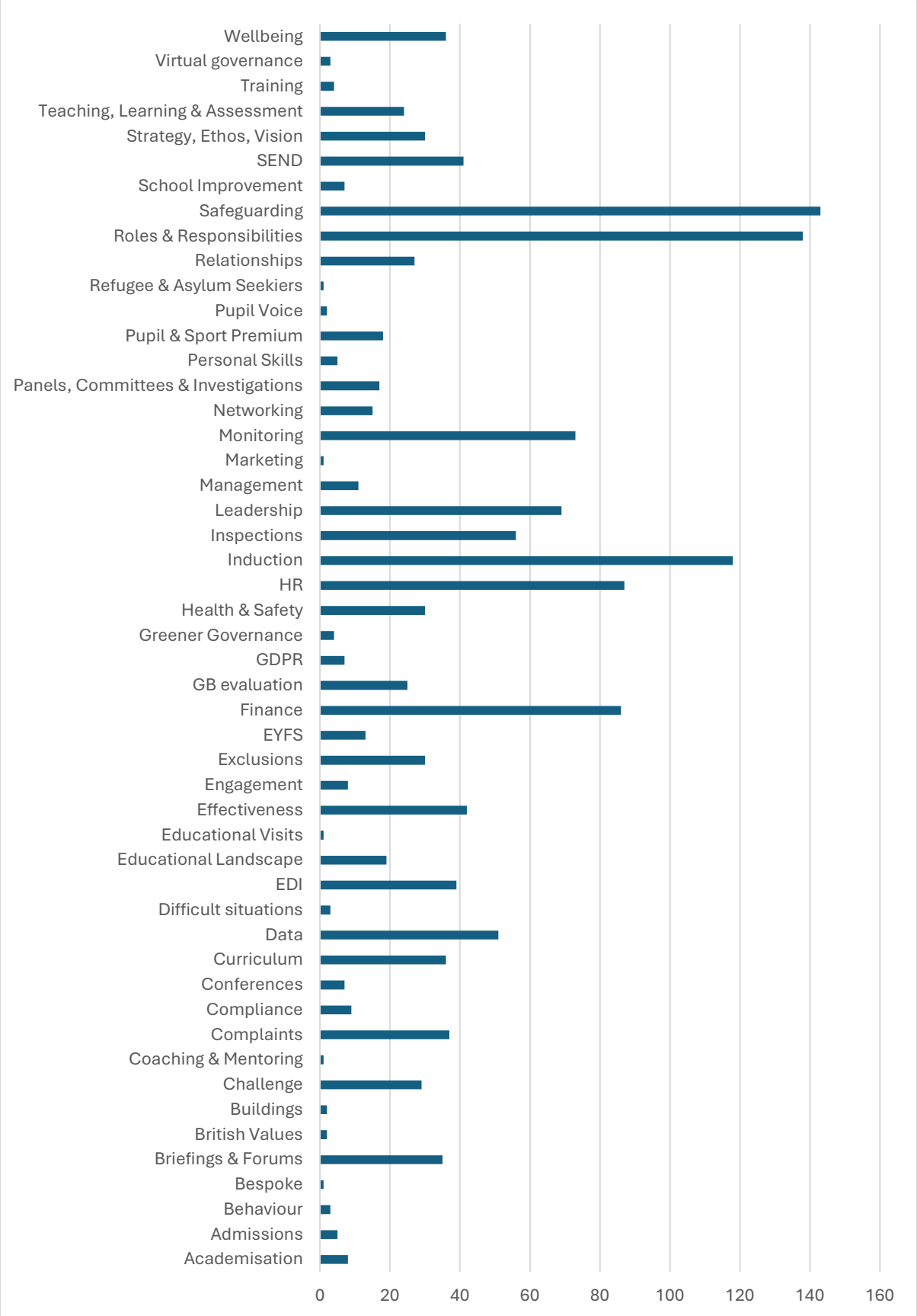


Figure 34 Frequency of Governor training modules within the UK based on publicly available training schedules (N=1459)

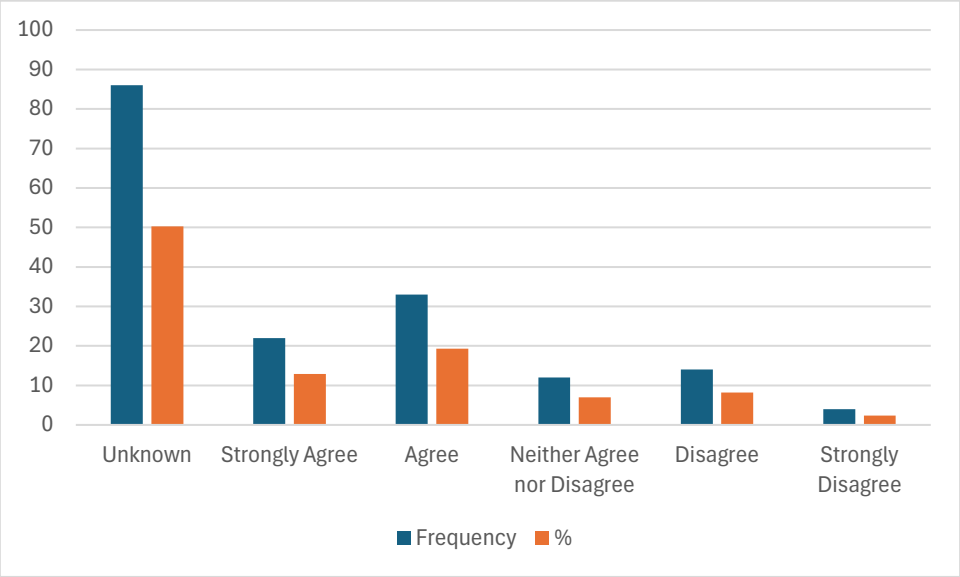


Figure 35 Responses to 'The amount of Governor training is good'

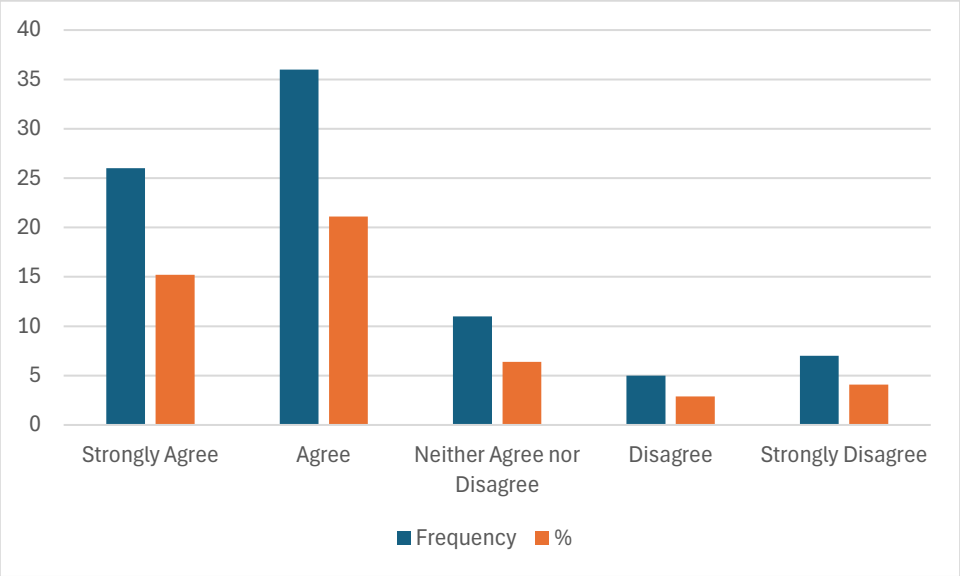


Figure 36 Responses to 'I have received good quality training'

4.3.2 Induction

An essential aspect of current provision that warrants further exploration is Governor induction. Whilst we can see that the majority of respondents either ‘Agree’ (14.6%)

or ‘Strongly Agree’ (18.7%), that ‘There are systems in place to support new Governor inductions (e.g. Governor buddies)’, we can also see an increase in the number of respondents who ‘Disagree’ (5.8%) or ‘Strongly Disagree’ (4.7%) when compared with previous statements answered in the survey (Figure 37). Exploring the responses to Question 8/statement 11 - ‘I feel I had support during my induction year’, Figure 38 shows that most respondents have self-identified with more negative responses when discussing support throughout their induction year. Most respondents selected either ‘Disagree’ (14%) or ‘Strongly Disagree’ (11.1%), which suggests that although there appears to a generally high proportion of Governors who are aware of the support that exists for new Governors, there is a discrepancy between those who are aware of the support and those who have accessed it, given the number of respondents who have felt unsupported in their induction year. This lack of support can be seen in Respondent 90’s declaration that they “…had no induction to being a governor, it was straight in at the deep end”.

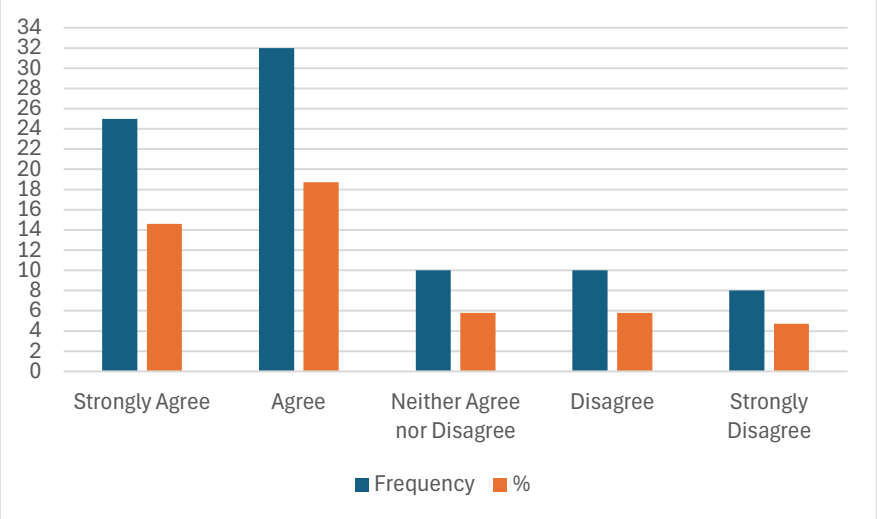


Figure 37 Responses to 'There are systems in place to support new Governor inductions (e.g. Governor buddies)'

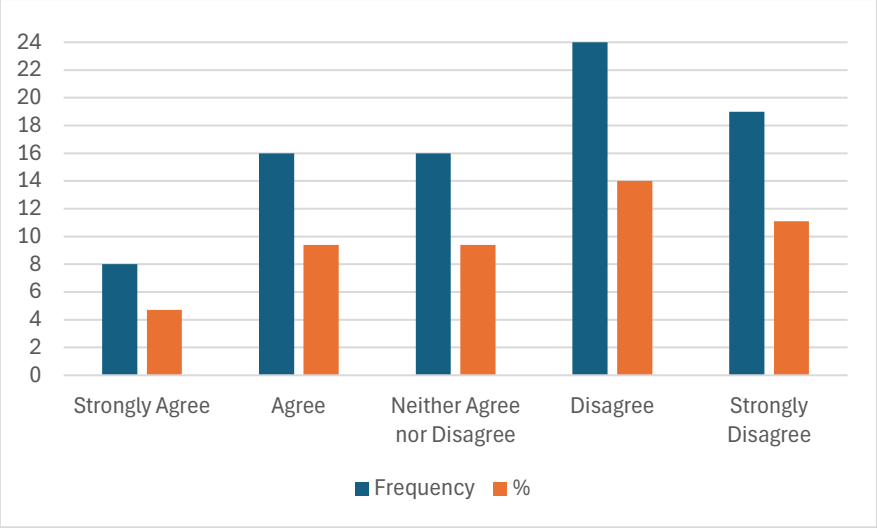


Figure 38 Responses to 'I feel I had support during my induction year'

4.3.3 Types Of Training Received

To establish an overview of the training Governors had received over the last two years, respondents were asked to select all the training they had received from a pre-designed list of options. It is important to note that a two-year time frame was selected to account for the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.. There were 405 options selected in total by all respondents. The graph (Figure 39) shows that ‘Safeguarding’ was the most frequently received training with a total of 18.8% of the 405 responses selected. This was closely followed by ‘Finance’ at 11.4% of the 405 responses. The least amount of training received was ‘Legal’, at only 1.7% of all 405 responses.

To gain a more holistic understanding of the training Governors had undertaken, the survey included an 'Other' option, enabling respondents to identify training not listed in the predefined categories. These responses were analysed in NVivo and subsequently recoded into 27 categories (Figure 40), revealing that 'Leadership' was the most commonly attended training. This suggests that while safeguarding and finance training were the most commonly attended, Governors also had the

opportunity to engage with a relatively broad range of additional training, developing more comprehensive leadership capabilities.

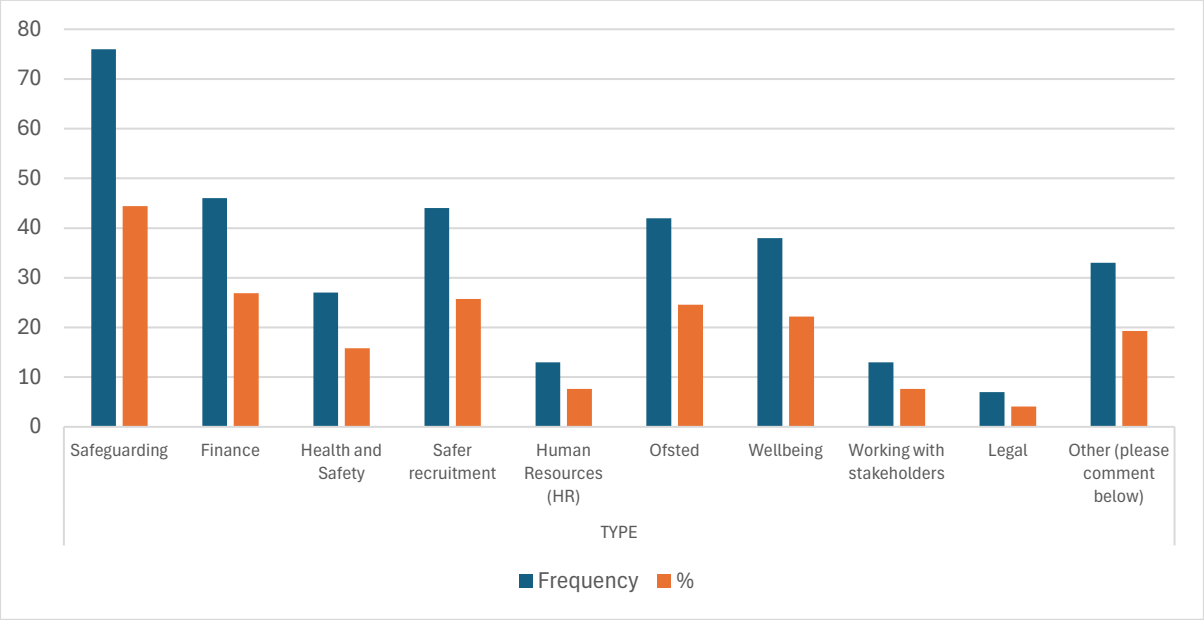


Figure 39 Responses to 'What training have you received in the last two years?

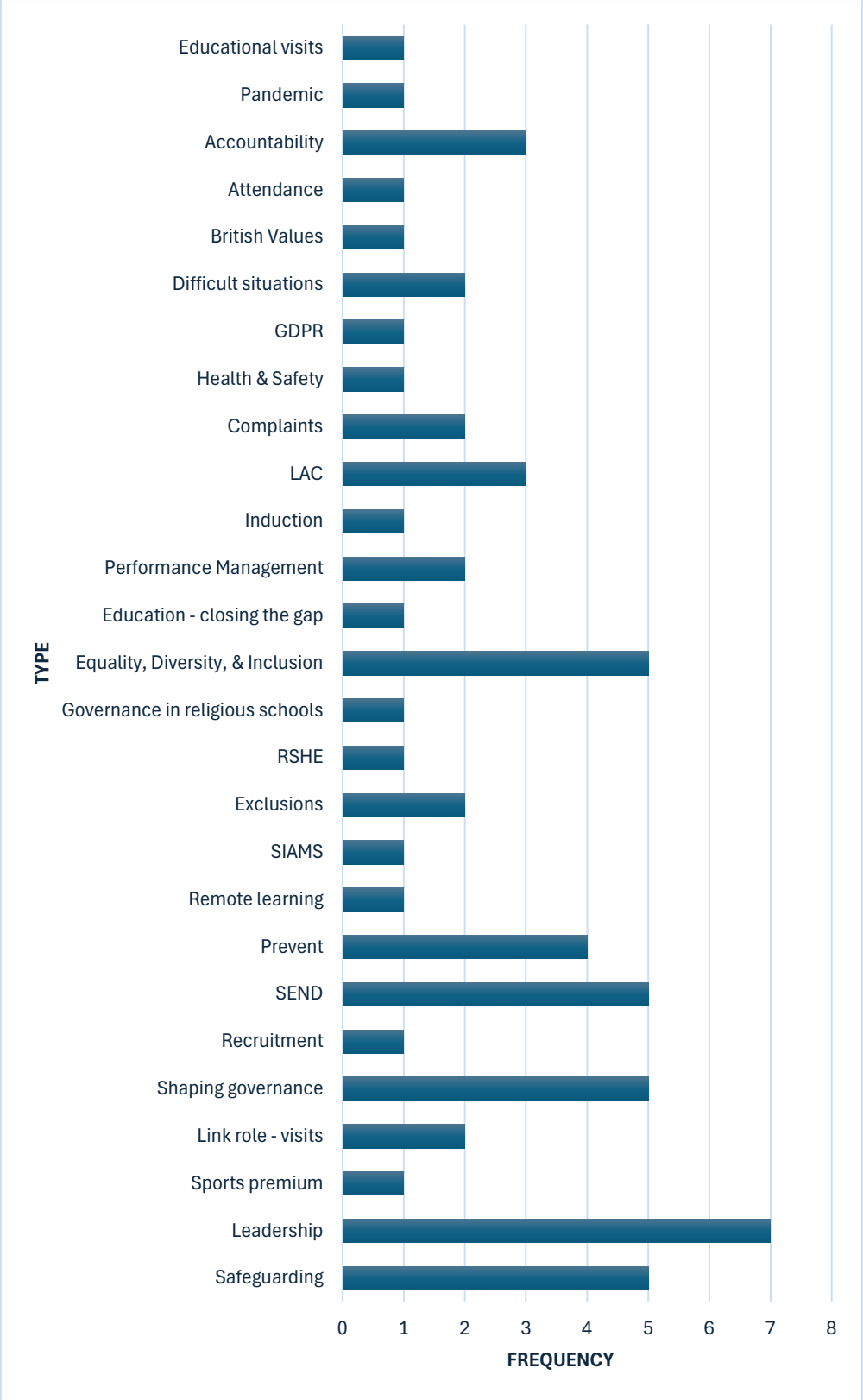


Figure 40 Responses to 'What training have you received in the last two years? = Other'

4.3.4 What Training Do Governors Feel They Need?

Despite generally suggesting that they felt training was good in terms of quality (Figure 36), Respondents were also asked to share their thoughts on what training they believed they needed to help make them an effective Governor (Figure 41). Although there were several areas that Governors felt would be beneficial in terms of types of training, with Finance the most desired topic, there were also suggestions made to improve the quality by including Mentorship and Contextualised Examples, which is somewhat at odds with the overall belief that training quality was good. It is clear from previous sections of this discussion that most Governors felt that contextualising their training would help them to absorb the information that they were being presented with. Respondent 6 specifically requests, “More videos of real-life scenarios”, whilst Respondent 18 argues that what is needed is “more specific mentorship and examples within training rather than the theory”. A “More hands-on practical knowledge of the school” (Respondent 20) is a theme that is clearly running through the responses and one way to achieve this, according to Respondent 22, is to have “More interactive sessions with a lot of contributions from other governors…to provide that extra depth of learning… Interactive sessions where dummy data/scenarios are used and attendees are asked to tackle…where you interact and practise can be helpful to increase confidence”. These findings are significant because they highlight the tension in current Governor training provision, between a Governor's need for theoretical knowledge and their desire for contextualised, practical examples that prepare them for real-world governance.

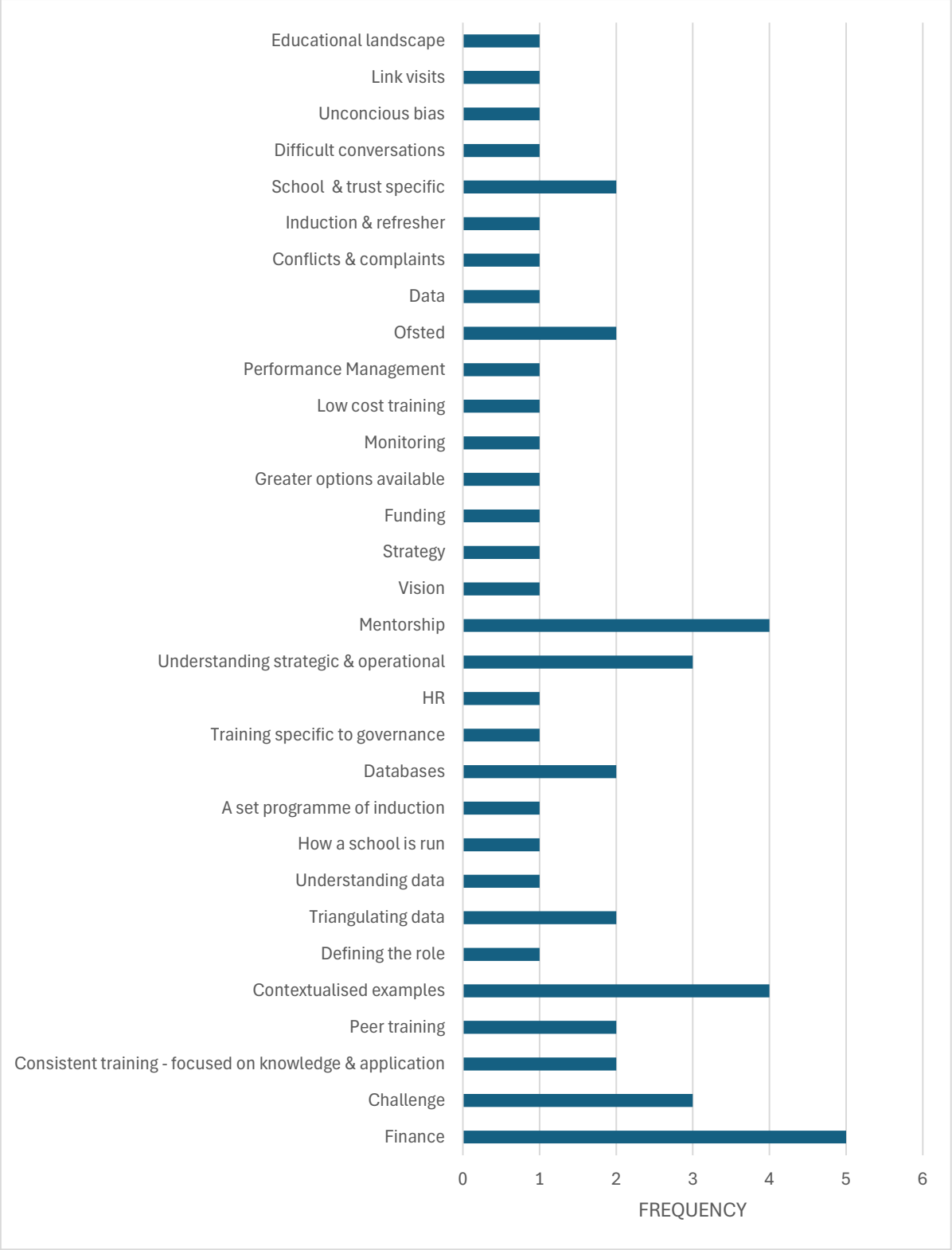


Figure 41 Responses to 'What training would help you to be an effective governor?'

4.4 Governors' Assessment Of Their Own Training

Section 4.5 reports on the findings of governors' own assessments of their training experiences. Specifically, it details Governor perceptions on three main areas: regularity of training, helpfulness of training, and quality of training. Furthermore, this section examines the reasons behind respondents' judgements on the helpfulness of training, exploring qualitative responses received within the survey.

4.4.1 Regularity Of Training

An overwhelming number of respondents Strongly Agreed (36.8%) or Agreed (11.7%) that regular training was essential to the effectiveness of a governing body, with only a small minority selecting Neither Agree nor Disagree (0.6%) or Disagree (0.6%). These findings are noteworthy because they underline the strong consensus among governors on the importance of regular training in promoting effective governance and skill development. However, it also highlights the need for consistent training that is high-quality, context-rich, and practical.

The responses, as seen in the graph below (Figure 42), clearly demonstrate that Governors feel that regular training is essential to an effective governing body. Additionally, the majority of respondents, as is evident from the graph below (Figure 43), were in strong agreement that training helped to provide the necessary skills to be effective, with 26.9% of respondents selecting 'Strongly Agree'. However, despite the overwhelmingly positive response in acknowledging the role regular training plays in producing an effective governing body, as well as how it can contribute to ensuring Governors are equipped with the necessary skills to become an effective governor, it is also seen that some respondents have raised concerns over the quality, level of training presented, accuracy, and lack of context or exemplars.

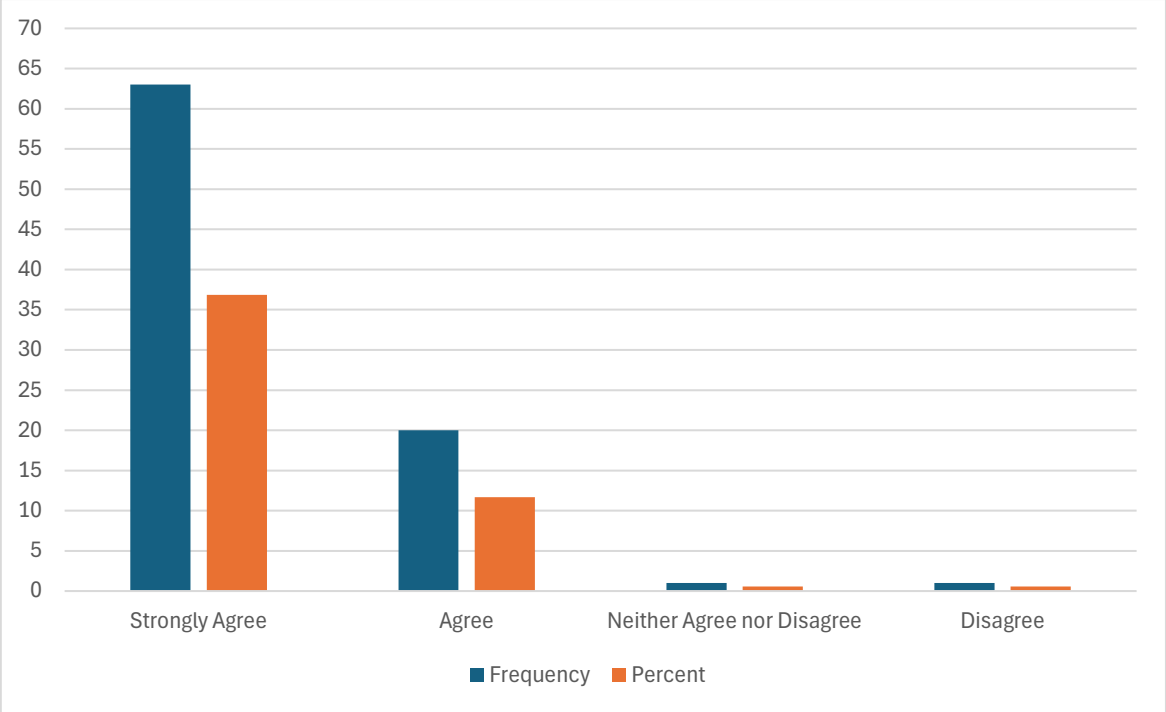


Figure 42 Responses to 'Regular training is essential to an effective governing body'

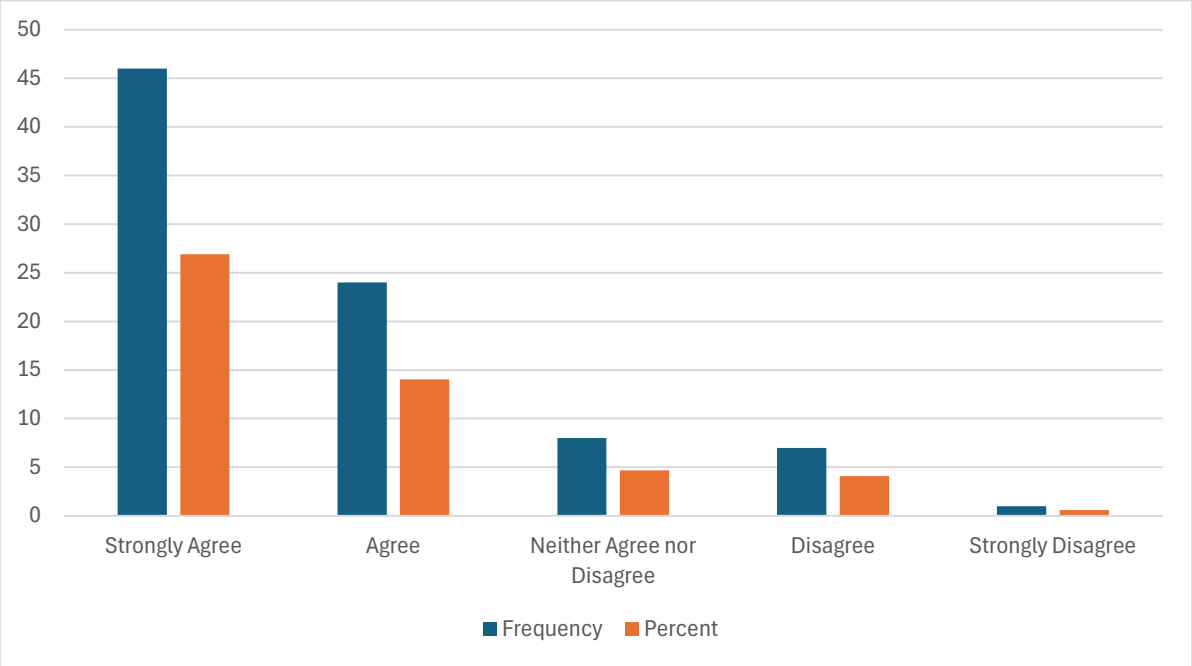


Figure 43 Responses to 'Governor training provides me with the necessary skills to be an effective governor'

4.4.2 Helpfulness Of Training

To ensure that governors' perceptions of their own training were adequately represented, the respondents were asked to reflect on the training they had received and select from 5 pre-defined responses of 'Extremely helpful because…', 'Somewhat helpful because…', 'Neither helpful nor unhelpful because…', 'Somewhat unhelpful because…', and 'Extremely unhelpful because…'. The respondents were then asked to explain their choice in the box next to their selection. As this question was both quantitative and qualitative, both SPSS and NVivo were used to analyse the responses. As the graph below shows (Figure 44), the majority of respondents felt that their training had been either extremely helpful (26.3%) or somewhat helpful (16.4%). A small number of respondents felt it was neither helpful nor unhelpful (3.5%), with only 0.6% feeling it was somewhat unhelpful, and 0.6% feeling it extremely unhelpful.

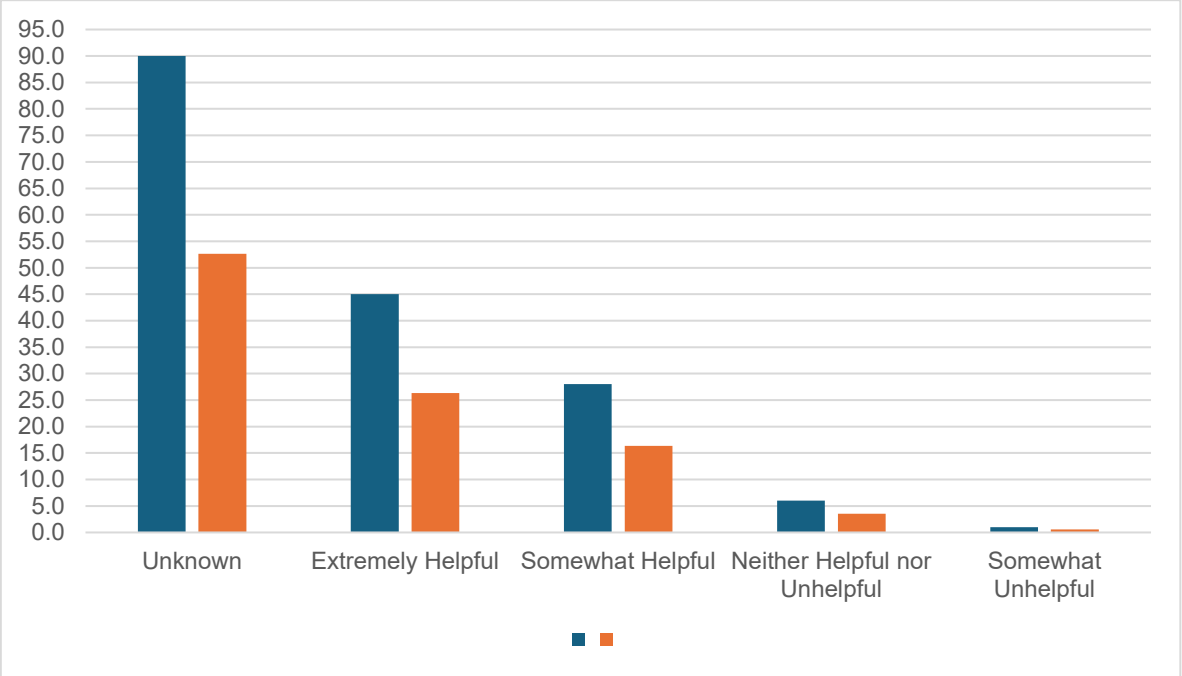


Figure 44 Responses to 'Reflecting on the training that you have received; how helpful do you feel it was to your role as a governor?'

Following quantitative analysis of question 10, which established the frequency of each category within respondents' responses, the qualitative supporting statements provided by the respondents were further analysed in NVivo. Each statement was coded to reflect the reasons for the respondents' selection (Figure 45; Figure 46; Figure 47; Figure 48; Figure 49). Responses indicating 'Extremely Helpful' were coded into 10 distinct categories; 'Somewhat Helpful' into 15 categories; 'Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful' into 4 categories; 'Somewhat Unhelpful' into 1 category; and 'Extremely Unhelpful' into 2 categories.



Figure 45 Respondents' reasons for selecting 'Extremely Helpful'



Figure 46 Respondents' reasons for selecting 'Somewhat helpful'



Figure 47 Respondents' reasons for selecting 'Neither helpful nor unhelpful'



Figure 48 Respondents' reasons for selecting 'Somewhat unhelpful'

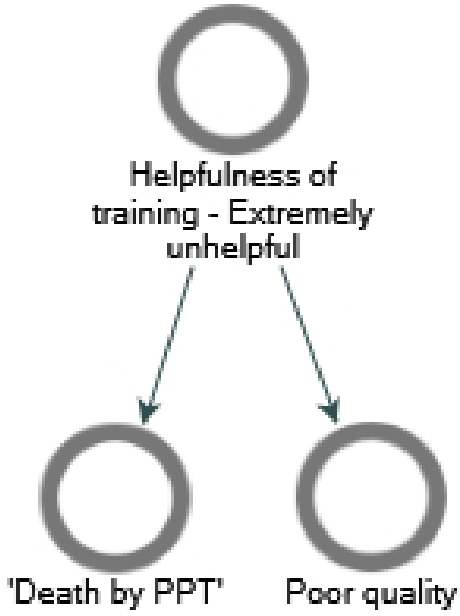


Figure 49 Respondents' reasons for selecting 'Extremely unhelpful'

4.4.3 Quality

An overarching theme throughout the respondents who selected ‘Extremely unhelpful’, ‘Neither helpful nor unhelpful’, and ‘Somewhat helpful’ was the quality of the training. Many noted that the training was ‘poor quality’, ‘basic’, or ‘merely adequate’. Respondent 97 stated that:

> *“Although the training does cover the area that it says it will, it always feels very basic - it could go into a lot more detail and use real life examples or make us work through scenarios but mostly it is all about just being given information to absorb”.*

This banking model of education, as mentioned in chapter 2, in which Governors are filled with what is deemed the necessary information, is further seen in Respondent 7’s assertion that “Most training has not been fit for purpose, you are talked at and a level of experience is assumed” [sic], as well as Respondent 130’s pronouncement that “It's a cascade of information rather than training”.

In addition to respondents’ claims that the training was basic, there were some responses that highlighted the fact that misinformation was problematic in their training sessions, with Respondent 161 disclosing their experience at a recent training session, noting that the “training was misinformed, poorly planned and delivered, not linked to research/evidence and patronising”.

Another concern raised in terms of quality was the generic nature of the training, with Respondent 13 noting that “Training is often generic and not always aimed at governors”. This is further supported by both Respondent 28, who asserted that “The training I have received has been generic through third parties. It has therefore been a useful foundation but lacks the practical examples that could be provided by the school itself”, as well as Respondent 10 who commented:

"While the information was often good, it was often pitched at a level that had to work for both experienced and non-experienced governors. It was often very basic as a result".

The lack of nuance within training has been identified throughout, with respondents noting that it is little more than generic information being presented to them. Respondent 115 summarises this thought, in relation to their experience of safeguarding training, by explaining that it is:

"A useful overview of safeguarding, but not specific enough to how we monitor it as governors".

The question then arises of how to ensure that training is specific enough to meet the needs of governors.

Referring back to Respondent 97, they feel that Governor training "could go into a lot more detail" and "use real-life examples or make us work through scenarios" to contextualise the information and provide a level of depth to the training. Respondent 28 agrees with this, noting that:

"It has…been a useful foundation, but lacks the practical examples that could be provided by the school itself".

This is echoed by Respondent 143, who also highlighted that whilst the basics were presented, "No follow-ups or case studies were provided for more depth". It appears to suggest that training, without contextualising the information, provides a good foundation – a starting point – but needs to be more than a generic presentation of information. Having a practical aspect of training, such as using scenarios and examples, can help a Governor to contextualise their training, and therefore can be

beneficial. For example, Respondent 105 argues that their training was ‘Extremely Helpful’ because:

> *“It gives examples scenarios you might come across as a governor…gives you to the tools to apply what you are learning to that situation and build from there”.*

Respondent 5 also contends that:

> *“…examples given in a variety of situations…help us apply the theory to our own school”.*

Reflecting on the question of how to ensure Governor training is specific enough to meet the needs of Governors, it would seem that contextualising the training and providing exemplars is seen positively amongst many respondents.

4.5 Strong Claims On Improving The Quality Of Governor Training.

This section concentrated on the qualitative responses from respondents who had selected that they felt training was ‘Neither helpful nor unhelpful’, ‘Somewhat unhelpful’, or ‘Extremely unhelpful’. It was the intention of this section to not only identify areas that were a cause of concern for individuals attending training but also to try and identify areas of concern noted by multiple governors. The intention behind this was to explore if these were unique concerns or evidence of a wider issue.

4.5.1 Improving The Quality Of Training

When exploring the respondents’ own assessments of their training, it was evident that there were concerns over four main areas: quality, level, accuracy, lack of context, and exemplars. In terms of the quality, respondents often felt there was a “cascade of information” (Respondent 130) that they were expected to “absorb”

(Respondent 97). Respondent 7 felt “talked at”, complaining that there was also a level of assumption in terms of how experienced they were, which subsequently affected the level the training was set at.

The level of training was considered by most to be “basic” (Respondent 7) and “generic” (Respondents 13 and 28). Most argued that although it was a useful “foundation”, it lacked nuance and was ultimately “not specific enough to know how we monitor it as governors" (Respondent 115). For some, the basic nature of the training could be improved by the inclusion of "practical examples” (Respondent 28) or “real life examples” with the opportunity to “work through scenarios” (Respondent 97).

In addition to quality, level, and the perceived importance of contextualisation, accuracy of the information presented was also a concern raised. Respondent 161 in particular, when reflecting on training that they had attended, noted it to be “misinformed” and “not linked to research”.

4.6 Covid

The impact of Covid-19 has been significant, and it would have been remiss to have continued without exploring the overall impact on school governance. This section will begin by exploring whether Governors felt their role was impacted by the pandemic and, if so, how. The remainder of the section then explores some of the more widely acknowledged areas that respondents had identified in the survey as being impacted by Covid, which included school visits (and by extension monitoring), Governor workload, the role of Governors, those new to governance, and training.

4.6.1 Impact of Covid

Respondents were asked, ‘Do you feel that your role as a Governor was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic?’. The graph (Figure 50) clearly shows that the majority of respondents felt that Covid had impacted their role, with 44.4% selecting ‘Yes’. The remaining respondents selected either ‘No’ (2.3%) or ‘Unsure’ (2.3%). Those who responded ‘Yes’ were then asked to explain how the Covid-19 pandemic had affected their roles (Figure 51). As this question required a qualitative response, it was analysed in NVivo. Respondents’ views were analysed and coded into 12 categories. These findings are meaningful as they provide an insight into the effect of Covid-19 on an often overlooked area of school leadership.

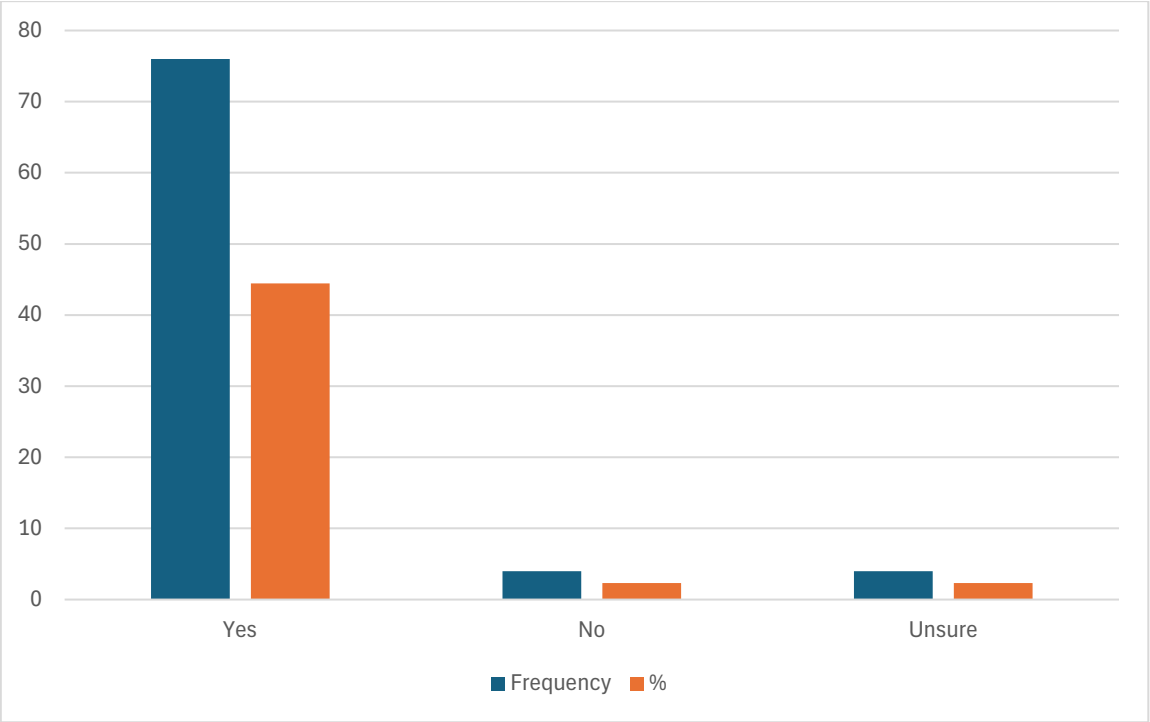


Figure 50 Responses to 'Do you feel that your role as a Governor was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic?'

How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected your role as a governor?
School Visits
Operational side overtook strategic
Virtual meetings & training
Seeing impact of work
Workload
Lack of networking opportunity in virtual training
Unable to fulfil role
Focus of governance
Monitoring
Induction
Meetings
Training

Figure 51 Respondents' views on 'How has the Covid-19 Pandemic affected your role as a governor?'

4.6.2 School Visit

Although there were many reasons presented on the impact of Covid-19 on the role of the school governor, a vast number of respondents considered the inability to visit their schools as one of the greatest impacts. Respondent 66 commented on the difficulties of monitoring from a distance: “We were no longer allowed into School. Monitoring became far more difficult”. This was something that Respondent 26 also noted as an issue: “We were unable to monitor except safeguarding and wellbeing” [sic]. Respondent 22 also expressed concern over their inability to monitor, commenting that it was “Much harder to monitor, harder to get a sense of how things are going from other members of staff than the HT which makes triangulating what we hear from the HT harder” [sic]. However, some respondents, such as Respondent 36, acknowledged that whilst there were difficulties created by being unable to attend in-person visits to school, they had developed ways to stay in touch and monitor:

“Initially not being able to go into school and then finding other ways of being involved keeping in touch and carrying out monitoring visits via zoom”.

Not all respondents found they could adapt so successfully, with Respondent 13 emphasising the challenging nature of virtual interactions, commenting that “Online meetings were a challenge, particularly with a somewhat aging governing body”. Respondent 105 also identified challenges with online interactions, mentioning that:

> *“Lack of face-to-face interaction has cause problems with interpreting others body language. One of our SLT has very obvious body language when someone disagrees with her, and it has been highlighted online” [sic].*

4.6.3 Workload

Another area that appears to have been heavily impacted by the pandemic is Governor workload, with many noting that it “Made it much more time-consuming supporting school” (Respondent 107). Respondent 16 was left questioning their decision to become a Governor because of the heavy increase, explaining that they

> *“Had to provide more support to the SLT than previously and it took more of my time. It made me consider if I was right for governance…”.*

Respondent 5 was also in agreement over the impact of Covid-19 in terms of the increased workload Governors experienced, explaining that there was:

> *“…very little recognition for the extra work Governors have put in. There was no recognition from the LA or the government. We have also had to do a LOT of looking after the Headteacher’s wellbeing and not many people have thought about us” [sic].*

Respondent 102 also commented on the impact of the pandemic in terms of increased pressure on their time commitments, remarking that:

> *"I spent far more time talking to the HT and SLT both from a wellbeing viewpoint, and also as a sounding board for decisions that could have had life-changing consequences for staff and pupils".*

There was a clear acknowledgement that Governor workload increased exponentially, with the implication that a lot of this time was dedicated to supporting SLT within schools. This is further evidenced in Respondent 108's response, admitting that they experienced:

> *"More responsibility and many more hours of work. Providing support to the SLT that wasn't needed before due to the extra pressures placed on them".*

4.6.4 The Role Of Governors

A concern seen amongst the survey responses was the lack of guidance from LAs in terms of how to continue monitoring. Respondent 105 discusses not only the lack of guidance their governing body received in terms of monitoring, but also the impact of returning to a more recognised level of monitoring:

> *"There was no guidance at all from the LA over the pandemic for how Governors would be expected to monitor schools. We had to be more light touch than usual, but schools now seem reluctant to return back to scrutiny" [sic].*

The frustrations of little guidance, coupled with the changing focus of the SLT, meant a change of focus for governing bodies also.

Respondent 10 talks in some depth in their survey response about this change of focus, explaining that even though the overall role of Governors has not changed, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that:

> *"…the nature of governance has needed to be different - completely different focus, with more time spent on risk management, supporting over-stretched SLT wellbeing and supporting SLT to deal with constant change. No data available meaning having to find new ways to monitor and hold to account for educational progress. No trips onto school site available, so types of monitoring possible have changed" [sic].*

There appears to be a sense of loss of clarity from some respondents, in terms of how they were expected to remain involved and complete their governance duties. Respondent 15 confesses to feeling isolated, explaining that:

> *"we didn't meet for quite a while after schools closed and I felt out of the loop with what was going on".*

This sense of isolation was echoed by Respondent 25, who said they were "Not able to visit the school, so feel more disconnected" [sic], as well as Respondent 98 who felt that they were:

> *"Now quite detached from the school - no visits in over 1 year, no face-to-face meetings".*

It was not simply the disconnect and sense of displacement that many respondents noted as an issue whilst trying to Governor during the pandemic, but also the unexpected need to support SLT from a more pastoral perspective. Respondent 102 highlights the increase in time needed to support the well-being of SLT, whilst simultaneously feeling the pressure of supporting them as they made extremely important decisions:

> *"I spent far more time talking to the HT and SLT both from a wellbeing viewpoint, and also as a sounding board for decisions that could have had life-changing consequences for staff and pupils".*

Respondent 108 also recognises the increase in their workload, acknowledging the additional pressure that the SLT were under:

> *"More responsibility and many more hours of work. Providing support to the SLT that wasn't needed before due to the extra pressures placed on them".*

Some Respondents also reported feeling that the boundaries between strategic and operational blurred, as seen in both Respondent 154's response which stated that there was a "Blurring of lines between operational and strategic", and Respondent 17's comment that there were "Blurred boundaries between operational/strategic, and support/challenge" [sic]. Several respondents commented on the increased pressure placed on SLT throughout the pandemic, and given the sense of disconnect and displacement that many Governors felt, it is possible that boundaries were crossed as Governors tried to reconnect and re-establish a role for themselves. With the ever-changing nature of the pandemic, Respondent 78 felt that they:

> *"Couldn't focus on strategic as leaders switched into operational / crisis management mode" [sic].*

This acknowledges, to a degree, the crossover between strategic and operational whilst explaining that it was as a result of being in 'crisis mode'. Respondent 3 supports this further by explaining that the:

> *"Gov role is largely strategic but strategy has often had to take a backseat to operational practical concerns" [sic].*

Reflecting on the normal, expected strategic/operational split, Respondent 97 was more direct in their response, stating that "…all strategic work ground to a halt". Respondent 112 expands on this by explicitly saying they "Had to get involved with operational/risk assessments".

4.6.5 New Governors

As a result of school closures and Covid-19 restrictions implemented by government departments, LAs, and schools, some new Governors have never been into their school or received any form of induction to their role. Respondent 117 explains:

"I started as a co-opted Governor at a new school in November 2020. I still haven't been on site so have no real idea of the culture or ethos of the school or the community it serves. I've not met the teachers or pupils and monitoring has been remote and light touch" [sic].

This was an experience that Respondent 118 also went through, commenting:

"I am a new Governor in my first year of my first term. All meetings have been online and i have been unable to go into school and meet with any of the children" [sic].

Another respondent - Respondent 28 - noted that:

"I joined as a new Governor during the pandemic. I therefore haven't been able to visit the school or meet anyone (SLT, HT, Governors or children) in person".

Respondent 90 joined a governing body, with little experience of the educational system, and although they had undertaken some training, they began a role that was complex without the necessary initial support:

"I had no experience of educational system prior to becoming a governor. I have completed the mandatory safeguarding and prevent

training that is required by the academies trust. I had no induction to being a governor, it was straight in at the deep end…" (Respondent 90).

The inability to visit schools was also seen by more experienced Governors as problematic for newer Governors, with Respondent 27 openly noting that "We couldn't visit the school which makes it really difficult for new governors".

4.6.6 Training

Training overall was another area impacted by the pandemic. Initially training completely stopped until people became more accustomed to online learning platforms. With the increased use of online platforms for meetings, training was moved online. However, not all Governors found this beneficial. Respondent 6 claimed that virtual training limited "interactions with other governors". It is clear that for this governor, training was more than gaining new knowledge; it allowed them to network with others. Whilst Respondent 6 shared a negative effect, others noted that the adaptation to online training was a positive, with Respondent 22 explaining that

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"training is accessible now because before often I could not get to training in person due to work commitments" [sic].

Respondent 104 shared this outlook, noting that:

"…One positive is that training went virtual which was great for use of time and doing when work was quieter".

Whilst some may see being online as a disadvantage, the fact that it allowed other Governors to attend training around work and personal commitments could be seen as a positive in terms of increasing accessibility. This, in turn, would potentially increase the ability of others to undertake a governing role, as it would allow a level

of flexibility to those who work or have family/caring responsibilities and ultimately increase representation on governing bodies.

4.7 Summary

In general, respondents felt that they had a good level of knowledge in terms of knowing their school data, staff, children, and community. However, there were small differences between respondents' responses to the statements on their knowledge of school data, staff, and community when compared to their responses to the statement on their knowledge of the children in their school. When reflecting on their knowledge of the children, there was a higher proportion of respondents who felt they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, as well as an increase in those who either disagreed or strongly disagreed. It is possible that the increase in negative or neutral responses in answer to the question about understanding the children in their school indicates a gap in their engagement with pupil voice in terms of the children's experiences or needs. This could suggest the need to facilitate opportunities for Governors to develop a better understanding of their student population.

In addition to feeling that their knowledge was generally strong in terms of school data, staff, children, and community, Governors also felt that they had a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, which enabled them to perform their roles well, feeling able to ask probing questions. Additionally, Governors generally felt that they performed well in meetings, with most acknowledging that they actively participate, they can freely express their opinions, and that they feel these opinions are valued.

When asked to reflect on governance more generally, it was widely acknowledged that a strong chair was essential. Reflecting on their own role, respondents generally felt that their link roles were clearly defined, they understood their role within Ofsted inspections, and they were aware of the person who was responsible for monitoring training within their governing body. However, although most considered the time commitment proportional to their expected responsibilities, it was noticeable that the difference between the responses ‘Strongly Agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘Neither Agree nor Disagree’, ‘Disagree’, and ‘Strongly Disagree’ were smaller, with more disagreeing than seen in the previous four statements. This suggests that there is less consensus on this point compared to other areas. Moreover, Governors who worked fewer hours viewed the time commitment as appropriate, while those with heavier workloads were less satisfied. It is possible that heavier workloads, especially when combined with training expectations, may negatively impact views on the role's long-term sustainability.

In terms of the current provision of Governor training, there were three main areas identified throughout the interviews: amount and quality of training, induction, and type of training. As this research was predominantly conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was essential to explore the impact on school governance. It was clear from the responses that there was a perceptible change in the role of school Governors, with once somewhat clear boundaries newly blurred. Additionally, respondents felt that there was a lack of guidance that could help them to understand how school governance, and by extension, the role of school governor, factored into the dramatically altered educational landscape.

Meetings stopped before moving online, which created a whole new set of concerns, such as digital illiteracy and the inability to read body language, which one

respondent shared impacted their ability to understand whether the HT agreed or disagreed with what was being discussed. Moreover, respondents felt that their role moved from the ‘critical friend’ who oversees and monitors, to a more pastoral role supporting the school and SLT as they tackled the unknown consequences of the pandemic. The consequence of the move towards a more emotionally based role was noted by respondents who reported an increase in their own workload as a result.

As with the meetings, training initially stopped before eventually moving online. However, in addition to the difficulties experienced during the establishment of online meetings, training online was impacted by limited access to networking relationships. However, there were also benefits identified, with online training considered to be a more equitable approach as it made training more accessible to those who may not always have the time or availability to attend in-person training.

Despite the impact of Covid-19, Governors felt that the amount of training offered was good, with a number of respondents reporting that they had attended several different types of training. Notably, safeguarding and finance training was seemingly attended by the highest proportion of respondents. An interesting aspect of the findings was that training that covered areas such as Health and Safety, Human Resources, working with stakeholders, and legal, had fewer reported Governors attending than training on Ofsted. Whilst not generalisable given the number of respondents, it does suggest that further exploration would be beneficial to understand why Governors would choose to attend Ofsted training over training that could arguably be considered more practical for the role they have to perform.

In addition to the multiple types of training that were reportedly offered to Governors, most acknowledged that there was a system in place to support induction. However, it was interesting to note that whilst a high proportion of respondents acknowledged there was an induction system in place, most felt that they were not adequately supported during their induction year, with some admitting that they had not received any Governor training in the two-year period since they had joined their governing body.

Further to the lack of support during their induction year, some Governors reported concerns over the quality of the training currently available. The concerns raised varied in nature, with some milder concerns around the generic nature of the material used within the training sessions, the lack of contextualisation, and feelings of being “patronised” reported. At the other end of the spectrum were concerns that some might consider more substantial, with some respondents arguing that the training was inaccurate, lacked any form of research base, and was ‘not fit’ for purpose.

When considering how to address concerns over the quality of training, respondents recognised the importance of improving the overall quality of training, moving it away from a more didactic lecture-based approach, to one that encompasses practical examples and encourages experienced-based learning. Respondents particularly felt that training that contextualised learning was essential to developing their understanding, as it allowed them to take the theory and see it in action. Furthermore, respondents wanted more accurate information, aimed at a more appropriate level. In addition to the improvements needed in terms of current training, Respondents also considered other approaches to Governor development, suggesting that some form of mentorship may be beneficial. Despite the concerns

raised in terms of the quality of training, the majority of respondents still believed that training was helpful to understanding their role and developing their overall confidence to perform as an informed and therefore potentially more effective governor.

5 Interview findings

The following chapter, which is divided into 10 sections, will report the findings from the interviews conducted with Governors and SLT. It begins with section 5.1, which explains the analysis of interview data, before exploring the themes generated during the analysis process in sections 5.2 – 5.10. Section 5.2 deliberates on the theme of power that was generated in interviews with both SLT and governors. Following this, section 5.3 will discuss the impact of boundaries in governor/SLT relationships and roles. The fourth section (5.4) will address the theme of clarity. The pandemic featured heavily throughout the research, and the interviews were no exception, with section 5.5 exploring the impact of the pandemic. The second half of this chapter (sections 5.6 – 5.10) explored the generated themes of mentoring (5.6), challenge (5.7), support (5.8), training (5.9), and recruitment and retention (5.10).

5.1 Analysis Of Interview Data

This chapter explores the themes generated from a total of 20 online interviews – 17 Governor and 3 SLT with various roles and years of experience (Table 12). The interviews were conducted online partially as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions around meetings, but also because it allowed a certain level of flexibility in conducting the interviews.

The Governor participants were selected from those who had left contact details at the end of the initial survey, volunteering to take part in the second phase of the research. As there were no responses from SLT during the survey phase, a decision was made to contact members of SLT individually. The lack of response from SLT was attributed to the timing of the initial survey, released during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thomas (2017) notes that a commonly adopted analytical method within interpretative research is the Constant Comparative Method (CCM). This involves revisiting the data, repeatedly comparing the different aspects within the data, generating codes, and subsequently creating themes. As part of the thematic analysis, the interviews were transcribed, and all participants were anonymised and given a pseudonym (Table 12). Furthermore, any potentially identifiable data was redacted or anonymised within the transcripts. The transcripts were then read through to gain a familiarity with the data (Thomas, 2017; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). After this, the anonymised data was coded into a "researcher-generated construct" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4; Creswell and Creswell, 2018), a descriptive word or phrase that summarised the transcription data. Following the CCM, the data was revisited, allowing time for reflection on the codes used, as well as providing a basis for generating overall themes. Following theme generation, Thomas (2017) recommends theme mapping, illustrating the map with appropriate quotations. For this research, an overall theme map was produced for both Governor and SLT responses (Figure 52 & Figure 53).

The Governor interviews generated 9 themes: Boundaries, Challenge, Clarity, Covid, Mentoring, Power, Recruitment & Retention, Support, and Training. SLT interviews generated 8 themes: Boundaries, Challenge, Clarity, Covid, Expectations, External Skills, Power, and Support. There were 5 themes seen across both SLT and Governor interviews: Boundaries, Challenge, Clarity, Covid, and Support.

Senior Leaders			
Name	**Role**	**Years in SLT**	**Occupation**
Stella	Staff Governor & associate	13	Deputy Headteacher

Lawrence	Ex officio Governor	28	Headteacher
Bob	Ex officio Governor	21	Headteacher
Governors			
Name	**Role**	**Years as a Governor**	**Occupation**
Elizabeth	Governor	9	Head of Digital Education
Ava	Vice Chair	3	Teacher
Charlie	Governor	11	Governor Service Lead
Andrew	Governor	15	Teacher
Emilia	Governor	4.5	Housewife
Noah	Governor	4	Engineer
Peter	Governor	30	School Governor Trainer
Georgia	Governor	4	Marketing
Ewan	Governor	4	Retired Council Worker
Libby	Chair	20	Retired Teacher
Morgan	Governor	4	FE College Services
Ronan	Governor	11	Recruiter
Jessie	Chair	5	Teacher
Sara	Governor	12	Doctor
Luca	Associate Governor	3	Deputy Headteacher
Louis	Governor	12	School Governor Trainer
Zoe	Governor	6	Housing Officer

Table 12 Pseudonyms of interview participants, their governing body role, length of time as a governor, and self-identified occupation

5.2 Power

One of the largest themes was power, with Governor interviews generating 3 sub-themes (Relationships, Roles & Responsibilities, and imbalance) and the SLT interviews generating 2 sub-themes (Relationships and Imbalance). There were two sub-themes within both Governor interviews and SLT interviews that overlapped – Relationships and Imbalance.

5.2.1 Power - Relationships

Both Governors and SLT reflected on the impact of the power dynamics on the relationship between the governing body and those in a paid position of leadership, predominantly between the CEO or Headteacher and governors. Most of the

Governor participants highlighted difficulties arising from a change in leadership, with phrases such as "…walking on eggshells", "bullying", and "get rid of us" being used to emphasise their experiences. Andrew's reflection on his own experience exemplifies the overall experience of most of the governors:

> *"Because you work in education, you might read between the lines that abrasive style might be a synonym for bully…and if you thought that, you wouldn't be too far wrong…"*

Andrew, who spoke with a quiet anger in his voice, was not alone in feeling that the relationship between Governors and paid leadership was impacted by power relationships. Several Governors suggested reasons for the difficulty or deterioration of these relationships, with some attributing it to an atmosphere of oppression following the appointment of a new Headteacher. This feeling of oppression was created through a variety of issues, but predominantly it would appear that most Governors felt that there was either an inability or unwillingness of the Headteacher to engage with the governing body. This lack of engagement manifested itself in numerous ways, with some Governors commenting on feelings of perceived inadequacy over governors' abilities, from Headteachers. This led to a few Governors sharing feelings of frustration at the belief that Headteachers wanted to dictate what should happen within the governing body, noting a level of disregard for those who were not educational professionals.

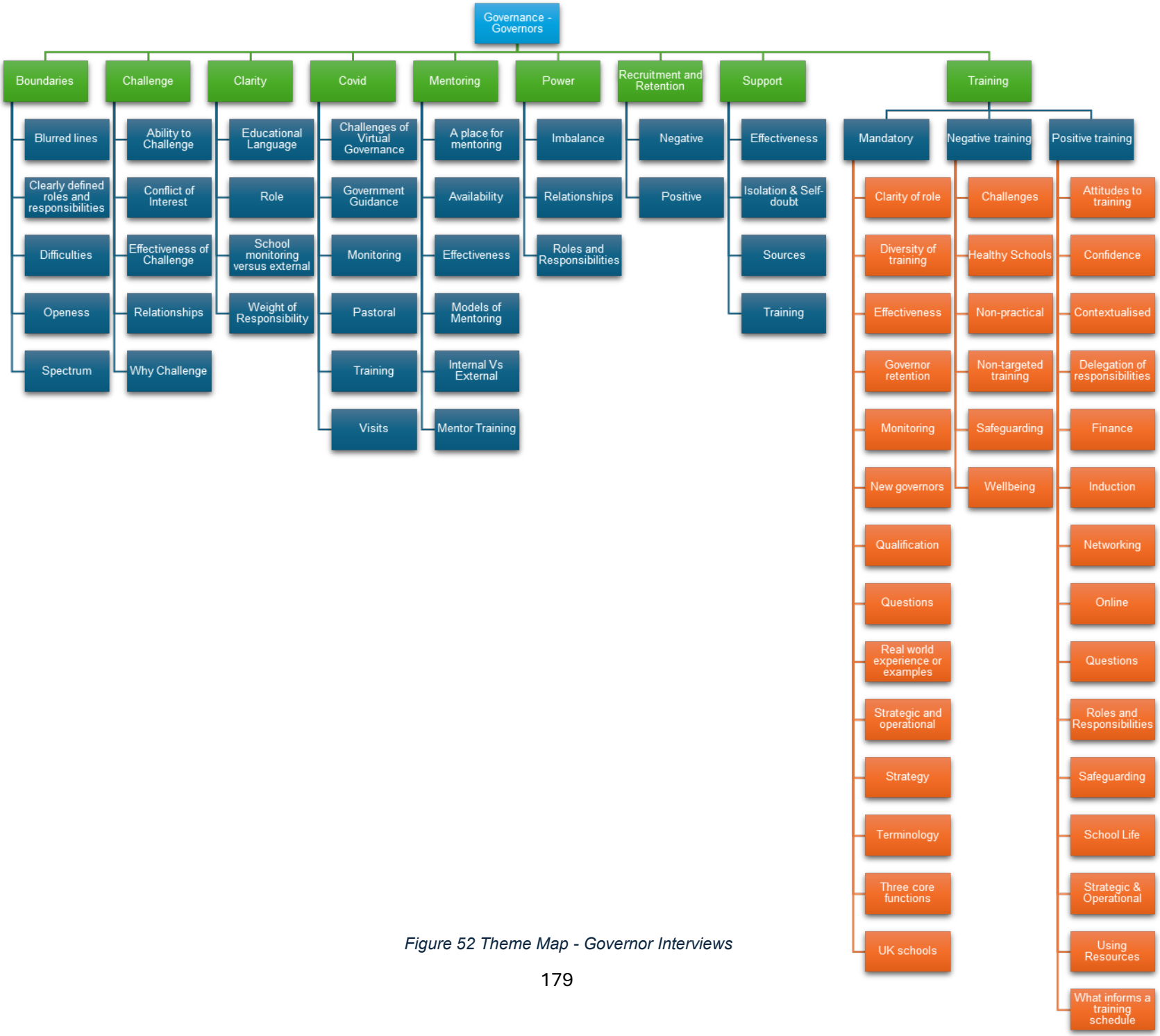


Figure 52 Theme Map - Governor Interviews

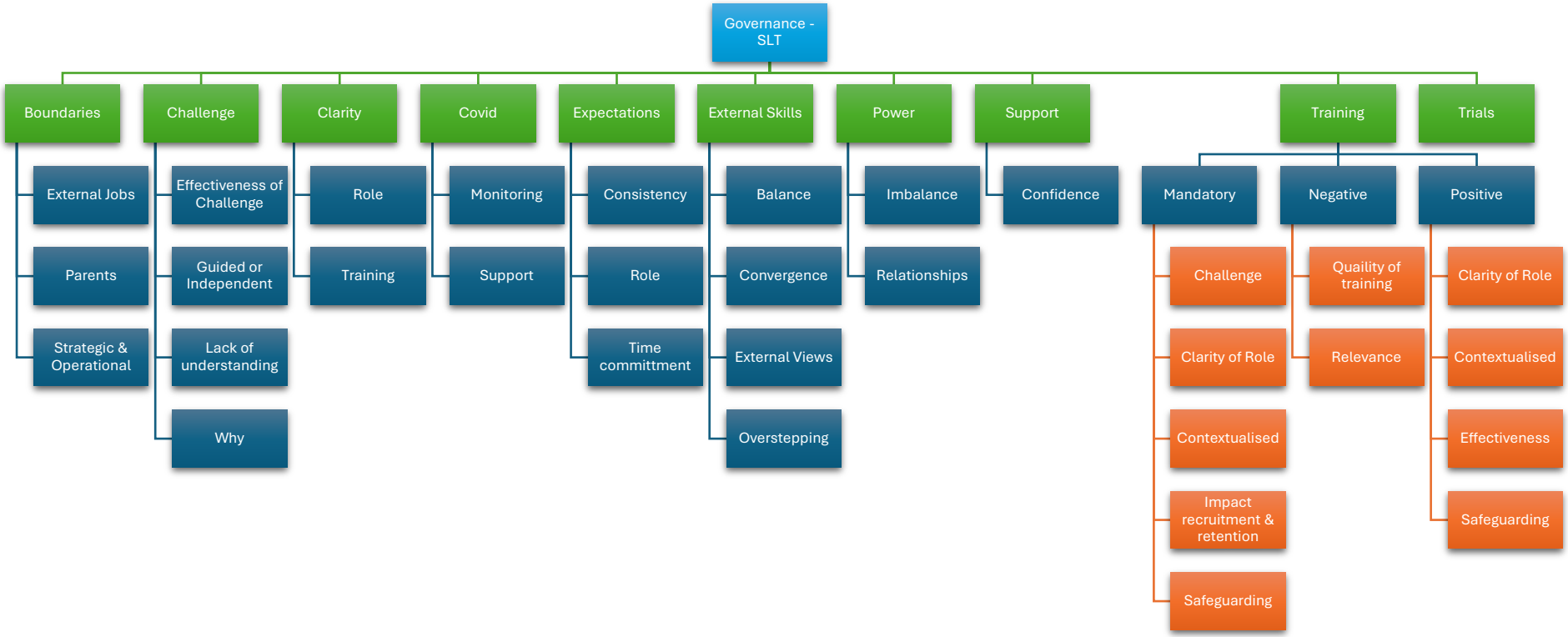


Figure 53 Theme Mapping - SLT Interviews

This experience can be summarised by Libby, a Governor with several years of experience, who noted that the previous Headteacher would regularly define their relationship:

> *"All he ever said to me was…'I'm… the lead professional. My job is to explain things to you' … From his point of view… he was the lead professional and we were subservient to him…"*

On a personal level, it was clear that Libby felt underappreciated and resentful in terms of how she felt the Headteacher treated her. However, it was subsequently suggested that this disregard, was in part, a result of the general perception of parent Governors by Headteachers and CEOs. When reflecting on this, Governors suggested feeling restricted in their ability to work effectively because of how the Governors felt they were both perceived and treated. Indeed, when speaking with the SLT participants during the interviews, there was an element of hierarchy displayed, with some references made to their role as the "professional" and "expert" leading the Governors to where they, as professionals, believe they should be. This was reflected in an experience shared by Luca, in which several Governors left following a speech given by the Headteacher, paraphrased by Luca as "you're either with me or you're not". However, one Headteacher, Lawrence, acknowledged that working with parent Governors was not necessarily something that should be a concern:

> *…actually the…bonds you form as you're… working together, I mean you have potentially a closer relationship with them.*

It was clear that most Governors felt a link existed between the type of relationship the Headteachers had with the governing body and the level of transparency that resulted from it. The perception that those with a good working relationship with their

governing body are more transparent and conversely that those with a negative relationship are less transparent, possibly suggests that there is a link between the perception of Governors as colleagues of equal standing or someone who they consider 'subservient'. For the SLT, the relationship is one that is, or should be, based on a hierarchy, with SLT at the top. Bob and Stella both reflect on the need to lead the Governors in terms of strategic direction and challenge. Bob shared feeling as if he was "bringing Governors with me rather than…Governors telling me what to do", whilst Stella felt the need to pre-empt challenge, commenting:

> *"…my approach has always been to tell them what the challenge is before they tell me what they think the challenge is…"*

Whilst this does not necessarily suggest that they feel Governors are subservient, it is clear that the relationship is not of equal standing in their eyes, something experienced by Libby.

Although the issue of relationships impacted by perceived power dominance has been seen within most Governor interviews, it was predominantly from the perspective of Headteachers/CEOs imposing their experience or views onto the governing body. Libby's interview also noted this as her lived experience. However, it is possible that the relationship had been impacted in a different, more nuanced manner. As Libby reflected on her belief that the Headteacher always regarded their working relationship as one of 'Lead professional' imparting their knowledge to somebody they considered less knowledgeable, she noted, with some exasperation, her own experience:

> *"…I would say, but I've been a teacher longer than you have, a senior leader longer than you have, so I think I probably know what I*

have to do, you know…I've been a chair longer than you've been a teacher!"

Libby's experience of feeling undervalued, whilst based quite specifically on her own extensive experience within an educational role, and more specifically within educational leadership, was not an uncommon thread within the interviews. A few Governors who worked outside of the education system but who had extensive experience within school governance also felt that their experience impacted their relationship with SLT, potentially suggesting that the conflict was less around power dominance and possibly more associated with a power struggle.

It was clear that the disconnect between Headteachers'/CEOs' perceptions of governors' abilities and the lived experience of most Governors affected relationships. However, another factor that impacted relationships was the disconnect in expectations between Multi-Academy Trusts (MAT) and Multi-Academy Companies (MAC) and those sitting on more local boards for each. One aspect of this was how Governors were publicly perceived, with some Governors highlighting the significance of the name of the governing body. Libby, for example, reflected on how being referred to as 'Local Academy Committees' rather than Governors, emphasised how their role was seen as subordinate to those on the board. It could be argued that by renaming the Governors, which in the eyes of some could be seen as a demotion, is effectively reducing their role. The feeling of both role and status being reduced was not isolated, with other Governors also sharing how they felt the role was being reduced within the trust.

Noah explained matter-of-factly that he felt that trusts were "trying to reduce the role…and…influence of the governor…", claiming that if given the option, Trusts would "get rid of us". Again, as with Andrew and Libby, Noah noticed the change in

attitudes to Governors after the arrival of a new CEO who appeared to "…have a different vision for how they want to manage things…" believing that ultimately, they wanted "to do all the governance themselves." As a senior leader, Bob has also noted the removal of responsibilities that are historically monitored by the governing body. Reflecting on his experience of a finance situation he felt was badly mishandled by the governing body, Bob explained that "The schools will be joining a Multi-Academy Trust...and the finance...is taken away from local governors", which seemingly supports the fears expressed by some Governors in terms of their loss of responsibility.

5.2.2 Power – Roles And Responsibilities

There were several examples in which the relationship between paid leadership and Governors suffered because of power struggles. What is also clear is that this appeared to impact governors' abilities to perform their duties, with some Governors feeling that it predominantly affected their ability to challenge effectively. Governors suggested that a large part of their difficulty in challenging resulted from feeling 'dismissed', with both Elizabeth and Andrew sharing feelings of despondency around asking questions and providing challenge. Notably, it would appear that Andrew felt that the Governors were doing little more than making surface recommendations that overall supported the view of the Headteacher, with little to no challenge because any challenge given was met with the accusation that they were "criticising the head".

The frustration felt by Governors at their inability to challenge is summarised clearly by Elizabeth:

"…there's no point me asking the question because I'm just going to get…shot down..."

The relationship between Elizabeth and the Headteacher left Elizabeth feeling almost impotent, becoming resigned to the fact that her input would make no difference. However, she attempted to resolve the situation by trying to explain why these questions were being asked. By doing this, Elizabeth effectively became a bridge between the Headteacher and the governing body, justifying their roles within the school. Despite this, Elizabeth still felt that the governing body was perceived as "a bit of an annoyance". This perception of Governors as a hindrance, or someone who is only there to 'meddle', is something that has been seen throughout the interviews. Some Governors felt merely tolerated, until they tried to challenge. Despite the concern shared by Governors in terms of how they are perceived, SLT participants seemed to understand the need for Governors, and even valued their contribution, as long as they remained within the confines of their remit. Bob, for example, explained that he completely understood the "need for good governance", whilst Lawrence shared that he valued his governing body input but had boundaries: "I want to have this discussion but ultimately, it is my decision." This suggests a disconnect between Governors and SLT in terms of their perceptions in how Governors perform their roles, with Governors feeling that they cannot perform their role because they feel SLT dismiss them, and SLT acknowledging the need for Governors to perform their role but only based on what they feel comfortable allowing Governors to do. Given that both Governors and SLT see the importance of governance, it suggests that the disconnect revolves specifically around the extent of that involvement. Standardising and clarifying the roles would help to reduce this

disconnect, as well as the frustrations clearly expressed by Governors during this research.

With the evolution of MATs and MACs, some Governors felt unable to challenge certain aspects. Ewan explained his understanding of the differences between academies and maintained schools, clarifying that finance is "…done at the academy level…we don't do it as a governor". Libby also commented on her governing body's ability to monitor finance, acknowledging that they no longer have as much influence or oversight of the finances, other than ensuring that the money is "spent responsibly". Louis, commenting more generally on local accountability within MATs as part of a "fractured" educational landscape, encapsulates the feelings of indignation shared by most MAT and MAC Governor participants:

> *"…local accountability and democracy is…completely eliminated…there is no legal duty in a Multi-Academy Trust to have local Governors for a school at all".*

The erosion of responsibilities was an issue acknowledged by most Governors in the interviews. Noah shared that the Trust overseeing his school had explicitly stated that the Headteacher is no longer required to share reports on the school's academic performance, noting that the Trust now "…consider that their role." In this situation, the Headteacher went against advice and continued to share the reports, allowing the Governors to continue to monitor the school's academic situation. Noah further explained the impact withholding the information would have on governors' ability to understand what is happening in their own schools, leaving them unable to perform even the most basic functions of governance. Noah's situation was not unique; both Peter and Libby expressed concern over their ability to monitor their schools

following ‘restrictive’ practices within their trusts, with Peter surmising that he felt the LGB was reduced to little more than a curriculum committee.

Aside from causing Governors to feel redundant within their roles, by restricting access to aspects of governors’ responsibilities, it can also have a very real impact on oversight. Libby explained more about the ‘gatekeeping’ experienced by her governing body, in which the Headteacher withheld certain pieces of information on academic progress:

> *“…he didn’t tell us…what he was doing. He didn’t discuss it with us, he just went ahead and did stuff…by the end of the year, the results, which had always been very good, dropped quite remarkably and somehow or other, it became our fault…”*

Despite the Headteacher apparently restricting access to this information, meaning Governors could not genuinely monitor the situation, they were still considered culpable, not just by the Headteacher but also by the LA and diocese, who “…sided with him”. This left Libby feeling both frustrated and angry, with a sense of outrage at being ‘blamed’ for results that they, as a governing body, were unable to monitor because the Headteacher was not open with them.

A sense of openness and transparency was considered by most to be essential to good governance. As previously discussed, many felt that strained relationships between leadership and the governing body impacted this transparency. However, it is also impacted by restricting access to areas that have traditionally been a part of Governor monitoring. Sometimes this restriction was done implicitly by not making Governors aware, as seen in Libby’s example of the Headteacher not telling the Governors about what he was doing. In other experiences, Governors were explicitly told that they would only have an overview of specific aspects of monitorable areas,

such as Noah's experience of being told reports should no longer be shared with them. A more extreme example of explicit restriction was shared by an incredulous Peter, who explained that he witnessed a Headteacher tell the board that he would withhold information:

> *"I worked with a Headteacher once in a school who would not sign the code of conduct because…it said Governors will hold the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school… he…said in the meeting, if you make me sign that document, I will hide stuff from you".*

The overarching feeling from the Governor interviews was that if Governors cannot accurately monitor their schools' situation, then accountability is almost impossible.

However, it should be noted that not all Governors had a negative experience in terms of their roles and responsibilities being impacted by the power dynamics between leadership and Governors. Ava spoke highly of the Senior Management Team (SMT) at the school she governed at, mentioning that they are open to ideas and suggestions from the Governors. Additionally, Jessie clearly showed an understanding of both sides in the situation – the need to challenge and why this may be taken poorly at times. Furthermore, unlike most of the other Governors who discussed how things were hidden from them, and Peter, who claimed to witness a Headteacher threaten to hide information from his governing body, Jessie felt that the SMT were always transparent.

5.2.3 Power – Imbalance

Words like 'abrasive', 'bully', 'annoyance', 'meddling', and similar have been used by most Governors during their interviews, so it could be suggested that there is a feeling of power imbalance, resulting in Governors feeling either too scared to speak or powerless in terms of actually carrying out the roles and responsibilities of

governance. Governors appeared to find it difficult to address these issues, with a few reporting that they had either resigned or had members of their governing body do so. However, the difficulties Governors faced when attempting to address abuses of power emerged as another key area of concern.

It has already been seen that some Governors felt 'bullied'. However, there were also some more 'extreme' examples, with Andrew in particular, explaining in some detail the difficulties he faced when dealing with a new, more 'abrasive' Headteacher. For Andrew, it was more than the 'abrasive' nature of the Headteacher, it was also the fact that they were "…someone who plays outside the rules", which had an impact on not only the Governors but also the staff. During the interview, Andrew, who was visibly annoyed at the memory, recalled a very specific incident in which the Headteacher allegedly instructed a member of staff to submit their resignation by the end of the day, with threats if that did not happen. The subsequent investigation was apparently taken out of the governors' hands, with Andrew explaining that the Governors were told by the Trust that it had been dealt with. An additional factor that impacted the balance of this particular board was the fact that the Headteacher, upon moving to the school, brought with them members of their previous governing body. In effect, by bringing Governors with her who were, according to Andrew, "…loyal to her", Andrew felt that the Headteacher had tipped the balance of power, making challenge difficult.

Attempting to control the population of the governing body was an issue raised within other Governor interviews, albeit less extreme versions than the example shared by Andrew. There was a power imbalance noted by some Governors, which they felt was an attempt to control who became a governor or remained one. Governors suggested numerous ways in which they perceived Headteachers' influence on the

make-up of the governing body, with some referencing Headteachers conducting interviews for positions as trustees or Governors, whilst others commented on the Headteacher ‘shaking-up’ the governing body. Additionally, most Governors shared feeling that Headteachers/CEOs had strongly relayed their expectations to either individual Governors or governing bodies as a whole. The approach of leading from the front, with the Headteacher leading the Governors in the direction they believe they should be heading, is one that Bob, an experienced Headteacher, emphatically agreed with and utilised:

> *“I'm the professional. I'm the one who…knows what the school needs...I am driving that school forward at quite a rapid rate…and I’m almost bringing Governors with me…rather than Governors telling me what to do. I'm the expert, and I’m moving the school forward.”*

Luca reflected the experience of most Governors by explaining how his own Headteacher outlined their Governor expectations:

> *“…the Headteacher said, “This is what I want…you’re all busy, you’re all full-time workers…governing is what you do of an evening, on the side….” He didn’t put it this bluntly, but …”you’re either with me or you’re not” and several Governors chose to leave at that point, because they, they couldn’t commit to that outstanding… journey we were looking to go on.”*

Whilst both Bob, a senior leader, and Luca could see the benefits of this approach, ensuring that all Governors were on board, it does raise the question of whether it usurps the power of the Chair and governing body, who should, according to the (NGA), be involved in all decisions, using the board’s Instrument of Government and skills audit (Appendix 8 - example of the NGA’s audit), to identify the type of Governor they need and the skillset that would be most beneficial to the governing body (NGA, 2024a, 2024b).

One approach discussed by Governors as a potential avenue to rebalance the power dynamic was to clarify the roles and responsibilities, ensuring that governing bodies were aware of what they should expect. Peter, for example, questioned the new scheme of delegation, justifying this as an opportunity to clarify to himself and others that the power and responsibility now lay at Trust level, but he ensured that it was legally documented in the minutes.

5.3 Boundaries

The second theme generated was boundaries, with five sub-themes generated: blurred lines, difficulties, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, openness, and spectrum. From SLT interviews, 3 sub-themes were generated: External Jobs, Parents, and Strategic and Operational.

5.3.1 Boundaries – Spectrum And Strategic & Operational

Whilst most Governors noted there was a boundary of some description, it varied from a fixed point to a spectrum. Most Governors believed that, regardless of how these boundaries were perceived, there remained grey areas, with Charlie succinctly summarising this as "…I don't think there's a one…size fits all model".

Some Governors felt that the boundaries were dependent upon the experience of the SLT, with a few Governors suggesting that a less experienced Headteacher may need more support than a school leader who has been in the role for some time, leading to boundaries changing depending on the school. However, viewing this attempt at 'guidance' from a Headteacher's perspective, Bob felt that it was less about guiding the novice Headteacher and more about them being "steered by their governors", which counters Libby's belief that more experienced Governors can support or guide less experienced Headteachers. There were clear differences in

how Governors and Headteachers perceived the level of flexibility within boundaries, with most Governors feeling there needed to be a greater level of flexibility. Georgia, for example, claimed that she would feel uncomfortable not crossing the line if it was deemed necessary. In opposition, most SLT interviewed felt that boundaries are, or should be, fixed.

5.3.2 Boundaries – Blurred Lines And External Skills

Reflecting on the potential for boundary infringements, the second sub-theme concentrates on 'blurred lines', with some Governors noting that they were uncomfortable with attending specific school events, such as the nativity, feeling that attending events such as these encroached on the strategic/operational boundary. Andrew, for example, felt quite strongly that attending events such as these encroached on the strategic/operational boundary:

> *"Mary and Joseph aren't strategic...that's very operational and it's nice to see...but I'm not bothered."*

Whilst attending school-based events which had little strategic basis was a concern, another more widely discussed issue was utilising the professional skills of governors. Although some Governors felt that utilising governors' external skills is a sensible approach, most expressed concern that whilst having professionals on the governing body who brought external skills to the table was beneficial, taking advantage of specific skillsets to help in the operational side of the school was not. They felt that not only did it lead to Governors getting uncomfortably close to the strategic/operational boundary, but it also would not be, according to Louis, sustainable in the longer term, as "Governors come and go". Some of the Headteachers interviewed agreed with avoiding the physical use of governors'

external skills, arguing that it helped to keep boundaries clear, and the Governors focussed on adhering to their role of oversight, as stressed by Bob:

> *"…they should really be using the experts, even if they are skilled…even if it's their line of work…their oversight of it, rather than actually doing it… it's keeping that…boundary clear"*

In contrast, other Headteachers and Governors shared that at times it was beneficial to converge external skills with governing body responsibilities. Charlie, a governor, felt that not using a governor's specialist skills, such as his example of a Governor with Health and Safety expertise, would be "unwise". Lawrence, a Headteacher, took this belief further, arguing emphatically that it would create a better governing body:

> *"If you've got people who come from private industry looking at the local authorities' HR Policy and such like, they would have…a much more robust view…those skills really do enrich the work of a… governing body…they actually make it better for it."*

However, Stella argued that regardless of whether external skills were beneficial, there had to be a balance between skills and understanding the school community, feeling it better to have a governing body comprised of "a mix of governors" from different backgrounds.

5.3.3 Boundaries - Difficulties

Most Governors noted the difficulties that they and members of their board had experienced with operational and strategic boundaries. Whilst some Governors felt that strategic leadership needed to work closely with operational leadership to provide that rigorous accountability, others felt as if they were pulled across the operational/strategic boundary, especially if they were in a more senior position, such as CoG. Georgia shared that most of her other Trust board colleagues felt as if they had been drawn into a more operational role at some point in their time on the board,

with Georgia herself noting that she had crossed the boundaries of operational and strategic multiple times. However, what should be considered here is the impact that being ‘pulled’ across the boundary line could have on newer, less experienced governors. Noah, for example, felt that as an experienced governor, even he still struggled to understand where the boundaries lay, suggesting how much more difficult a novice Governor might find it to adhere to, or even understand, the boundaries.

In addition to feeling ‘pulled’ across the boundaries, most Governors also acknowledged the difficulties that parent Governors – and Governors who are parents – face in terms of understanding the boundaries of strategic and operational leadership, potentially because of the more personal connection to the school. There was also some suggestion that their understanding could be impacted by their motivation for joining the governing body – a feeling shared by most SLT participants. The overarching feeling within most Governor responses was that the difficulties experienced by parent Governors arose because they potentially joined under the misconception that they could change operational aspects that relate to their child. All SLT participants agreed, noting the difficulties they had experienced included parents wanting to “fight their corner for their own child” or to present the “point of view of a group of parents”. These views are exemplified by Sara, who summarises the feelings of most Governors and SLT by explaining:

> *“…sometimes people have come into being a Governor specifically because they would like to change operational things...with a particular mindset of my child's experience has been this...”*

5.3.4 Clearly Defined Roles And Responsibilities

Some Governors argued that the difficulties involved in understanding the boundaries lay in the fact that the role of Governor is constantly evolving. Louis highlighted the extension of Governor responsibilities to areas such as exclusions and teacher recruitment, noting that their overinvolvement can impact the ability of Governors to hold the school and SLT to account. This was something the SLT participants also agreed on, with all three highlighting the impact that lack of role clarity can have on Governors' abilities to monitor effectively, but particularly those Governors who are very new to the role. Clarifying the role can help Governors to realise that they are, to quote Bob, "representative of parents rather than representing parents" and not, as highlighted by Stella, a "spokesperson for a group of parents".

As a way to tackle the uncertainty around what was expected, most Governors shared their beliefs in the importance of clarifying the roles and responsibilities of governors. It was something that was clearly seen throughout all the interviews, with some highlighting not only the importance of clarifying them within official documents, such as the Terms of Reference, but also having a clerk who can clarify any uncertainties, especially 'in the moment' during meetings.

Whilst clearly considered an important approach to helping Governors to understand their boundaries, most Governors felt that clarifying the roles and responsibilities of Governors via official documents and governance professionals did not completely address the issue. Instead, most argued that training would help Governors develop a clearer understanding of what is expected of them, as highlighted by Emilia, who stated:

> *"...that's one reason to have...training on…new governance to understand what your responsibilities are and what you can and can't do..."*

5.3.5 Openness

Clarifying roles and responsibilities through written documentation, governance professional support, and training all appear to be key factors in helping Governors to understand their role. However, a few Governors acknowledged that it was also important to have an open environment in which Governors could clarify whether or not they were crossing into boundaries, without fear of reprisals. It was seen by most as essential to allow Governors, even those who may have read all the documents and attended all the training, the opportunity to clarify 'in the moment', by asking questions. This openness lends itself to developing a culture of support and potentially reduces the "tension" mentioned by some SLT participants. Elizabeth illustrates this point clearly:

> *"… not being afraid to ask the question, you know, is this operational...? And I think sometimes in meetings…we end up talking about things, and you have to pull it back and go, this is getting operational now."*

The notion that there should be an openness to meetings, accepting that there will be questions or reminders about boundaries given and received without malice, is supported by most Governors and SLT, including Jessie, who acknowledged both straying into the operational and being reminded of the boundaries. Stella – an experienced member of the SLT – both acknowledged and accepted that it is natural that there will be occasions, such as those experienced by Jessie, further arguing that it should even be expected, given the nature of governance:

"I think that's to be expected really in…what is quite a bizarre set up, because I think governing bodies…it's all a bit strange isn't it, and I think those sorts of missteps are…to be expected."

5.4 Clarity

For many, the role of the Governor appears to be subjective with most eager to have some structure to guide them on expectations of the role. However, for most Governors it was more than ensuring a clear overview of the role and its expectations, it was also clarity on educational language, school monitoring versus external, and weight of responsibility. For SLT, there were only two sub-themes within Clarity – the role and training. It was these discussions that led to the generation of 'Clarity' as a theme.

5.4.1 Educational Language

Most Governors expressed some frustration at the use of unclear, educational language within meetings. Some Governors, acknowledging that jargon can impact the ability of Governors to effectively participate in meetings, note the importance of addressing this. Andrew, for example, reflected on having a culture of "self-checks" within his governing body, in which someone will interrupt the meeting temporarily, to ensure that all understand. This reflects Elizabeth's previously discussed view that an open, supportive environment in which people can question openly can create a culture of support. In Andrew's case, the governing body made it clear that the Headteacher can and will be challenged over the use of "Jargon". Moreover, it would appear that the Headteacher potentially supports this, or has at least acquiesced as a result of Governors consistently highlighting the difficulties they face:

"We…do have a bit of a culture of calling each other on the jargon...if the Headteacher slips into jargon, the Headteacher can

expect to get interrupted with someone saying...I just want to check that everyone understands what… so the headteacher self-checks now."

5.4.2 Role

For most Governors, clarity of the role involved Governors understanding the physical aspects of the position, something that all SLT participants agreed with. Stella noted that most Governors who had difficulties in understanding their 'place' within the governance structure did so mainly before they received training. Acknowledging the importance of understanding expectations, Elizabeth explained that Governors needed to know "what's expected of them" in terms of not only their role more generally, but also the part they play in governing body meetings. Andrew, for example, felt concerned about attending the meetings initially, worried about "dominating", which led to him taking a metaphorical 'step back' in meetings, allowing others to speak whilst he remained quiet. The lack of understanding of the role Andrew could play in governing body meetings meant that he felt hesitant to speak up and which ultimately impacted his ability to govern effectively.

Understanding expectations was something that most SLT participants also noted was essential to being an effective governor, with some highlighting the importance of understanding the time commitment to the role. Bob argued that governance relied on volunteers – "busy people" - who had other commitments and potentially could not honour the time required for governance:

"…It has 12 governors…and there's probably about 4 of those that are effective Governors, and many of the others just turn up. One of them…I've been in this particular school since September, one of them I've not seen yet."

Evidently, clarifying the role helps the Governor to understand what is expected of them, which in turn helps them to govern effectively. However, there is another reason to ensure that the role is clear to those choosing to become a Governor and that is to ensure that they understand the weight of the role they are undertaking.

5.4.3 Weight Of Responsibilities

A lack of clarity often affected Governors' understanding of the significance of their role. Most Governors expressed their uncertainty at the beginning of their governance journey, with Louis explaining his shock at the realisation of how much work was involved and the number of hours that he had to commit to performing Governor duties or even receiving training. For some, the realisation of how serious the role is and how much responsibility is carried by the Governors was only understood through negative media. Georgia, after taking on the role of CoG, watched a programme that caused her to realise just how much of a responsibility she had taken on:

> *"I watched a programme whilst I was Chair of Governors …some…school that was failing…all the staff left, the Headteacher left, the Governors were then pulled over the hot coals because they were the ones who didn't stop this free fall from happening and only at that point, I think I realised what a key role a Governor has and what a responsibility..."*

For most Governors, understanding the weight of the role was something that happened only once they had taken on the role, and so at times they struggled to understand how they fitted into the governance structure within their school, as seen in Louis' experience. Stella also noted that the lack of understanding of their roles and responsibilities often led to Governors taking on inappropriate roles. This was something that Lawrence spoke of also, explaining that he had an inexperienced

Governor who took it upon himself to arrange “consultation sessions”, with Lawrence noting that it was in a similar vein to those held within constituencies. It was clear that Lawrence reflected on this with some incredulity, noticeable through his tone and use of the word “conceit” when describing the actions of the governor. In this situation, the Governor had placed too much emphasis on the role he played within his governing body, resulting in him overstepping boundaries. However, Lawrence also noted that he did not have to step in to resolve the situation, as “the Governors rounded on him and battered him into submission”.

In addition to clarifying educational language, the role of Governors within meetings, the physical aspects of the role, and the overall responsibility placed on the Governors, participants discussed the difficulties faced when trying to clarify the role of school monitoring when compared to external monitoring experienced by Governors with a professional background.

5.4.4 School Monitoring Versus External

Although Governor participants discussed a variety of monitoring responsibilities, finance was repeatedly mentioned, predominantly because of the differences between how school finances are monitored in comparison to other industries. Elizabeth shared her governing body’s experience, which summarises most governors’ reflections on financial monitoring:

> *“I think school finances are very different, even though we've had people from financial backgrounds, school finances seem to be very different to anything else.”*

Elizabeth expands on this by explaining that although they can challenge around funding and how it is spent, a lot of her governing body still struggle with monitoring finances, often worrying about whether they are doing the right thing, something that

most other Governors have experienced. It suggests that, despite having the 'right skills', clarity around ensuring financial oversight in areas that are monitored in a setting-specific manner, such as a school, may still require additional Governor development training to contextualise financial aspects of monitoring.

5.4.5 Training

It is evident that clarity has an impact on understanding the role, educational language, school monitoring versus external, and the weight of responsibility. The question that arises from this is how training can impact or influence clarity within these aspects. Most Governors have reflected on training at various points throughout their interviews. In terms of training and clarity, it has already been raised that those who struggled to understand their role or place within the structure did so predominantly before they had received training. Stella summarises the feelings of most Governors and SLT when she explains the impact training has:

> *"They come on board very expectant of wanting to help, and sometimes they…don't quite get it. They don't quite understand the role, which is why I think the training is really important…they tend to go on their training…'Oh, I see…I…understand now what my role is'…the key's getting people trained properly so they understand what their job is because…nothing like this exists anywhere else…"*

5.5 Covid

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was substantial, and it was clear throughout the interviews that it had affected each of the Governors, SLTs, and their school communities on varying levels. Generated within both Governor and SLT interviews, the Covid-19 theme contained six sub-themes: Monitoring, Pastoral, Government guidance, Training, Visits, and Challenges of Virtual Governance. Within the same theme for SLT interviews, two sub-themes were generated: Monitoring and Support.

5.5.1 Monitoring And Visits

Monitoring was heavily affected by the pandemic, with most Governors and SLT acknowledging that monitoring was either completely stopped or heavily adapted. There were a variety of reasons put forward by the Governors for why this happened, but predominantly, it was suggested that it was simply not appropriate at the time. This was because most Governors felt that their Headteachers were engrossed in adapting to the 'new normal', with Ronan noting that they were dealing with "so many other things". However, most SLT participants acknowledged that any form of monitoring would be challenging, with Stella openly acknowledging that monitoring "…wasn't quite as rigorous…" but simultaneously clarifying that it was actually incredibly difficult to monitor as they had no access to the school, and no data to assess.

The concern around pushing traditional monitoring on to an already overwhelmed SLT, was seen throughout all the Governor interviews, with most Governors conscious of the fact that schools were dealing with multiple unknown consequences of the pandemic – implementing constantly changing government guidelines, infection control, additional safeguarding monitoring, risk assessments, and moving learning to a completely new, online platform. Although it is clear that Governors felt uncomfortable continuing to monitor at such a difficult time, there is also the fact that the majority of children were not physically present at the time, with Governors such as Ava asking, "where to visit?". With the majority of children based at home for online learning, and strict Covid-19 guidelines on numbers allowed to be present in an enclosed space at that point, visits from Governors stopped. The lack of visits created what some Governors felt to be a "disconnection" or "gulf" within their

governing bodies, with Louis stating that it would “take at least a year” for the Governors to reconnect.

Whilst there were concerns expressed about the adaptation of monitoring during the Covid-19 pandemic, most Governors felt it was an appropriate course of action given the overwhelming change in focus for school leaders during this time. Elizabeth noted that their governing board had a focussed person who communicated with the Headteacher, explaining that the CoG had adopted the role of the main point of contact with the Headteacher, feeding back as needed to the general governing body. By adopting this approach, it potentially reduced the impact on the Headteacher’s mental health and well-being by limiting the number of Governors making contact, allowing them to concentrate on implementing Covid-19 protocols, adapting to the ‘new normal’, or even, as Bob notes, simply “running the school”.

All SLT participants acknowledged their governors’ willingness to adapt, adopting a more supportive role, with Stella commenting that the role of Governor became more “…touchy-feely”. This is evidenced in Bob’s interview, with him noting that:

> *“…they recognised that we were dealing with a crisis. We were dealing with things that we've never done before…”*

However, for some Governors and SLT, monitoring continued but at a Trust level as opposed to school-based governing bodies. Bob, for example, noted that most governance came “…from the trust itself”, with them providing risk assessments and making sure that Headteachers were making the right decisions and managing their schools effectively.

5.5.2 Pastoral And Support

All Governors and SLT participants conceded that the pandemic was not only difficult from a logistical point of view, but that it also impacted the well-being of both Governors and SLT, with most Governors commenting on the clear change from 'critical friends' holding the school to account, to a far more supportive, pastoral role, as reflected in Stella's "…touchy feely…" comment.

In terms of impact on Headteacher/SLT well-being, most Governors felt that it was damaged by several factors, highlighting the expectations placed on SLT to adapt at incredibly short notice. Governors used phrases like "firefighting" to describe how SLT were reacting to the situation, with Libby noting that the last-minute issuing of guidance by the DfE exacerbated the situation.

In addition to the impact of governmental dictates, some Governors noted there was an increased level of non-school based support expected from SLT. Zoe reflected on the school's involvement in more general welfare support, sharing that they had moved past simply providing an education, becoming more "like a welfare refuge", with schools offering food parcels. Whilst this was a common experience for most schools during this time, Zoe explained that within her school, it moved past food parcels, with SLT having to support families who were affected by suicide:

> *"It was quite a difficult time for the school…there's lots of people with mental health and…quite a number of parents actually committed suicide during the time…"*

Clearly, there were many pressures faced by both the Governors and SLT, with increasingly difficult expectations placed on the entire school community. Most Governors shared experiences of having to support SLT in a pastoral capacity, with a definitive move towards becoming more of a 'sounding board' for the Headteacher.

Libby explained that the Headteachers just needed “somebody there to listen”, a concept supported by all the SLT and acknowledged by Stella as a need to “offload”. However, throughout the interviews, it was clear that the pressure also impacted the Governors, with a few sharing how the situation had affected their own well-being. This was seen in Georgia’s interview, in which she discussed the reciprocal support shared between her and the Headteacher, explaining the frustration and exhaustion that both felt:

> *“She cried on a call to me, I cried on a call to her just because of how dreadful the whole situation was…We did the absolute very best that we could.”*

The move towards a more pastoral role seemed to arise from multiple factors but can be summarised as – government guidance which was generally acknowledged as inconsistent and last minute, and the adoption of a more welfare-based approach to supporting families in their school community. This led to an increase in pressure on both SLT and governors.

5.5.3 Government Guidance

As highlighted within the Covid sub-theme, Pastoral, most Governors voiced concerns about the impact of government guidance in terms of both delivery and consistency. Charlie reflected on the impact of inconsistent guidelines within schools, highlighting the disparity in how schools dealt with Covid-19 related issues. This was something that evidently frustrated Charlie, who believed Governors exacerbated it by talking to each other on online forums, sharing information that perhaps was inaccurate or clashed with other interpretations of the guidance:

> *"…going 'Oh well, we've closed today because we've got one case', when I'm saying, I'm not closing until we've got 10% of our school with cases, if that makes sense."*

Inconsistency within the guidance was acknowledged by most Governors and SLT as one of the most prominent negative factors on well-being. An example of this was the impact on time commitment, with a few Governors noting that as a direct result of the last-minute turnaround of guidance, their time commitment to their governing role increased exponentially. With guidance changing on an almost daily basis, often at the last minute, in addition to the lack of clarity within the guidance itself, schools and Governors were placed in a difficult position. Often, Headteachers and Governors were left struggling to understand what was expected of them, and what the consequences of the government's dictates might be. Emilia, for example, highlighted concerns about what schools needed to do with children who had been exposed to, or had contracted, Covid-19. She shared feelings of uncertainty around allowing children to return if they did not have symptoms but had tested positive, confessing that they did not know what they should do. This feeling of uncertainty was not unique to Emilia, with most Governors and SLT sharing similar feelings when speaking about the guidance they received.

5.5.4 Training

Although the Covid-19 pandemic was overwhelmingly a negative experience for all involved, it unexpectedly had a positive effect on governor training. During the interviews, a few Governors commented on the increase they observed in Governor participation, with Emilia and Sara both suggesting that because the training was online, it was easier for Governors to take part. A possible explanation for this could be the fact that Governors, whilst still busy tackling the regular changes in

government guidance, were not able to perform their regular duties, which allowed them to fill that space by completing training. Additionally, the fact that the training was online potentially made the training easier to attend, with Governors accessing training at a time that suited them (if pre-recorded) and without having to leave their own home.

5.5.5 Challenges Of Virtual Governance

Aside from the pastoral and physical challenges of the pandemic, one of the other more notable challenges governing bodies faced was adapting to online meeting platforms. Until the pandemic, online meetings were more or less unheard of within the realm of school governance. However, most Governors interviewed shared that they had, at some point in the pandemic, used an online meeting platform. Georgia noted that for some, the biggest challenge initially was that they had “never used ‘Zoom’ before”, making meetings challenging, which appears to contrast with Emilia’s experience of Governors adapting to online training and noted increase in training.

In addition to the physical difficulties of virtual governance, some Governors reflected on the impact governing virtually had on Governors returning to in-person governance. Morgan argued that a strength of their governing body lay in their presence in school. However, for Morgan, there was a concern that virtual governance would lead Governors to become “quite remote and quite distant”, which harks back to earlier comments from Governors on the “disconnection” and “gulf” Governors felt following the removal of visits.

5.6 Mentoring

Most Governors highlighted the importance of connections with other Governors, whether formally through networking at training or more informally through social

media support groups. Part of these discussions reflected on the importance of mentoring as a tool for Governor development, and this subsequently led to the theme of Mentoring being generated. Again, the main theme was broken down into several sub-themes: A place for mentoring, Availability, Effectiveness, Models of Mentoring, Internal Vs External, and Mentor training.

5.6.1 Mentor Training

Most Governors agreed that mentoring, of some description, would be beneficial. However, there were some concerns shared in relation to the mentor's understanding not only of what should be done, but also how it should be done. Andrew, for example, spoke about mentors lacking guidance on how to execute the role of mentor. However, for Andrew, the resolution to this was less about training Governors to become mentors, which would incur additional training costs, but rather about providing some form of guidance via pamphlets. Keeping it simple was also something that Andrew felt was key to successful mentoring, suggesting that Governors and mentors had three key dates throughout the year with pre-selected, linked themes to ensure that each meeting had a focus. Whilst Andrew opted for a low-key approach that focussed on perhaps three specific areas, such as finance, strategy, and being a 'critical friend', other Governors shared thoughts about adopting a more practical mentor training approach.

Charlie spoke about developing a 'modelled monitoring' approach to mentoring, in which an external mentor comes into the school utilising a modified version of 'see one, do one, teach one'. With Charlie's approach, there are three 'steps': 1 - Observed monitoring in which the Governor is a passive observer; 2 – Co-Monitoring with both mentor and Governor taking an active role but with the mentor still leading; and 3 – Independent Monitoring where the Governor independently monitors but with

support/guidance/feedback from the mentor as needed. For Charlie, this approach allowed Governors to see examples of ‘good’ monitoring, whilst contextualising it within their own school.

In contrast, Georgia recommended shadow mentoring, which involves following someone more experienced to learn how to effectively ‘do the job’. Georgia felt that adopting this approach, one she had seen in the workplace, within a governance setting would be the “ultimate training”. Again, one of the benefits suggested was that the Governor would garner “real-world experience”. However, rather than ‘shadowing’ someone within their own governing body, Georgia argued that it would be more beneficial to have the ‘shadowing’ take place externally, which would enable the Governor to have “honest conversations”. Whilst Georgia clearly felt ‘shadowing’ was the most appropriate form of mentoring, she did emphasise the need to ensure ”like for like”, noting that a Governor mentor from a LA school would be inappropriate for a Governor mentee from a trust, adding that these are completely “different beasts”.

5.6.2 Effectiveness Of Mentoring

Some of the Governors who talked about having a mentor, or ‘Governor buddy’, shared their opinion on the effectiveness of their experience. Ava explained that she had specifically requested a mentor and was assigned the Chair of their governing body. Whilst initially this might have seemed appropriate given the Chair’s experience, Ava felt that she was left in an inadequate mentor/mentee relationship because the Chair was never available, leaving Ava feeling frustrated and unsupported. This highlights the importance of selecting a mentor who has the availability to undertake the role.

Whilst Ava experienced ineffective mentoring due to a lack of availability on the mentor's part, Ronan's experience of mentoring was impacted by a well-meaning but unprepared mentor:

> *"He sat next to me, for the first couple of meetings and tried to explain things but that was it, it would have been useful to meet...give me an overview of the school and stuff like that...how the committee's work, how ...governance works, any questions I had..."*

Ronan's experience of being mentored involved the mentor simply explaining what was happening in the meeting, rather than helping Ronan to understand his wider role. This again led to feelings of frustration, similar to those experienced by Ava. It could be argued that this particular mentor's approach to mentoring was a result of a lack of understanding of what the role entailed. At this point, it is possible to see how Andrew's recommendation of guidance for the mentor may have been beneficial.

Whilst the overarching feeling from most Governors was that mentoring was a good idea, with some already attempting to include some form of mentoring or 'buddy system', it was clear that there were issues implementing it consistently and effectively. Time appeared to have been one factor, with mentors accepting the role but being unable to act effectively within the role, as already noted by Ava. Emilia acknowledged that although mentoring was "really good", it "wasn't enough". Again, as with Ava, Emilia felt this was due to a lack of time. However, Emilia developed this point further, stating that everyone works and is therefore time restricted, making it hard to either give or receive help.

Another factor that may have impacted the wider adoption of mentoring was how the role was perceived. Most Governors had a different interpretation of what a mentor should be. Sara felt that mentors should be someone "friendly" and "supportive",

someone they could “talk to and become friends with”. This differed from Ronan, who specified a more practical approach, with mentors supporting Governors to learn the physical aspects of the role, such as an overview of the school, how committees work, and even how governance works overall.

5.6.3 Models Of Mentoring

Governors who shared that they had adopted some form of mentoring also shared the models of mentoring they used. There were four main models of mentoring identified: modelled monitoring, shadowing, opt-in mentor matching, and a buddy system.

Charlie, who previously explained that he was in the process of developing ‘modelled monitoring’, stressed the benefits of adopting this approach. He explains that it moves past the theoretical and into the practical, with the additional value of being contextualised on a personal level:

> *“...it's so personal to their roles, it's their school, it's not just the theory of what good monitoring looks like, it's good monitoring and practice.”*

As previously explained, Charlie’s model adopts an approach similar to ‘see one, do one, teach one’ with three specific stages – observed monitoring, co-monitoring, and independent monitoring, which could be summarised as ‘see one, team one, lead one’. This model creates a practical and contextual aspect to mentoring, something identified throughout the interviews as a positive approach to Governor training. Furthermore, it aligns with Schwille (2008) and Luggya (2019), who both note the importance of contextualising training.

‘Shadowing’ was another method discussed, with Georgia arguing that it would allow the Governor mentee to contextualise the information that they are seeing. However, there was also a caveat that this type of mentoring should be conducted externally to allow for free and open conversations.

In a similar vein to the previous two examples, the ‘Buddy system’ relies on a new Governor aligning themselves to a more experienced governor. Peter noted that, for their governing body, this was a more informal, in-the-moment approach, not dissimilar to that experienced by Ronan. Unlike Ronan’s experience, Peter explained that he felt it was helpful in understanding some of the more basic aspects of governance, such as educational language, particularly acronyms.

In contrast to some of the previous examples, in which mentors were found within the governing body, the opt-in approach to mentoring involves Governors calling to arrange for a mentor to be assigned. Libby further explained that the role of the mentor in this model is more than somebody acting as if they are “the font of all knowledge”, stressing that a mentor should listen to the mentee, highlighting any “obvious flaws”. This model would appear to be less of a banking model approach, in which the ‘expert’ fills the 'novice’ with knowledge, and more of a guided approach, in which the new Governors are allowed the space to reflect on situations under the guidance of a more experienced mentor, aligning with Varghese et al. (2022).

5.6.4 A Place For Mentoring And Availability

The importance of mentoring as both an opportunity to train and support, was acknowledged by most Governors, with three main points highlighted: good practice, clarity, and support.

Jessie felt that it was important to have a mentor to ensure that Governors “begin and then continue good practice”, something that was clearly encouraged within the models of mentoring previously discussed, particularly ‘shadowing’, which was intended to allow the Governors to witness best practice. However, the support for mentoring was more than as a catalyst for good practice, it was also seen as important to Governors having a clear understanding of their role, with Sara sharing her own experience of being mentored and having her mentors guide her. This is a viewpoint supported by Zoe, who acknowledged that mentoring could support Governors who have little understanding of today’s education system, making specific reference to those coming into governance from other professional spheres:

> *“I think it's important…education's moved on from when you were probably in education, so there's lots of changes”*

The third point, support, encompasses the first two points raised – good practice and clarity. Noah explained how it felt to attend the first meeting, understanding the dichotomy that they have taken on an official role, which often experiences critical oversight, under the assumption that you are ”supposed to understand what’s going on” now that they are a governor. Noah’s statement suggests that he felt out of his depth and unsupported, noting that it takes up to a year to truly understand the role. Additionally, Ronan emphasised the need to support Governors because of how difficult the role is, highlighting the importance of mentor programmes to help Governors get their “head around” their role and the wider role of school governance. He further highlighted the importance of a mentor because the role “can be quite isolating”, and it would allow the mentor to share words of encouragement. It could also be suggested that by supporting Governors, it gives them the opportunity to gain clarity of their role, which allows them to further develop good practice.

However, not all Governors had the opportunity to take part in a mentoring programme, with Charlie acknowledging that his own induction training lacked “a mentor”. For a few Governors, mentoring was not raised as a possibility, with both Luca and Morgan sharing that it had not been offered at all, although Morgan did feel able to approach the Chair with questions.

Most Governors spoke about the demands that governance made on their time, and it was again highlighted by some Governors in relation to the difficulties faced in implementing any form of mentoring system. Both Luca and Sara noted that time restriction was an issue, whether you were a mentor or a mentee, with Luca sharing his uncertainty over the ability of Governors to accept the offer of mentoring as a result, arguing that “full-time jobs and syncing diaries” can be challenging. Sara also subscribed to a similar view in terms of the demand on time, arguing that this increased demand on time subsequently led to fewer people being “willing to give time” to volunteering.

5.6.5 Internal Vs External

With most Governors acknowledging the importance of mentoring and the impact it can have, thoughts were then shared on who should take on the mentoring role. Most Governors felt that mentors should be from within the governing body, especially for ‘general’ governors. Elizabeth suggested that adopting an internal mentor approach would allow Governors the opportunity to develop a relationship with others on the governing body, making it beneficial not just for guidance but also for allowing them a space to get to know the other governors. However, Georgia disagreed with this, believing that mentoring should be conducted externally, from comparable school systems. Elizabeth expanded on Georgia's belief that mentors

should be external, noting the benefits of external mentors but explaining that external mentoring would probably be more beneficial for Chairs and Clerks:

> *"The Chair often becomes a mentor to people within their governing body, so it's having that other person as a chair to talk to who understands the role…I think would be useful."*

Although there was a clear emphasis on the importance of providing external mentoring for chairs as they potentially become the mentor in their own governing body, it has already been noted by Ava that a mentor who is chair does not always have the time to mentor effectively. This potentially raises questions of restricting access to external mentors to those in positions of chair, vice-chair, and clerks.

In addition to external mentoring, enabling role-specific support for more senior governing body positions, some Governors highlighted the ability of external mentors to view situations from a different perspective. Emilia, for example, noted that an external mentor may approach the situation differently. This could be beneficial because an external mentor would allow new Governors to validate their experiences or, conversely, identify any concerns. This is something that Sara also agreed would be "really good", again noting that it would allow Governors a space to raise concerns or ask questions that they might find difficult to ask their own governing body.

However, some Governors suggested that there were benefits to both internal and external mentors. Both Libby and Luca spoke about the advantages and disadvantages of internal and external mentoring, noting that internal mentoring can mean adhering to set expectations from governing bodies or the school itself, potentially without critical reflection. For Libby, it was the "danger" of falling into accepting things without challenge, but for Luca, it was more about "buying into the

vision". In contrast, Ronan suggested that internal mentoring could reasonably be considered more helpful, as mentors and mentees could address school specifics, contextualising their mentoring.

In terms of external mentoring, whilst Luca argued that someone acting as an external mentor would bring "objectivity" to the role – which is supportive of Emilia and Sara's stances – Libby felt that an external mentor might not have enough knowledge of the Governor to support effectively, expressing concern over external mentors potentially interfering with how governing bodies "run their meetings" as a result.

5.7 Challenge

One of the more substantial themes generated was Challenge, containing five sub-themes: relationships, conflict of interest, effectiveness of challenge, ability to challenge, and why challenge? SLT sub-themes generated were effectiveness of challenge, guided or independent, lack of understanding, and why. There were two sub-themes that crossed over between Governor interviews and SLT interviews: effectiveness and why.

5.7.1 Relationships

Most Governors reported that relationships were an essential part of their ability to challenge, with some reflecting on how tenuous these relationships could be. Elizabeth shared that she felt her governing body were gaining confidence in their ability to challenge but that it was heavily dependent on "how receptive" the Headteacher was, acknowledging that their recent experience had been quite negative, as the Headteacher "was often quite defensive and…that puts people off".

It was evident that most Governors felt that they had some form of relationship that allowed challenge. However, scattered throughout the interviews were certain words, such as “headstrong”, “defensive”, “awkward”, “uncomfortable”, “dismissive”, and “aggressive”, which demonstrated that even with a relationship, challenge could still be difficult. Louis noticed the impact on the Governor/Headteacher relationship after asking challenging questions, sharing that as a result of the challenge, the Governors felt that there had been a “rapid deterioration” in the relationship between themselves and the Headteacher. According to Louis, the relationship between the Headteacher and the governing body deteriorated so much that the Headteacher resigned from the governing body. Although most Governors felt that relationships became tenuous because of the responses of SLT, some Governors felt that the relationship was potentially affected by the Governors themselves, with Luca arguing that at times, Governors made their challenges quite personal rather than challenging the opinion.

Whilst it is evident that a number of the Governors felt they had experienced a tempestuous relationship with SLT as a result of their response to challenge, some of the Governors interviewed stressed that their experience had been more positive. They shared their experiences in school environments that were far more supportive because they felt they had a balance, with Peter arguing the importance of a balanced culture:

> *“...a culture whereby openness is important, and challenge and support is kept in the right balance.”*

Peter was not the only Governor who stressed the importance of openness in creating an environment in which challenge was given and received positively. Ewan also agreed with and highlighted the importance of openness, acknowledging that

his was a “very open school”. Bob, a senior leader, also stressed that it was important that Governors understood that SLT were being “being open and honest”, whilst building a relationship over time. Stella expands on this by explaining that, in addition to openness, for trust to develop within their relationship, they need to “have that two-way conversation”. However, for this openness to develop from a governor’s perspective, it needs to be a genuine two-way conversation, in which SLT are receptive to the input of governors. The importance of communication was something also seen in Baxter’s (2020, p. 48) research, with Baxter identifying “communication between layers of governance” as a theme of importance. Concerns over “top-down” (Baxter, 2020, P. 48) communication and exclusion via conversations restricted to only those within the higher echelons would appear to support the views on the importance of two-way conversations shared by both Governors and SLT within this research.

5.7.2 Conflict Of Interest

Ostensibly, the main reasons for conflict of interest were staff Governors and those who joined for personal reasons, for example, parents. Charlie shared his experience of challenging on SEND issues following an Ofsted inspection. The Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCO) was also the staff Governor, which made Charlie feel uncomfortable challenging:

> *“...it was really difficult to hold that person to account, as a leader in their own right when technically that person was sat around the table as a colleague, at the same time.”*

Sara also felt that challenging key staff was difficult. However, in Sara’s case, this was not a staff Governor but a member of the general staff who was not delivering

“key reports”, which Sara ultimately felt affected their ability to govern the school effectively.

Whilst there were clearly Governors who struggled to challenge as a result of conflicts of interest around staff who also sit on the governing body, it was also noted that conflicts of interest could potentially arise from parent Governors, who have perhaps become a Governor as a result of a private agenda. Luca raises concerns over the impartiality of parent Governors, suggesting that they have potentially become Governors for more personal reasons. Luca further argues that anyone joining for personal reasons would result in a governing body that has “the wrong people around the table”. Giving the example of “nosy parents”, Luca suggests that they may challenge, but in an inappropriate, self-interested way. As previously noted, all SLT had experiences of parent Governors acting as if they represented the parents as opposed to being a representative of the parents. However, Bob and Stella also reflected on the awkwardness of parent Governors being in meetings when they are speaking about underperforming teachers, as well as newer parent Governors using the role to lobby the SLT over the opinion of a specific group of parents. Both are examples of how SLT view conflicts of interest within a governing body, with the former akin to the awkwardness felt by Governors when having to challenge staff who work in areas that fall under the monitoring remit of the governing body, such as the SENDCO.

5.7.3 Effectiveness Of Challenge

Governor reflections on how effectively they challenged were relatively mixed, with both positive and negative examples shared. Andrew, who clearly felt troubled by the situation, shared that challenge was taking place but that it was negated by the fact

that the Chair would constantly support the Headteacher without critical reflection, commenting that the Chair had an approach of the “means justify the ends”.

Ineffective Governors was another area that some Governors felt affected challenge in a negative manner. Emilia illustrated how ineffective Governors impacted challenge within her own governing body by sharing her experience of trying to get them to work as a team, confessing that one of her biggest challenges was ensuring the governing body worked “together as a team”. As a senior leader, Lawrence also shared the difficulties he had experienced when Governors didn’t understand the importance of working as a team, noting that a parent Governor had “unilaterally booked the village hall to hold his parent-governor…consultation sessions” with no communication of his intent to do so.

As previously suggested, the type of environment in which governance takes place can also greatly impact challenge, with most acknowledging that openness was essential. However, there were several other reasons suggested by participants, which could further explain why the Governors might have struggled to challenge, such as the way challenge is met by Headteachers. A few Governors highlighted the “dismissive” or “defensive” nature of the Headteachers they worked with when challenged, which often led to Governors either feeling unable to challenge, or unable to challenge effectively. For SLT, this defensiveness may be a result of trying to keep Governors within the confines of their role, with some noting that a lack of awareness in terms of the overall educational landscape or day-to-day running of the school impacted the effectiveness of the challenge being provided. A nonplussed Lawrence noted that when asking the Governors what to put into their school development plan, the Governors responded with “some completely off-the-wall things”.

As with openness, familiarity was also suggested as a key factor impacting Governor challenge. Zoe argued that with familiarity, there is the potential for challenge to become less effective, and therefore, “it’s good for change to happen”. Furthermore, Zoe speculated that by not offering a challenge, SLT might in return stop expecting challenge, potentially leading to a ‘blasé’ attitude in which the leadership team “kind of rest and lay back”. Conversely, expanding on Zoe’s point, Libby explained that it was also too easy for Governors to become apathetic to challenge, leading them to acquiesce to leadership decisions, adopting a “fine, we’ll go along with it” attitude.

Additionally, as Elizabeth and Georgia both stressed, confidence can influence whether a Governor challenges, with Georgia explaining how she addressed challenge and confidence in areas of finance:

> *“I think it's about lack of confidence…it's harder to challenge... I recruited somebody who was very data driven....put him in charge of data... because he had that skill set, he was able to interrogate that data and...ask more pertinent questions”*

So, whilst Elizabeth felt that it was more about developing confidence in individual Governors, enabling them to ask questions, for Georgia, the answer was to develop overall governing body confidence through recruiting a team with external skills. This could potentially, suggest that it is better to have a board with a mixed skillset.

From an SLT perspective, most agreed that governance had to be effective. Bob highlighted the impact of ineffective governance through the perceived lens of Ofsted, noting that if anything is deemed to have gone wrong, governance is often blamed. However, he also noted that if there were no issues, then governance barely received any acknowledgement in the subsequent report. It is clear that Bob feels an immense amount of responsibility in terms of ensuring Governor challenge:

> *"…it's my responsibility as Headteacher to ensure that my Governors are challenging me effectively…I know Ofsted will look at governing body minutes… they will look to see whether the Governors are challenging the senior leaders...I have to make sure that the right questions are being asked in the meetings and being recorded…"*

Bob also notes that he will guide Governors towards further training if he feels they are not challenging adequately, suggesting that he takes quite an active role in guiding the governing body.

Most SLT participants noted that when Governors do challenge, even if it is in an area that challenge would be expected, it can occasionally be misdirected. Both Lawrence and Stella, for example, acknowledged being challenged over finances. However, Lawrence noted that although they challenged, their challenge was ineffective as they were arguing over the minutiae of financial spending rather than the larger financial overview. Lawrence explained that whilst trying to explore financial savings within the school, the Governors fixated on trying to make savings on paper towels and toilet rolls, which amounted to approximately 2% of the school budget. Although Lawrence appreciated the effort that they made, he found himself having to explain that any savings would be minimal. These experiences suggest that Governors have an underlying understanding of the need to challenge, but on occasion lack an understanding of how to do so effectively.

5.7.4 Ability To Challenge

Several factors have already been identified as influencing the effectiveness of challenge. Andrew admits that he struggled to challenge because he did not have the knowledge that SLT had. Ava furthers this point through her own experience with data, explaining that their ability to challenge will grow exponentially if the data is

made easier to understand, increasing their ability to give input whilst decreasing the amount of time that they need to spend trying to understand the data enough to challenge.

As Ava suggests, not understanding the information presented can impact challenge as well as increase demands on time. Emilia also acknowledges that a lack of understanding can impact meaningful challenge. Furthermore, she links lack of understanding to lack of confidence and fear of asking questions that some might deem inappropriate, arguing that Governors should not feel scared to challenge and should operate under the assumption that “there is no such thing as a stupid question”.

Some Governors also raised the issue of core responsibilities being removed from their remit, subsequently impacting their ability to challenge. Predominantly, this was in relation to financial oversight, in which some academies held financial monitoring at Trustee level. Ewan explained that within his Trust, they only had access to the budget, which involved little scrutiny. Georgia shared a very similar experience, with overall finance managed at a higher level, with the governing board left to challenge more routine financial aspects, such as the utility bills. She acknowledges that although they can “challenge the electricity bill”, they feel that they do not have any financial accountability. As a senior leader, Bob has also confirmed that this is something that has happened within his own Trust with respect to finances, admitting that Governors “basically won't have anything to do with it”. These experiences were similar to those identified in Baxter’s (2020, p. 47) research, in which some of the Academy Board Members interviewed shared feelings of despondency, asking, “…what am I doing this for?”. Furthermore, some of Baxter’s Trustee participants acknowledged the impact of reduced responsibilities, noting that “we have to spell

out that they are not really governors anymore". Whilst perhaps not as 'severe' as telling the LGB that they are no longer Governors, Bob's admission that Governors will no longer have responsibility for finances within their own school is extremely close to the experiences shared within Baxter's (2020) findings.

Another area of concern raised by Governors, although closely related to the above, is the inability to govern if information is withheld. Jessie shared her frustration at being unable to hold SLT to account because they are not informed of what they are doing "until it is too late…". For Jessie, challenge could not happen effectively because information was withheld and only released when Governors could no longer meaningfully contribute to oversight.

In terms of monitoring and challenging within meetings and link visits, most felt that outside of the pandemic, they were welcome to visit. However, there were a few, Noah for example, who felt restricted by the SLT within the school. Noah explained that:

> *"...they don't even want us to go in and do…link visits... they don't see the governors having any role in terms of monitoring the performance of children..."*

Evidently, Noah felt he was being hindered by the school, whilst trying to monitor what is considered one of the three core functions of governance – holding SLT accountable in terms of the educational performance of the school and its pupils. In contrast to Noah's SLT, both Stella and Bob acknowledged that visiting the school was an important part of the governors' role, although Stella did add that there needed to be an understanding that Governors needed to "behave professionally about the whole thing", reinforcing that underlying concern expressed by some SLT over the use of volunteers to monitor.

In addition to the difficulties with Governor understanding, removal of certain aspects of monitoring, and schools declaring aspects of Governor monitoring to be unnecessary, most Governors spoke of the difficulties in challenging because the administrative side was inefficient. Sara spoke about the impact of receiving papers for governing body meetings in a timely manner, explaining that as a result of papers being given inappropriately late, it had been impossible to “do due diligence” or “scrutinise” the information, making it difficult to challenge effectively. Moreover, it could be argued that by not producing the papers in a timely fashion, they have inadvertently placed a bigger burden on governors' time, as meetings could increase in length to enable the papers to be read and questions asked.

5.7.5 Why Challenge?

Challenge is considered one of the most important aspects of governance. As a senior leader, Bob argues that it is essential that Governors challenge and ask those “courageous questions”, without which he feels that SLT can “get away with things”, ultimately acknowledging that this is the moment things can “go wrong”. This is something that both Zoe and Emilia also acknowledged. Emilia felt challenge was important to ensure that whatever the Headteacher assured the Governors was taking place was accurate, and that all processes were followed appropriately. However, Zoe felt that challenge was important as it enabled Governors to ensure that the Headteacher was still challenging herself to “set new goals”.

5.8 Support

During the interviews, the concept of support for Governors was discussed. This subsequently generated the theme, Support. Once again, within each theme, further sub-themes were also generated. For the theme of support, there were four sub-

themes: sources of support, effectiveness, isolation and self-doubt, and training. Within SLT interviews, one sub-theme of confidence was generated.

5.8.1 Sources Of Support

Most Governors felt that the only support they received was internal, either through their own governing body or the Headteacher and staff, with Sara, Luca, Georgia, Zoe, and Andrew all sharing that they had received support of varying degrees from their governing board or Headteacher. However, Charlie described their experience as a reciprocal form of support, in which the Headteacher supported Charlie and Charlie supported the Headteacher. Nevertheless, Charlie reported that whilst support was present, it still felt “isolating”. Luca, on the other hand, shared that he thought the support came primarily from the Headteacher, admitting that the Governors “scared” him. Although Luca did also add that governing bodies could be supportive, the composition of the governing body mattered, making it important to ensure you have the “right governing body team” behind you.

Luca’s belief that the composition of the governing body matters in terms of their ability to support is exemplified in Jessie’s example of a governing body. Jessie noted that despite being “old” and “established”, it did not have an appropriate configuration of Governors and therefore may not be the most helpful form of support, suggesting that “nobody really knows what governance is”. Looking at Jessie’s experience, even from the most basic levels of support, it is clear that the governing body would have found it difficult to support others if they did not understand the role of governance themselves.

Further sources of support for Governors included training and Governor networking sessions, which varied in structure. Elizabeth, for example, spoke of specific

Governor networking sessions for Chairs, organised with a partner school. In addition to network events, some Governors received personal introductions to Governors from other governing bodies. Emilia recalled a time when her clerk introduced her to another CoG. This introduction developed a relationship in which both chairs were “basically venting to each other”. For Emilia, this relationship appears to be about having a safe space to express their feelings, to be each other's sounding boards.

However, some Governors felt that support was relatively mixed in terms of what was available. For Louis, support was extremely limited and often dependent upon the type of school at which you are a Governor. He argued that it is a direct result of the LA’s inability to support Governors:

> *“...there is no support for Governors and Chairs of Governors...particularly maintained schools...it's not a statutory duty for local authorities to support governors…”*

However, it is not solely LAs that have been blamed for limited support. Even within MATs, Louis feels there is a variation in the support available, noting that in addition to the support varying, it is also dependent upon the scale of the trust. Despondently, Louis summarised his perception of the situation as “there isn’t any systemic support for governance”.

5.8.2 Effectiveness Of Support

Most Governors suggested that Governor support was inconsistent in terms of both reliability and effectiveness. Louis recalls a particularly harrowing situation in which a CoG suffered both physical and mental health problems as a result of receiving little support whilst undertaking a difficult aspect of governance responsibility:

> *"...the former Chair ended up with quite significant health problems as a result of having to suspend the head teacher...allegations of fraud and misconduct...it hits the local papers... and it had a long-term impact on their health...physical and mental..."*

Louis further adds that although the LA attempted to put support in place, they struggled because they were "being hollowed out", resulting in the very real, physical suffering of this Chair. Luca also supported the belief that there was little support for Governors, explaining that they were simply expected to watch "training videos". Clearly, neither Louis nor Luca felt that the support received at the time was effective. However, Charlie offers a reason for the disconnect between governance and support, suggesting that governance potentially falls into a gap because they are "not employees" with employers who have a legal duty of care to support them (ACAS, 2024).

5.8.3 Isolation And Self-Doubt

Isolation and self-doubt were raised as concerns by some Governors, evidenced in Charlie's earlier statement on feeling isolated despite receiving support. Additionally, Emilia shared that despite having a degree, as a parent Governor, she found herself questioning her ability to do the role, questioning whether she was "smart enough to know things". Emilia suggested that to avoid these feelings, it was important to have a variety of members on the governing body who can learn from each other, which links back to Luca's belief that it is important to have the right team on the governing body.

5.8.4 Training And Confidence

Confidence in the governors' abilities was a concern for a few SLT participants. Bob explained that following a difficult situation in which a school faced a deficit budget,

with the absence of a definitive Headteacher in place, Governors were left facing three different scenarios to help avoid financial difficulties. Unfortunately, according to Bob, they chose the most 'severe' option, which was accepted by the LA. Bob confessed that he felt the Governors had handled the situation poorly:

> *"…they've really messed up, absolutely messed up. So no, I don't have confidence in the Governors in terms of finances."*

It could be argued that Bob's experience lends itself to the suggestion that there should be further training for governing bodies, particularly in financial aspects of governance, to avoid such a scenario happening again.

Whilst Emilia reflected on the importance of learning from each other, the question does arise of whether additional training would also have supported her as she felt these feelings of isolation and self-doubt. Louis does feel that training has supported him and allowed him to confidently embrace the role with a solid understanding of expectations and a "good understanding of the role".

5.9 Training

Training was one of the eight themes generated during analysis of Governor interviews, and within this theme, three sub-themes were generated for both SLT and Governor interviews: Mandatory, Positives, and Negatives. Within these sub-themes, SLT sub-themes were broken down into Mandatory – Challenge, Clarity of Role, Contextualised, Impact recruitment & retention, and Safeguarding; Negative – Quality of Training, and Relevance; Positive - Clarity of Role, Contextualised, Effectiveness, and Safeguarding. Governor sub-themes were broken down into Mandatory - Clarity of role, Diversity of training, Effective, Governor retention, Monitoring, New Governors, Qualification, Questions, Real-world experience or

examples, Strategic and operational, Strategy, Terminology, Three core functions, and UK schools. Negative was broken down into Challenges, Healthy Schools, Non-practical, Non-targeted training, Safeguarding, and Well-being. Finally, Positive was broken down into Attitudes to training, Confidence, Contextualised, Delegation of responsibilities, Finance, Induction, Networking, Online, Questions, Roles and Responsibilities, Safeguarding, School Life, Strategic & Operational, Using Resources, and What informs a training schedule.

5.9.1 Mandatory

Mandatory training was something that most Governors felt was important, particularly for newer governors. In fact, some Governors were unaware that mandatory training did not exist within the English governing system, especially as it is currently enforced in Wales. From the perspective of SLT participants, Stella and Lawrence, mandatory training was essential, with Stella expressing surprise that it was not already mandatory. Both acknowledged the importance of training for Governors, with Stella noting that “People need to go on…training straight away so they can do their job properly”, and Lawrence emphatically stating that “Governors need to be trained, full stop”. Bob, however, was a little more reticent, explaining that “…you will put people off. It's already very, very hard to find enough governors”.

5.9.1.1 Clarity Of Role

There were several areas that Governors felt should be covered by mandatory training, with clarity of role being the most frequently specified training. Most Governors felt that by clarifying the role, it would help Governors to understand the commitment and expectations of the position, which in turn would support Governor retention. Reflecting on this, Charlie asked how Governors could “live up to the

expectation” without understanding what the expectations are. Governors were not alone in this belief, as SLT interviews also noted the importance of clarity of role within any mandatory training. Some SLT noted that it was particularly important for Chairs to have training on what will be expected within their role. For Bob, this was because Chairs are the ones who will work most closely with the Headteacher, who will guide meetings and ensure “that things are happening”.

Clarity of role was also the reason behind most Governors suggesting that induction training should be mandatory, with Jessie arguing that ensuring potential new Governors have training prior to joining a board will allow them to understand exactly what they are joining. This will allow them to make an informed decision on whether governance is for them. Another important factor in learning about what the role entails is understanding the boundaries, with Noah arguing it can establish a “really clear description of the boundaries of governance”. Understanding the boundaries would help Governors to also understand “how to work with senior leaders in the school” according to Bob, with Stella further arguing that if they train immediately, “they can do their job properly”.

5.9.1.2 Diversity Of Training And Effectiveness

The educational landscape is, as noted by Ewan, a unique blend of academies, LAs, Free Schools, private schools, and a multitude of Key Stages. This generated discussions on the type of training that is available, resulting in the generation of Diversity of Training as a sub-theme. A few Governors reflected on the need for training that was more representative of the diverse educational landscape, which would ensure that there were training opportunities for each ‘type’ of governor. For Georgia, it was important to have guidance on how academies work and what

powers are devolved to the LGBs, which relates back to ensuring clarity of role and a governor's ability to adequately perform their role.

It was not just the diversity of the available training that was important to Governors, it was also considered essential to ensure that any mandatory training was, as highlighted by Ava, effective. As already noted in previous sections, Governors are volunteers, often with additional external responsibilities such as families and work, and can therefore be considered 'time poor' to some extent, especially when factoring in attending governing body meetings. With this in mind, most Governors felt that training should be designed to be as effective as possible.

5.9.1.3 Governor Retention And Impact Recruitment & Retention

There were several discussions on whether mandatory training would be beneficial or whether it would potentially impact recruitment and retention. Andrew argued that the opposite would be true and that mandatory training would not only be beneficial, but it would also encourage Governor retention:

> *"I think if someone's been in an organisation 13/14 months and still don't really know what they're doing…they're likely just to walk."*

Andrew's main point is that if a Governor joins but does not access their training, they are potentially going to be in a situation where they are not equipped to do their job because they do not have the necessary knowledge. Andrew feels that mandatory training would decrease the likelihood of Governors leaving.

In contrast to Andrew's main argument, Bob expressed concerns about the potential impact that mandatory training could have on both recruitment and retention. He explained that he felt the expectations of attending mandatory training were too high for "a parent who's only going to be there for 4 years maximum". Furthermore, he felt

that it would potentially exacerbate the difficulties that they have experienced in recruiting governors. Both of these reasons made Bob reticent to enforce mandatory training.

5.9.1.4 Monitoring, Challenge, And Questions

Monitoring is one of the most important parts of governance, with its ability to perform the monitoring role often judged by Ofsted. It has already been seen that Governors have occasionally struggled with monitoring areas such as finance. Georgia argues that there needs to be specific mandatory training specifically on monitoring, likening it to an “idiot’s guide to monitoring”. Most Governors noted that to monitor effectively, they needed to understand exactly what they needed to monitor, a point which reflects back to the importance of understanding their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, a few Governors, including Ronan, Andrew, and Georgia, stressed the importance of learning how to ask those challenging questions as part of the monitoring regime. Most SLT agreed that Governors should ask challenging questions and be that ‘critical friend’. However, some felt that there was a very fine balance between being supportive and asking questions that will, according to Bob, “…make sure that you are thinking about the things that are important”, emphasising the nuance within the role.

Georgia exemplified the importance of understanding monitoring by reflecting on a personal experience in which monitoring was ineffective. She explained that despite receiving monitoring reports, it was not until there was a change of Headteacher that they found out that the monitoring had not been adequately conducted, which resulted, according to Georgia, in:

"an inconsistency of reading…across the year groups…that was never identified by our monitoring".

Noah also felt that there needed to be an aspect of mandatory training that would cover reporting, namely what needed to be reported and where the challenge should be. Given the difficulties encountered by Georgia's board and the impact this had on their ability to monitor effectively, it would suggest that mandatory training covering monitoring, challenge, and asking questions would be extremely beneficial.

5.9.1.5 New Governors And Qualifications

With the agreement of most Governors and SLT on the importance of training for new Governors, a few Governors reflected on the need for specific induction training. For Emilia, it was important to ensure that Governors understood "…what a Governor is…". Some Governors shared that attending induction training was an expectation, with Elizabeth expanding on this point by discussing how their school has five specific courses that they have deemed "core courses" that must be completed within their first year. Although Elizabeth highlights the school's expectation for new Governor training, she does acknowledge that there can be challenges, such as the timing of the training courses. She counters this concern to some degree by encouraging the Governors to access online courses.

It was clear from those who discussed new Governor training, and from Elizabeth's explanation of having a set of five core courses, that there were expectations of what should be included in induction training. These varied from understanding the concept of being a Governor to Luca's suggestion of "…how to conduct yourself in a meeting…". Another recommendation, and one that fits in with discussions held on

the diversity of training, was school type specific training, with Georgia arguing that there should be mandatory Trustee induction training.

In addition to the discussions around the content of mandatory induction training, there were thoughts shared on potential qualifications. Elizabeth felt that it would be beneficial and shared her own experience of training, which led to a 'Certificate of Governance', which was organised within the county she governed in. This course was expected and contained four core and three optional modules, which were: Getting Started, Being Effective, Introduction to Child Protection and Safeguarding, Introduction to the Curriculum, Introduction to Finance, Introduction to Employment Matters in Schools, and Introduction to Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) in mainstream schools. To complete the course, the Governors had to write a statement explaining what they had learnt. This was something that Elizabeth encouraged other members of her governing body to sign up for, not only because she felt it was beneficial from a knowledge perspective, but also because it provided proof of training. A few Governors shared their thoughts on the concept of Governor qualifications, contemplating the benefits of a qualification for specific roles, such as CoG. Libby's perspective was that it should be essential for Chairs to undertake a national qualification, allowing them to know "…what's expected…as Chair…".

5.9.1.6 Real-World Experience And Contextualised

Real-world experience or examples were also highly valued, with some Governors stressing the importance of being able to contextualise the training. Morgan noted the importance of training including, "scenario-based discussions", with Luca addressing the need to contextualise it within the governor's school environment. For Luca, this meant that those leading the training should have knowledge of the school. Some SLT also agreed that there was a need for a less "generic to…British

schools" approach, with Stella arguing that training, in finance for example, should become more "local" and "specific". The argument behind Stella's suggestion is that it would allow Governors to access more contextualised information.

Shadowing was previously discussed as an option for mentoring, but it was also raised by Georgia as an option for enabling "…real-world experience…" into their training. For Georgia, this would potentially involve being "invited to other…Trust boards…".

For some Governors, it was essential to have some form of "benchmarking material", with Ewan suggesting that it was important to show Governors where they can find that information. The reasoning behind using "benchmarking material" was to allow Governors to see what is 'normal' for schools, particularly those matching the demographics of the governor's own school. This was especially pertinent for Governors who perhaps joined the governing body with external skills but needed to contextualise what they were seeing, which reflects back to previous discussions on utilising Governors with external skills.

5.9.1.7 Strategic And Operational, Strategy, Three Core Functions

It was evident in most Governor and SLT interviews that understanding the difference between strategic and operational was essential for a Governor to be effective. Although there was some discussion surrounding fixed or fluid boundaries, most Governors and SLT agreed that there was a need to have a general understanding of what constituted operational and what fell under the remit of "strategic overview", something that Andrew and Ewan both specifically acknowledged in their interviews as important for any mandatory training. It was especially important for Andrew that Governors understood their role and the three

key areas of responsibility. This, he argues, would allow them to develop a strategy for taking an active part in their monitoring responsibilities. For Andrew, including this in mandatory training would teach Governors to "choose your battles" and "…play the long game…"

5.9.1.8 UK Schools And Terminology

Interestingly, understanding UK schools was a topic that arose throughout most SLT and Governor interviews, with some suggesting that people naturally feel as if they understand the school system. This overarching feeling is clearly illustrated by Sara:

> *"…it's often assumed that people understand the context within which they're governing, and sometimes they don't, so some narrative around the background of the British education system would be really good…"*

Some Governors suggested that this assumption has arisen because they have either attended school themselves or been made aware of school and educational issues via mainstream news channels. This was supported by other Governors, with many suggesting that for those who do not work in the education sector, it can be quite a shock to the system. Libby, who governed in an area that had a number of families based within the African community, felt that this was particularly applicable to Governors who were "from outside of the UK". This led Governors, like Libby, to suggest that it is important to have an "understanding of how schools in this country operate" as a part of any mandatory training.

In addition to understanding the UK school system, a few Governors highlighted the need to understand educational language. Governors specifically noted that there were often assumptions made by educational professionals that the "jargon" they used was understandable to non-education based governors. Although there were

Governors, such as Andrew, who challenged those using this language, a few Governors suggested that educational language should be a part of mandatory training, as a lack of understanding has already been established as having an impact on the ability to govern effectively.

5.9.1.9 Safeguarding

One of the most prominent areas of focus within education from both a governance and SLT position is safeguarding, with most SLT agreeing that safeguarding training should be mandatory. However, there was some divergence in what this training should look like. Unlike the other areas of training that most felt should be contextualised, Bob felt that safeguarding could be addressed more generically "because that should be the same". For Stella, whilst it was important for the Governors to have mandatory safeguarding training, she emphasised the importance of the content of that training. Arguing that it is not within the governors' remit to tackle the physical aspects of safeguarding, such as making referrals, she recommended that mandatory training revolved around understanding the overall issues of safeguarding within a school environment. This aligns with Respondent 115's request to safeguarding training more in keeping with the monitoring expectations of governors.

5.9.2 Negative

5.9.2.1 Non—Targeted, Non-Practical, And Relevance

In the second sub-theme, Negatives, Non-targeted training was seen as an issue within Governor training, with Ava noting that:

> *"…if you are a part of a finance committee, and you are getting the training for… how to improve the syllabus…I'm not saying…that would be useless, but it's not very targeted."*

Ava's opinion was supported by most other Governors who talked about the importance of attending training that could specifically help them within their role, with a few Governors expressing frustration at attending training that they felt was not relevant to their role or specific responsibilities. Ava reflected on her own conversations with Governors who have been encouraged to attend training but who are frustrated with the lack of relevance:

> *"…for what? We have been to various training, so what? These trainings are not adding to our understanding…".*

When considering the impact of training, most Governors felt that for training to be impactful, it must be "relevant", a "hot topic" for their school, or linked to specific elements of the "Governor competency framework" or "three core roles of governance". However, whilst Governors requested a link to the Governor competency framework, which was in effect during the data collection period of this research, it was withdrawn in March 2024. The belief that training needs to be targeted was echoed by some of the Headteachers interviewed. Bob noted that "a lot of the training that the local authority offers is not relevant to schools' interests", which he felt made the training pointless, leaving him frustrated:

> *"It annoys me slightly when Governors go off and do some training...that's irrelevant to their context... It's no good going on a general data thing when they learn about how schools do data. And then they come back, and actually they find that the data drops are different…"*

In addition to most Governors feeling that training is only effective if targeted, there were also a few Governors who reflected on the usefulness of the training they had attended. Some felt that the training "wasn't useful" but would have benefitted from a practical element, with Elizabeth sharing that for her, it was about "how it was

delivered rather than…finance as a topic". Again, the concept of introducing "…real-world experiences" arose as beneficial, with Georgia sharing her belief that:

> *"It outweighs hours of watching presentations or watching training videos…"*

5.9.2.2 Healthy Schools And Well-Being

During discussions around what negatively impacted training, a few Governors identified healthy schools and well-being as training that they felt did not meet the needs of governors. In terms of healthy schools, Andrew argued that whilst he understood the importance of supporting healthy living as a nation, it is not something that would create effective governors:

> *"Schools aren't being judged on how healthy our kids are, they're being judged on reading, writing, and arithmetic… So why was it no good? Because it didn't actually help Governors get any better at their job."*

Well-being was another aspect of training that a few Governors suggested would not benefit Governor development. However, unlike Andrew, who felt it was not beneficial as it did not involve developing governors' oversight, Georgia argued that it was not beneficial if it lacked context:

> *"But even the very best trained people can't necessarily just apply the same methodology in every school…I'd want them to get more school-based experience and knowledge of that before coming back with...the world and his friend's idea as to what good looks like..."*

Again, the lack of contextualisation is a theme that has run throughout the interviews, with most agreeing that it supports Governor training.

5.9.2.3 Safeguarding

Whilst in the minority, a few Governors believed safeguarding to be a negative aspect of Governor training, which may seem, as one Governor phrased it, “Controversial”. However, the Governors who raised it as a negative explicitly stated it was not because they felt the Governors shouldn’t have safeguarding training, but rather that the safeguarding training should be specific to their role, meaning that their training should cover the strategic nature of safeguarding rather than the more operational side. Simply put, the Governors wanted to understand how to monitor safeguarding effectively.

For Andrew, the problem arose because of the imbalance between monitoring and the emphasis on safeguarding in comparison to other forms of monitoring:

> *“…we're asked to go on safeguarding training that's for frontline staff, so that theoretically, we know what they know. We never have to go on, say, teaching maths training, so we know what they know, or English training, so we know what they know. Why do we need to know what they know? Why, as a governor, do I need to know what marks look like? And the answer is I don't. I need to be strategic to make sure that I know those things happen...”*

By comparing the expectations of knowledge for monitoring safeguarding with those for monitoring English or Maths, Andrew highlights the disparity in what is expected for Governor knowledge between the three areas. The overall implication being that safeguarding training is almost too operational, with Andrew summarising his thoughts as the “training is applied to the wrong audience”, akin to remarks made by both Stella and Respondent 115. Luca also shares Andrew’s concerns about the necessity of Governors attending the same form of safeguarding training as staff, again raising concerns over whether it is aimed at the most appropriate audience.

> *“What frustrates the life out of me is when Governors are given training like that, when actually that is not going to impact them. All that's going to do is show them what we are doing in school to keep children safe....The only reason Governors have to read part of keeping children safe in education is...the headteacher could turn around and go, "Well, all my Governors were trained, so you know it's not our fault anymore.”…but actually, is it training?”*

In addition to whether this was aimed at the most appropriate audience, Luca also suggested that the reasoning behind enforcing Governor safeguarding training was as a pre-emptive measure in case any safeguarding issues were identified. By having records of Governor training, it would, according to Luca, allow Headteachers to show that they have adhered to guidance and incidents were therefore not their ”fault”. It is this “red tape” adherence that Luca explained “winds me up”, as he acknowledged that Governors could be doing “something much more useful for their role”.

5.9.2.4 Challenges

One of the most common challenges raised by most Governors was the fractured nature of the current education system, as acknowledged by Jessie, who noted that “…the governors' role has changed quite drastically…”, a feeling that was echoed by Louis. Most acknowledged that this meant Governors needed additional training to support them in the role. However, it is at this point that some Governors acknowledged the difficulties in ensuring Governors did so, summarily explained by Jessie as:

> *“Actually, getting them to take part, engage…we talk a lot about you can lead the horse to water. You can't make it drink…”*

Peter, Louis, and Sara all raised concerns about ensuring Governors attended training, highlighting the impact of the quality of training, the impact of training on

governors' time, and subsequently the potential for all of these to impact Governor recruitment and retention, with Peter noting:

> *"…The problem I think I have is…some schools have difficulty in getting Governors, and I think they are scared that if they then put this thing out, 'you must have training', it might frighten people away…"*

However, Peter further explained that from his perspective, he would rather have "dedicated" Governors who were "committed" and "knowledgeable", than Governors that he feels "…cannot be bothered…" in terms of them understanding their role better. The impact that the quality of training can have on Governors' learning effectively or even simply attending training, was also noted during SLT interviews, with Lawrence acknowledging that the group of Headteachers within his area were so dissatisfied with the training offered to Governors, they started to run their own training.

5.9.3 Positive

There were several positive areas of training highlighted by Governors, which generated the following themes: Confidence; Contextualised; Delegation of responsibilities; Finance; Induction; Networking; Online; Questions; Roles and Responsibilities; Safeguarding; School Life; Strategic & Operational; Using Resources; and What informs a training schedule.

5.9.3.1 Contextualised & Networking

The most discussed sub-theme within 'Positive Training' related to the importance of contextualisation within training. Some Governors also discussed how training that included some form of contextualisation was far more beneficial to their overall professional development. Sara, for example, felt it moved training past a "List of

directives of what we should and shouldn't do". However, for others, such as Ava, contextualising the training helped to embed it in their memory:

> *"I'm telling you that when you are not putting these things into action…you forget these things very easy"*

For others, however, contextualisation allows the Governors to see how the theory works in practice. Charlie suggests that contextualising information creates a circular approach to training:

> *"Probably a…sort of circular motion…so starting understanding the schools current approach…then potentially go external and learn the theory - the best practice, but also the…applied experience of others through either case studies or hearing from them… then coming back around that full circle…to take things back to your own school because I think that for me is the is the application of training…"*

However, Charlie felt that this approach may not be generalisable on a national level but would be more realistically achieved via a more local approach, such as LAs.

Most Governors agreed that overall, contextualised training was "really helpful" and "really valuable" for visualising how the training works within their own governing environment. Ewan suggested that it is especially important for those who are trying to understand their role in a MAT environment, asking questions to establish which are "your bits". Sara also commented on the importance of "real-world grounded examples" for areas such as strategy. Some SLT participants also agreed that providing training within a context related to the governors' needs was the most appropriate approach, with Bob sharing how they contextualise data training for their Governors by running training within their meetings, which also helps engagement with training:

> *"Sometimes the most effective way is to do it within a meeting…we know that our Governors don't really understand the data...so we might run a 20-minute training session for them on, "This is what data looks like. This is how schools manage data." These are the types of questions that Governors should be asking …"*

For Georgia, contextualising training would be most beneficial if delivered through shadowing, immersing the training governor in real-life situations:

> *"…I think you can do all the training in the world, but until you get practical experience of it, you might as well be reading a blank piece of paper...there should be opportunities to shadow existing boards. Work shadowing opportunities...other governing boards, how they run, what kind of questions they ask in the real-world…"*

In addition to contextualising the training, networking was also seen as a valuable form of training. Morgan, who also shared that at times the training felt as if they were simply sitting in front of a collection of different PowerPoints, stated that networking helped them because:

> *"It was actually you know real people talking about real things that happened…and really discussing and understanding."*

Quite simply, it allowed Governors a way to contextualise training and run through real-life scenarios with their peers. This was done in a variety of ways – at in-person training, during online training in breakout rooms, but also increasingly through Governor support groups on a variety of social media platforms.

5.9.3.2 Induction

For some, their own experience of induction was less formal, happening via more local means. Luca shared his own experience of induction, which involved online training videos and a quiz. However, in terms of induction, although most Governors felt that it was important to take part in some form of initial Governor training, Louis

emphasised the importance of ensuring it was a "…through a rigorous induction program" which would cover "all the elements of their job…". Induction training was likened by Zoe to a form of "welcome to governance", with most Governors acknowledging that induction training would allow them to develop a basic level of understanding of their role. However, Sara suggested that induction training should be more than a brief introduction, as experienced by Luca, arguing that it should be over the initial year of governance:

> *"…from my experience, it takes at least a year for people who come on a governing body to understand a cycle of governance…"*

5.9.3.3 Roles And Responsibilities, Delegation Of Responsibilities & Questions

As already noted, most felt that induction training was beneficial in establishing new governors' understanding of their responsibilities. For Sara, ensuring that Governors have a solid understanding of what is expected of them is essential, and for her, this would involve compulsory training on specific aspects of governance:

> *"…my personal feeling is that there should be a…compulsory kind of four-week…succession of trainings on the different aspects of governance. …"*

Most SLT interviewed also agreed that any training which clarified the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of Governors was considered a positive contribution to Governor development, especially if it helped to develop a more thorough understanding of "boundaries". Stella, another leader, further argued that some form of pre-emptive training would be beneficial, giving Governors a glimpse of what governing involves. These approaches would avoid, or at least reduce the

possibility, of Governors progressing through their term of office with gaps in their knowledge, which is something Sara has witnessed herself:

> *"I've had Governors who have been Governors for three or four years who still don't know what the competency framework is …"*

Aside from ensuring that there are no gaps in their knowledge, it was suggested that training on roles and responsibilities would enable parent Governors to transition more easily to their role, with Elizabeth suggesting that it would allow them to better understand what they are "not there to do". Additionally, Andrew felt it was also important that Governors know how to delegate these roles, something he referred to as "diffusion of responsibility".

Although most acknowledged the importance of training on roles and responsibilities, Emilia noted that it should be specific to the needs of individual Governors and should not involve doing "every single training". Therefore, as with the importance of contextualising training, it is also seen as important to allow Governors to personalise their training. This was demonstrated by Elizabeth, who explained how useful she found being able to select training on "effective questioning". Interestingly, we again see the importance of contextualisation as part of Elizabeth's reasoning for finding this so helpful, with her noting that they provide examples that can actually be used:

> *"…it was really useful because they gave us some questions that you could then use..."*

5.9.3.4 Finance, Operational And Strategic, School Life, Safeguarding, Using Resources

Financial training was considered by most to be beneficial to governors. However, Sara noted that most Governors did not take advantage of this training, theorising that this is a result of Governors either being "pushed for time", or more specifically, that there is an assumption that they already know what is needed from a financial perspective:

> *"…actually, they would benefit from more training because I think that school finances…is an area where the training can really make a difference"*

Sara expands on the benefits of financial training from her own perspective and experience. Reflecting on the training she had received at LA workshops, which had a very practical approach, with Governors being given an exemplar budget sheet, and trainers teaching Governors "…how to look at it and what the different columns…" mean.

In addition to finances, most Governors reflected on the importance of safeguarding training, contradicting the few Governors and SLT like Luca, Andrew, and Stella, who had concerns about the almost operational nature of the training. Governors used words such as "essential" and "crucial" when describing the importance of safeguarding training, with most SLT also agreeing on how essential it is for Governors to complete safeguarding training of some description. Bob noted that "they have to understand about keeping children safe. That's the most important thing". For some, it was the "recognition that it could happen here" that formed the basis for ensuring Governors had a basic level of safeguarding training. However, what would a basic level of training consist of? For Luca's governing body, it

consisted of ensuring that Governors read government guidance, such as *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)* (DfE, 2023), as well as Safer Recruitment, which would seemingly be in opposition to the more strategic approach to safeguarding training suggested by some previously.

The fine line between strategic and operational is something that has arisen at multiple points throughout the interviews, and it has also been raised as an important aspect of Governor training, with Jessie noting that it provided a basis for understanding of how to be strategic:

> *"…that difference between strategic and operational, and developing that understanding and ways to practise and demonstrate having that strategic overview"*

Aside from the areas of training considered more 'traditional' for governing bodies, there were also recommendations that training should consist of an element that explores "A day in the life of a typical school", with Luca arguing that it is important Governors understand the connection between everyday life within the school and the wider role of school governance, to understand that:

> *"…actually, if A, B, and C didn't happen in the governing body meeting, X, Y, and Z couldn't be reported or couldn't happen"*

Further to developing an understanding of how daily school life can impact governance, it was also considered important to understand how resources could be used effectively. Ava, for example, suggested that one resource that Governors may find beneficial to develop a deeper understanding of is the role of Human Resources and how they can support Governors and governing bodies.

5.9.3.5 Attitudes To Training, Confidence, What Informs A Training Schedule, And Online Training Effectiveness

Attitudes to Governor training were mostly positive, with most Governors acknowledging the impact training can have on Governors' abilities to perform their role effectively, with Peter arguing a direct link between improved governance and improved school performance:

> *"…it's really, really important that the governing board have the best skills they can have because if they're better trained and better interested in their own self-development, the better the board will be. And if better the board will be, the better the school will be..."*

Some Governors noted that both Governor-specific and external, profession-based training were mutually beneficial, a "two-way street", with governance benefitting from external skills being brought to 'the table' and Governors benefitting from skills learned within their role. Morgan reflected on how these skills "…really helped him in his day job…" and even suggested it would be beneficial to include training on governance within Initial Teacher Training (ITT), enabling them to see the "skills" and view their role in education from a "…different perspective…".

For some Governors, training extended beyond providing Governors with the technical knowledge to perform their role, it also provides a level of confidence. Most Governors acknowledged that they faced a clear, and sometimes intimidating, level of responsibility. Emilia shared her feelings as a new governor, a mixture of nerves and fear, and the overwhelming sense of excitement when she experienced training that helped her to better understand her role:

> *"…I have to admit, when I became a parent governor, I was not confident at all. I was scared shitless. I was petrified. I was thinking, "Oh, my God. What am I going to do now?"... it made me understand the finance a bit better. I'm like, "Oh, my God, I*

understood that."...I'm so excited. I could understand everything...then when I went for my meeting, I'm like, "Oh, I understood...when they said this, this, I understood what it was."

It is clear that training was seen in an overall positive way, especially in terms of the confidence that most Governors felt they had obtained, but what informed a governing body's training schedule? Confidence, or more specifically, the lack of confidence, was only one factor of many that informed a governor's training schedule. Most Governors noted that training schedules were shaped by several factors, including self-evaluation, the presence of a designated Training Governor, and whether the governing body preferred an external provider or an 'in-house' approach.

Self-evaluations are known to most governing bodies, with many choosing a set point in the year to perform a 'skills audit'. The audit involves Governors completing a form and assessing their own skills within certain areas, such as their ability to read and understand a budget report, rating themselves on a Likert scale type system. However, a few Governors expressed concern with this approach, casting doubt on the accuracy of the results given the subjective nature of the system. Charlie, for example, admits that he is rather critical of self-evaluation, acknowledging his scepticism of the reliability of results:

"I am a big critic, I suppose, of self-evaluation, in the sense that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'…I sometimes fear some people have got an overgenerous view of themselves in some areas…"

Regardless of any potential reliability issues, the audit is often used as a basis for guiding the governing body's training schedule over the year by those responsible for arranging training. Elizabeth discussed her governing body's adoption of a 'Training

Governor', a link role specifically created and which "promotes and encourages training within the school." Using the audit, the Governor would identify areas of development for each Governor and the governing body as a whole, subsequently making decisions on how best to address that training need. For Emilia, it was important to identify the best place for training and "…how they do training…", noting that it was important to vary training providers and "…never limit to just one particular company…". For other Governors, such as Jessie, training was more regularly conducted through their own governing body, by adding an additional 30 minutes to the start of each governing body meeting. These 30 minutes are acknowledged as "professional development" and are used to develop their "broader knowledge". Training within meetings was also seen by some Headteachers as an effective approach to Governor training when compared to simply "…watching a webinar", although Bob does warn that this approach should not be used in isolation to avoid potential issues, such as "failure of governance":

> *"…in some schools that could create a failure of governance because if the school itself is doing the training…they can miss things that's important for Governors, so it shouldn't be the only method of training that Governors get…"[sic]*

Whilst most training options discussed were in-person options, some Governors reflected on the ability of online training to open up accessibility to training opportunities, using words such as "flexibility" and "efficient" to describe it. Sara, for example, noted that it had "huge benefits" in terms of Governors who may have restricted time within their schedules, accessing training.

5.10 Recruitment And Retention

5.10.1 Negative And Positive

Despite the many positive attributes of Governor training, some Governors felt that enforcing training could negatively impact the governing body. Jessie and Morgan shared concerns that by enforcing Governors to take part in training, it would result in fewer Governors joining the governing body or the loss of Governors from existing governing bodies. Jessie emphasised the difficulties faced by Governors who might struggle to fit in another commitment on their time, and which potentially would lead to Governors having to choose whether to continue with their governance role, noting that "…you either have Governors or you have an incomplete board…". Morgan also reflected on the implications of training that is too "time-consuming" or "difficult":

> *"I wouldn't want to get into a situation where we were putting people off becoming Governors, because the training was too time consuming or too difficult…"*

However, for Peter, the fact that training "might frighten people away" is not necessarily a negative and could almost result in a more dedicated governing body:

> *"I would rather have fewer, dedicated, committed, knowledgeable Governors than have lots and lots of Governors that actually can't be bothered to learn what their job is…"*

5.11 Summary

5.11.1 Power

'Power' as a construct was part of most participants' realities. Three sub-themes: Relationships, Roles and Responsibilities, and Imbalance were evident throughout, and although there were some positive reflections on the power dynamics within the

governing body, and between leadership and Governors, most experiences were generally more negative. In Relationships, several Governors expressed difficulties because of perceived hostile interactions. The hostility experienced impacted other areas, creating the second sub-theme, Roles and Responsibilities. Governors explained that without a working relationship based on trust and openness, it was difficult – if not impossible in some situations – to carry out the responsibilities of a governing body. This left many feeling they were little more than a token of accountability – there to meet external requirements but with little practical involvement. Through the removal of certain responsibilities or the restructuring of the role of the governor, an unequal distribution of power and control developed, leading to the third sub-theme, Imbalance. Within this sub-theme, numerous Governors struggled to understand their position, often wrestling with how to reconcile the roles and responsibilities being outlined by SLT within their school or trust, and those highlighted within government guidelines.

5.11.2 Boundaries

It is evident that both Governors and SLT have experienced difficulties in terms of either understanding or implementing strategic and operational boundaries. In part, this is a result of the inconsistency in boundary expectations. Indeed, Governors' perceptions of using flexible boundaries to support their headteachers effectively differed greatly from those of the SLT, who all emphasised the need for stricter adherence to boundaries. Additionally, although the Governors perceived understanding of utilising a flexible boundary to 'support' newer Headteachers was based on the belief that they were 'guiding' them, SLT's perception of this was very different, with some noting that it appeared to allow Governors to 'lead' someone who should be perceived as the 'expert'.

Furthermore, the observations reported here suggest that the blurring of strategic and operational boundaries occurred through both physical expectations of a governor's role and parental understanding. Additionally, most participants argued that utilising a governor's external skill set within the operational side of the school, whilst having some positive aspects, was overall inappropriate.

Whilst it was clear that some Governors felt the need to acknowledge that boundaries within governance were flexible, most Governors felt that clearly defined roles and responsibilities, in addition to an atmosphere of openness, in which Governors can question and challenge whether something is strategic or operational, helped with understanding where the boundaries lay.

5.11.3 Clarity

Without a doubt, clarity within the role is important to most Governors, with numerous examples of how the lack of clarity has impacted their ability to effectively govern. An overarching theme throughout was the importance of clarifying the role so that Governors understood exactly what was expected of them, enabling them to fully participate in governing body activities. Lack of clarity impacted governors' ability to take part in meetings, with Governors unsure as to what questions they could ask or how much they could challenge.

The ability to monitor and challenge is seen as intrinsic to the role of a governor, with modern governance embracing the notion of bringing Governors to the table who have external, professional skills. Interestingly, most participants acknowledged that even though external skills were considered beneficial, there were notable drawbacks, including Governors crossing boundaries by using their skills in a more operational manner. Additionally, it was highlighted that professional skills did not

always translate to an educational environment, suggesting the need for additional training regardless of their skill set. Consequently, it could be argued that external skills can potentially reduce the clarity of the role if boundaries are not monitored, and training is not provided that can help contextualise their skills.

Another significant factor in the importance of clarity was ensuring that Governors had a thorough understanding of the weight of responsibilities within the role. Most participants argued that clear, documented role descriptions, as well as training, would be beneficial to ensuring that Governors were aware of what the role entailed, which would allow them to understand their place within the wider governing body.

5.11.4 Covid

The impact of Covid-19 on governance challenged the traditional role of the governor, with monitoring dramatically scaled back, replaced with a more pastoral approach. Additionally, Governors had to adapt to online meetings, visits, and eventually monitoring. However, with reduced or no visits, Governors began to feel disconnected from the school community. Notably, Governors and SLT noted the impact that leading during a pandemic had on their mental health and well-being, with some school communities experiencing extreme well-being situations and subsequent losses.

All Governors and SLT participants acknowledged the difficulties they experienced because of government guidance, noting that it played a substantial part in the need to develop the more pastoral role. Inconsistent advice led to confusion, with last-minute responses increasing the workload of both Governors and SLT.

Interestingly, training was an area that was affected more positively. Noting an increase in participation, Governors suggested this was potentially because it was easier to take part virtually.

5.11.5 Mentoring

Whilst most Governors recognised that having some form of mentorship would be beneficial, it was also stressed that there should be guidance on how to mentor effectively, to ensure good practice. There were a variety of thoughts on how to develop the role of the mentor, in addition to the types of mentoring that could be used, with Governors sharing their own models of mentoring.

Governors also touched on the effectiveness of mentoring, pointing out the potential impact of an inability to fulfil the time commitment aspect of the role, and a lack of clarity in terms of what the role was. For some, mentors should be a ‘friendly ear’, whilst others felt the role entailed a more direct instruction approach.

Most Governors agreed that mentoring was beneficial, but there were mixed opinions on who should mentor and whether this should be a role allocated internally or externally. Some argued that internal mentoring allowed the Governor to contextualise information and develop a better understanding of their governing body, whereas external mentoring would allow the mentor objectivity, allowing mentees to ask questions they might not feel comfortable asking within their own governing body.

5.11.6 Challenge

Multiple factors affect a governor’s ability to challenge effectively. The impact of relationships and conflicts of interest clearly affected most governors' abilities to challenge, and therefore, it also impacted their ability to govern effectively. Open

relationships were considered by most to be the most effective way to govern, in which Governors could ask questions without fear of reprisal, whilst relationships that were overly “dismissive” or “defensive” impacted negatively on their ability to govern effectively.

Conflict of interest was also acknowledged by some Governors as playing a large part in their inability to challenge. Predominantly, roles with specific governance oversight, for example SEND, caused the biggest conflict of interest, with Governors openly stating how difficult they found challenging someone they considered a colleague. Further to this, it was suggested that parent Governors had the potential to create conflicts of interest if they had joined for inappropriate, personal reasons. Additionally, the inability to challenge effectively was raised by most Governors and covered a range of aspects: lack of understanding, removal of traditional Governor responsibilities, restricting information, and inefficient administration.

5.11.7 Support

Support for Governors varied greatly in terms of sources and effectiveness, with some Governors sharing examples, some quite extreme, of ineffective and inconsistent sources of support. Most Governors felt supported within their own governing body, but noted fewer opportunities for external support from Local Authorities or Trusts, although some Governor networking sessions were available.

Furthermore, most Governors felt that effective support could positively influence the isolation and self-doubt some Governors felt. An example of this could be seen when a few Governors noted that the relationships they had built up with other Governors allowed them the opportunity to share the burden of the role, using each other as a “sounding board”.

5.11.8 Training

Most Governors felt that mandatory training would be beneficial, emphasising the importance of particular aspects of governance, such as clarifying the roles and expectations, and situating ‘real-world’ experience within the training. Moreover, most Governors reflected on the impact that training can have on a Governor’s ability to do their role. However, some Governors highlighted aspects of training that they viewed more negatively, with most noting that training that did not directly impact their role or help with the strategic overview expected of them was not beneficial.

5.11.9 Recruitment And Retention

Although most acknowledged the difficulties faced by Governors when trying to fit training into busy schedules, they also understood the importance of training. Some Governors felt that it was a balancing act between ensuring that Governors were receiving appropriate training and avoiding an excessive impact on their commitments outside of governance, which could result in poor retention of governors. Others, however, felt that by enforcing training, it could almost act as a filter, removing those who were deemed less committed to the role.

6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the findings of this research and explore these within the boundaries of existing literature and the overarching research questions: *What is the present provision for Governor training in England? How do serving Governors assess their own training? How do senior leaders assess the training of Governors based on their performance in meetings? Which strong claims could be made to improve the quality of Governor training?* This chapter will address each of these research questions, providing a summary of the overall provision of Governor training in England in terms of both quantity and quality, and how this training is perceived by serving Governors and Headteachers. Moreover, it will aim to understand how those who access Governor training (Governors), as well as those who benefit from it in terms of a potentially improved governance (Headteachers), feel it could be improved.

6.2 Overview Of Themes

Section 6.2 discusses general themes identified within this research. It is divided into 4 sub-sections: The impact of power on the effectiveness of the governing body (6.2.1); Tension between different perceptions of abilities and responsibilities within some governing boards. (6.2.2); Restrictions impacting the effectiveness of challenge (6.2.3); and The changing nature of the role (6.2.4).

6.2.1 The Impact Of Power On The Effectiveness Of The Governing Body

Governance, and by extension, school Governors, have existed in one form or another for centuries (Sallis, 1993; Gann, 1998; Young, 2014). During this time, the responsibilities of the governing body have grown exponentially, leading to a higher

level of overall accountability and increased expectations in terms of the roles they play in a school's leadership team (James et al., 2014; Wilkins, 2015). Throughout this time, as a result of changes in Government regulations, the power balance has fluctuated, meaning that Governors moved between adopting heavily operational roles, to a form of passive oversight, to reaching a more balanced role of voluntary colleague in the 21st Century (Dunford, 1976; Gann, 1998; Balarin et al., 2008; Woods and Simkins, 2014; Allcroft, 2016; Wilkins, 2016; Baxter, 2017). However, as an overarching theme, 'Power' was part of most of the participants' realities. There were some positive reflections on the power dynamics within the governing body, with most survey respondents feeling that they could freely express their opinions and that these opinions were valued. This differed to the experiences shared within the interviews, which were more negative and similar to experiences relayed within the literature.

Recognising the existence of power play within most group dynamics, Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren (2009) and Bagarette (2011) discussed the difficulties often experienced when attempting to share power, something also identified during the interviews. Several participants shared their experiences of information being withheld, as well as feelings of perceived hostility from the SLT to Governors and forms of 'gatekeeping' (Dean et al., 2007) in terms of Headteachers discouraging overly critical monitoring. A contributing factor towards the perception of hostile relationships could be the perceived domination in meetings of the SLT, as seen in Ranson's (2011) governance type, 'Governance as a deliberative forum'. This was noted by several Governors to be particularly prevalent in moments of leadership change, with several Governors sharing feelings of oppression, with comments made during the interviews about "…walking on eggshells", "bullying", and "get rid of

us". In this scenario, the Governors perceived their oppressors (Freire, 1970) to be SLT. However, from the perspective of some SLT, controlling the meeting helps them to ensure that the challenge is recorded for Ofsted. This could suggest that the dominance experienced by some revolves around a lack of trust, as well as the power play experienced by some following a change of leadership. This lack of trust, exemplified through Bob's experience, could prove problematic, as Dhillon (2006) explained the importance of trust in establishing a collaborative partnership. The difficulties and power play reflected upon by Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren (2009) and Bagarette (2011) presented within the interviews as gatekeeping and an inability to constructively participate in conversations. For Freire (1970), the notion of true, democratic dialogue involved all parties having the right to speak unhindered, without domination by either party, and was utilised as more than the simple passing of information from one side to another. It was clear that this was not the experience of the majority of those interviewed.

The feelings shared in the interviews were in stark contrast to survey respondents who generally felt able to contribute freely within meetings, although some responses were more in line with the negative experiences shared in the interviews. However, whilst there is a slight disparity between the respondents' and participants' feelings on their ability to access information and share their thoughts freely, there is commonality between the experiences shared within the interviews and the literature, such as Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren (2009), Bagarette (2011), and Dean et al., (2007).

6.2.2 Tension Between Different Perceptions Of Abilities And Responsibilities Within Some Governing Boards

As previously highlighted, whilst seemingly part of the overall system of educational oversight, Governors are also oppressed. This oppression originates from the overarching system of school inspection, with both SLT and Governors impacted. As with Governors, who present as oppressed whilst adopting a role within an oppressive system, it can be argued that SLT are also in a similar position. SLT are simultaneously oppressed within the wider system of educational oversight and oppressor within their relationships to the governing body through their attempts to withhold information and impose a one-sided dialogue.

In addition to feeling oppressed, several Governors felt that there was a lack of engagement from the Headteacher, with some suggesting an unwillingness on the part of the Headteacher to engage. Some attributed this to Headteachers feeling that Governors did not have the ability to perform adequately. The feelings around being perceived as inadequate, shared in Governors interviews, appear to align with Heystek (2004), who also noted that Headteacher perceived ineptitude in terms of Governor abilities had the potential to lead to dominating behaviour on the part of the Headteachers, if they felt that monitoring was ineffective. Libby, a longstanding Governor, experienced something similar to that suggested by Heystek (2004), sharing her own experience with a Headteacher she felt did not value her experience and who regularly reminded her that it was his “job to explain things”. The concern over governors’ lack of understanding because of their non-educational background, whether perceived or legitimate, was also highlighted by Robinson, Ward and Timperley (2003). Again, it is clear that Governor experiences shared in the interviews differ from those recorded in the survey, with most respondents

overwhelmingly stating that they felt their opinion was valued. However, SLT participants appeared to agree with survey respondents, noting that they valued Governor input as long as they adhered to the remit of their role. Although, as noted by Merrell (2000), keeping boundaries clear can be difficult. The similarity between SLT participants and Governor respondents notwithstanding, the general findings of the interviews broadly supports the work of other studies in this area, such as Robinson, Ward and Timperley (2003), Heystek (2004), and Hatcher (2005) who all noted the impact of perceived Governor ineptitude and the potential risk to Headteachers in a high stake inspection environment.

Regardless of whether Governors felt their opinions were valued, it was clear that for some SLT, Ofsted and its potentially punitive response was a genuine concern. This was evident in both the interviews, in which some (e.g. Bob) commented on the need to guide governors to ensure that challenge is taking place, and the literature, as seen in Hatcher (2005), who reflected on how the lack of an educational background on the part of the Governors, can lead to Headteachers adopting a more dominant approach to avoid a negative Ofsted judgement. Whilst it was evident that Governors interviewed felt they were perceived as inadequate, and SLT shared concerns over ensuring that challenge was being seen to take place, respondents shared that they could actively take part in meetings and freely express their opinions. This again shows a disparity between survey responses and interviews, although it is difficult to comment on whether this is authentic freedom to take part or whether they too are being guided. Despite these differences, the interviews do provide a level of understanding over why some felt unable to freely express their opinions and how this could be addressed. Namely, it was suggested that a lack of understanding in terms of educational knowledge and role expectations could create a crisis of

confidence, resulting in a fear of asking questions. Additionally, the removal of some governor responsibilities and pertinent information being withheld by SLT left Governors feeling restricted, unable to express an opinion because they did not have access to all the information. However, there were also suggestions on how to mitigate this perceived inability to contribute. This predominantly involved creating and sustaining a culture of openness, which would enable Governors to ask questions without fear of reproach. For Heystek (2004), the prospective solution was developing layers of responsibility, allowing Headteachers to prepare initial documents and then present these documents to the Governors for approval, akin to Ranson's (2011) 'Consultative sounding board' type of governing body. However, in contrast to Heystek's (2004) solution, for the majority of Governors interviewed, it appears that the resolution lies in the recognition of the skills they bring to the governing body, particularly for Libby, who brought experience from both a governance and educational perspective. The overall view that acknowledging the skills brought to the governing body aligns itself with Ranson's (2011) 'Executive board' or 'Governance as a governing body', in which power is more equally shared because skills are acknowledged. When comparing the two options – layered responsibility and skill recognition – consideration should be given as to whether Heystek's (2004) suggestion creates an opportunity for an 'authentic' designation of power or rather a form of quasi-autonomous oversight. Additionally, further consideration should be given as to whether, in the first instance, this is more a power struggle rather than power dominance, with power dominance a byproduct of that struggle. Lack of respect for the skills they brought with them was noted by several Governors, with some feeling that they were considered "subservient" to the "lead professional". Acknowledging the skills they bring, albeit not necessarily

education-based, could reduce the potential for power struggles and subsequently the dominance experienced by some, who felt ‘dictated’ to.

It was not only individual relationships that were impacted by power relationships, there were also discussions amongst the Governors of the disconnect between MATs/MACs and their perception of LGBs. There were particular discussions around how they were publicly perceived when given the moniker ‘Local Academy Committees’ (LAC), removing all references to the role of Governor. Noah, Andrew, and Libby all commented on feelings of subordination, noting that their roles were being reduced with the intention of the CEOs and Trusts to “do all the governance themselves” (Noah). Most felt their role was reduced to a version of Ranson’s (2011) ‘Governance as a deliberative forum’, with little responsibility. For some, the name change was a physical representation of this reduced role.

Roles and responsibilities were also impacted, such as challenge, a responsibility which many consider essential to ‘good’ governance (Governors for Schools, 2024; Dean et al., 2007; Wilkins, 2015; Baxter, 2017). However, despite the collective view on challenge being essential to ‘good’ governance, several Governors moved beyond this shared view from literature, expressing feelings of frustration at being unable to challenge. These frustrations then developed into feelings of impotency, with Governors surmising that they felt they could no longer make a difference.

Robinson, Ward and Timperley (2003), as previously noted, reflected on concerns over governors’ lack of understanding and the impact that has in terms of relationships. Baxter (2017) also considers Headteachers views of the quality of Governor challenge, noting that some who considered it to be below the expected standard. It was clear during the interviews that several Governors felt ‘dismissed’

because their knowledge was considered less than that of the Headteacher/CEO, exemplified in Elizabeth's statement that there was little point in offering a view as it was simply dismissed. However, difficulty challenging was not solely based on perceived ineptitude and dismissiveness. Dean et al. (2007) discuss two reasons that Governors may be reticent to challenge: support balance and feeling ill-equipped. As previously discussed, within the interviews, most Governors felt equipped to ask the questions, as did most respondents within the survey, but in general, they felt that they were not taken seriously, with Governors sharing comments from Headteachers about it being their "job to explain things" to the Governors. Therefore, Dean et al.'s (2007) second point on Feeling ill-equipped does not appear to fit the experiences of the Governors interviewed. However, Dean et al.'s (2007) initial point on the balance between challenge and support does appear to factor. This suggests that not only does there need to be recognition of the skills Governors bring with them, but there also needs to be a level of respect from SLT for these skills.

Although support is acknowledged as a specific and often preferred responsibility of the governing body (Earley, 2003; Dean et al., 2007; O'Sullivan and West-Burnham, 2011; Ranson, 2011), some Governors felt it difficult to offer either challenge or support as they felt that the Headteacher actively attempted to keep them out the loop. Evidence of this can be seen in Libby's statement about the Headteacher 'gatekeeping' through refusing to share or discuss information with them before taking action. Not only did this create a situation in which Governors could not provide support, but it also built up resentment, as Libby reflected on the surprise they felt at the negative end-of-year results and the blame that was subsequently placed upon them. In this situation, the governing body could neither support nor

challenge, as they were not aware of the situation. As noted by Baxter (2017, p. 33), there were Headteachers who acknowledged being asked “the right questions” but questioned their understanding of the response in terms of the accuracy of the information provided, noting their reliance on school improvement partners to confirm accuracy (Robinson, Ward and Timperley, 2003; Baxter, 2017). It is evident that in Libby’s situation, the fact that the Headteacher withheld pertinent information, which was not identified until the end of year results, suggests that regardless of whether the Governors asked the “right questions”, they were still unaware of the clearly developing situation within their school. This suggests that there is a need for support around ensuring that Governors are able to identify the accuracy of the information, whether through training or collaboration with someone who can verify the information, such as the school improvement partner.

Libby was not alone in experiencing this form of explicit restriction to essential information. Peter also shared his experience of working with a Headteacher who threatened to withhold information if he was forced to sign a code of conduct in which governors would hold them accountable for educational performance. This lack of openness and transparency clearly impacted governing bodies’ abilities to govern and challenge effectively, leading to questions of performativity with Governors being seen to ask appropriate questions but with little effect on their overall understanding of the situation they are supposedly monitoring (Ball, 2003; Wilkins, 2015; Young, 2016). Quesel, Näpfli and Buser (2017) argue that for some Headteachers, ensuring the power lies with them, allows them to control the narrative but as Robinson, Ward and Timperley (2003) note, when power resides solely with the Headteacher, it can lead to situations experienced by both Libby and

Peter, resulting in either an overdependence on, or deference to, staff which could create an opportunity for information to be withheld or manipulated.

There is a ‘natural’ imbalance within the school governance system as it is split unequally between volunteers and paid educational professionals, which is exacerbated by the removal of certain responsibilities or the restructuring of the role of the governor, creating an unequal distribution of power and control. Reflecting on this through a Freirean theoretical lens, it is clear that these roles are not of equal stature and that the role of Governors in the democratic process is limited, as is the opportunity to participate in authentic dialogue.

Perry (2011) and Unda et al. (2023) acknowledge the importance of having clearly defined roles within effective governing bodies. However, whilst most survey respondents felt they had a good understanding of their roles, many of the interview participants felt conflicted over their roles and how they should be enacted, struggling to find the balance needed.

Ambiguity over role expectations, coupled with power imbalance, often affected Governor responsibilities, especially challenge. Roles that are not clearly defined, in addition to conflicts of interest, clearly affected most governors' abilities to challenge and, therefore, also impacted their ability to govern effectively. Relationships that were open were considered by most to lead to effective governance, as Governors could ask questions without fear of reprisal, reducing the potential for deference referred to by Robinson, Ward and Timperley (2003). It was seen that “dismissive” or “defensive” relationships, often a result of Headteachers’ concerns over the impact of inspection judgements (Hatcher, 2005), impacted negatively on their ability to govern effectively because Headteachers then tended to dominate (Hatcher, 2005).

6.2.3 Restrictions Impacting The Effectiveness Of Challenge

Whilst challenge has historically been considered to be balanced with support, Baxter (2017) argues that there has been a move away from this balance, to a more challenge-focused approach. However, Walker, Sharp and Sims (2020) have suggested that since the pandemic, the balance has been restored. This is reflected in the interviews, where Governors considered the impact of Covid-19 on challenging as part of their overall monitoring responsibilities, with many acknowledging the support they provided to SLT and their schools. However, although acknowledging the impact of the pandemic, Jopling and Harness (2022) note that SLTs were most likely to approach colleagues, both internally and externally to their school, before reaching out to their Governors, suggesting that Governors were not considered to be the primary support at the time.

Conflict of interest also played a large part in the Governors' inability to challenge. Predominantly, interviews suggested that link Governors involved in monitoring an area overseen by a governance colleague, e.g. SENDCO, caused the biggest conflict of interest. This was in addition to parent Governors who, some believed, had the potential to create conflicts of interest if they had joined for personal reasons, a difficulty also highlighted by Ranson (2011).

Additionally, Governors felt unable to challenge if they did not understand the data presented to them, a concern also raised by Baxter (2017). It was felt that a lack of understanding impacted their ability to challenge and increased their workload as they tried to understand. Furthermore, they found that it was difficult to challenge when their responsibilities were removed and given to a higher level of governance, such as the trustees. Again, examining this within the theoretical framework of Freire (1970), the lack of trust and hierarchical nature of accountability created by the

removal of certain responsibilities restricts the opportunity for collegial dialogue and active participation in the democratic process of school governance. As noted by Freire (1970, p. 88), “dialogue cannot occur between…those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them”.

Governors also found it difficult when their access to information was restricted or withheld, noting their inability to challenge effectively when unaware of the facts, something also considered by Robinson, Ward and Timperley (2003) as impacting effective challenge. Finally, Governors argued that they found it difficult to challenge when the paperwork was inefficiently dealt with, leaving them trying to process documents with very little time.

6.2.4 The Changing Nature Of The Role

In addition to the difficulties experienced by Governors in terms of adhering to their role expectations, such as challenge, Governors also reflected on the changing nature of their role as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The impact of Covid-19 on governance appears to have challenged the traditional role of the governor, with the monitoring aspect of the role dramatically scaled back, replaced with a more pastoral approach. As the pandemic developed, schools and Governors began to adapt to online meetings. However, it was noted that as a result of monitoring moving online, with reduced or no visits from Governors to the school, Governors had begun to feel disconnected from the school community and anxious at what their new role entailed (Merrell, 2000; Hayden, 2006; Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren, 2009; Connolly and James, 2011; Quesel, Näpfli and Buser, 2017; Gibson and Bailey, 2021; Unda et al., 2023)

Both Governors and SLTs noted the impact that leading during a pandemic had on their mental health and well-being, with some school communities experiencing extreme well-being situations and subsequent losses. From a Freirean perspective, although Governors were seemingly removed from the democratic oversight of schools at this time, in terms of conscientização, Governors developed more awareness of injustices and inequalities experienced within their school community, with some engaging in more meaningful dialogue that allowed a deeper understanding of their own and SLT realities. This was particularly evident in Ewan's response:

> *"I think it was understanding the implications… how children became at risk because their parents were now out of work or on furlough…the finance had gone down…they were on benefits… and that implication on the youngster in terms of their well-being and their learning" – Ewan*

Schmidt and Groeneveld (2021) emphasis the need for clear communication in a crisis situation; however, this was not the experience of the Governors within this interview. As seen in the findings of Beauchamp et al. (2021), all Governors and SLT participants acknowledged the difficulties they experienced because of poor government guidance, noting that it played a substantial part in the need to develop a more pastoral role. This experience with inconsistent advice led to confusion, with last-minute responses increasing the workload of both Governors and SLT. Interestingly, training was an area that was affected in a more positive manner during the pandemic, with Governors noting an increase in participation. It was suggested during the Governor interviews that this was potentially because it was easier for Governors to take part virtually.

However, it is not only the impact of the pandemic that has led to the adaptation of the role of a Governor. With the ever-evolving nature of school governance, there has been a clear, and some might say expected, move away from a stakeholder model of governance to one that is skills-based, a model that is actively promoted by the Government (Gove, 2012; Connolly, Farrell and James, 2017). Coupled with the increased expectation from the government that governing bodies should have more autonomy in line with their increased powers (Wilkins, 2015), it suggests there may be a need to explore whether the current provision of training for school Governors is sufficient, when teamed with external, occupational based training, or whether there is a need to have additional training regardless of the skills Governors bring to the governing body.

6.3 Summary Of Key Findings In Relation To Research Questions

Following the discussion of general themes in section 6.2, section 6.3 addresses key findings in relation to the research questions. This section is separated into 4 sub-sections based on the research questions: 6.3.1 What is the present provision for Governor training in England? 6.3.2 How do serving Governors assess their own training? 6.3.3 How do senior leaders assess the training of Governors based on their performance in meetings? 6.3.4 Which strong claims could be made to improve the quality of Governor training?

6.3.1 What Is The Present Provision For Governor Training In England?

6.3.1.1 Quantity And Types Of Training

There has been a clear attempt to understand and develop Governor training over several decades, particularly post-1977 (Louden and Urwin, 1984). In terms of the quantity of training available, it was clear from survey responses that most

Governors felt that the current provision was good, with only a small minority disagreeing. Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, respondents were asked to reflect on the types of Governor training that had been made available to them over a period of two years, to allow for a period of adjustment and adoption of alternate training provision and/or more traditional avenues of training re-opening. When reviewing the options selected by respondents from the 12 main training topics provided in the survey, the top two most attended forms of training were safeguarding and finance, both of which were considered essential by most Headteachers and Governors in the interviews. However, as part of the options, respondents were allowed to select an 'Other' option, which showed an even wider range of training opportunities. Based on self-identified training opportunities they had experienced, these 'Other' options seemed diverse in topic and included training in areas such as equality, diversion, and inclusion; governing within a religious school; difficult situations; and even pandemic-related governance, such as remote learning. However, it was evident from responses to this option that the focus for most was on attending leadership training.

In addition to training in areas specific to the roles each Governor may undertake during their tenure, the importance of induction was highlighted in both responses to the survey and interviews. This importance is mirrored in the literature, with several authors acknowledging the impact induction training can have on the successful completion of their role (Jones, 1998; McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011; Perry, 2011). However, there was some variance in whether induction should be mandatory, with concerns raised over the impact on Governor retention and recruitment, a concern again reflected in the wider literature (McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011).

Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there were induction systems in place to support new Governors, but there were variations in the format of these induction systems. This is similarly seen in Perry (2011), who noted that a large proportion of Governors were offered induction training, with a high percentage of those offered accepting a place on induction training (89%).

In terms of attendance at training, some suggest that it is linked with the format, with a preference for attending contextualised, less formal training rather than the more formal training preferred by others (Turner, Mountford and Morris, 1991; Jones, 1998; Perry, 2011). It was clear that there were several approaches to training, with some Governors sharing that their inductions were less formal and held at a local, school level. Others, such as Luca, completed online induction training, which consisted of watching videos and answering questions. For others, there were more formal approaches to induction, with an expectation that they would complete an induction course. These were often led by LAs or counties, as seen in Elizabeth's discussion of her own experience of induction training. Elizabeth explained that her school had 5 designated "core courses", with the expectation that these courses would be completed within the first year of governance. Additionally, there were several discussions with Governors on induction training and the possibility of it leading to a qualification, with some feeling that it was beneficial to ensuring a consistent approach to knowledge acquisition. There were also comments relating to the fact that a training certificate would provide proof of training, potentially demonstrating an underlying consideration of what Governors feel Ofsted requires as demonstrable evidence of a compliant governing body. However, some Governors, when reflecting on a more formal, official qualification, considered this to

be more beneficial to those in more ‘senior’ roles, such as Chair and Vice-Chair, rather than the more general governing body.

It is notable that the methods of induction and general Governor training varied quite significantly, but in addition to the physical variation in how induction training was delivered, there were also differences in induction and general training content. The more formal induction training contained role specific content, such as Elizabeth’s “core courses” and ‘Certificate of Governance’, the latter of which concentrated on what they believe to be the seven main aspects of governance – beginning governance, acting effectively, safeguarding, curriculum, finance, employment, and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). However, for some Governors, it was important to include more general training on understanding the concept of governance, or as Emilia states, “…what a Governor is…”. Some even argued that there should be more non-governance related aspects, such as Luca, who felt that there should be training on “how to conduct yourself in meetings”, for those Governors who may not have worked in an environment that operates in a similar manner to that of the governing body. Additionally, some Governors also felt that there should be school type-specific training, allowing Governors to understand the role of the governing body within maintained schools, MATs, or religious-based schools. Georgia, for example, argued that it was essential to have Trustee training within induction training. In terms of general training, Perry (2011) notes that respondents within their research identified legal, health and safety, data protection, monitoring, public relations, communication, analysing data, and mediation as potential areas for Governor CPD. However, areas such as legal and health and safety were among the least attended, according to survey respondents.

However, although most Governors and Headteachers acknowledged that induction training was essential and that there were induction systems in place, most Governors did not feel supported during their induction year. The survey responses suggest that although there was a high proportion of respondents who were aware of induction training/support, most still felt unsupported, with one respondent sharing that they had not received any form of induction training. Given that most were aware of induction training, the question arises of why these Governors felt that they did not feel supported within their induction year. Potentially, Governors' awareness of induction training did not necessarily translate into their access or use of the available resources.

6.3.1.2 Quality Of Training

As also noted by Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991), Jones (1998) and Perry (2011), concerns over training revolved less around the quantity or type of training but rather the quality. Whilst most felt there was a wide selection of training available, including induction, both respondents and participants felt that there were issues with the quality of training provided. Governors and Headteachers both described the quality of training they had experienced as “basic”, “generic”, and “inaccurate”, with some sharing that they had experienced training sessions which had openly shared “misinformation” which had little or no link to “research/evidence”. Those Governors who complained that the training was “basic” also felt that those leading the training were poorly prepared and “patronising”. The quality of training was considered so bad by some Headteachers, such as Lawrence, that they created their own training within a small, local collective of schools, in an attempt to provide Governors with a more stable approach to their training. A benefit of Headteachers providing training,

particularly induction, was noted by Jones (1998) who suggested that this approach ensured all had some form of training in readiness for their role as a governor.

Most of the concerns raised by Governors and Headteachers in relation to the quality of general Governor training also applied to Governor induction. However, there were also discussions around the importance of utilising mentoring as part of the induction process, a method that Varghese et al. (2022) not only consider to be a standard approach to professional CPD but also a preferred option. Some Governors shared their experiences of working with a mentor or ‘Governor buddy’ and, as with induction content, there were variations in general perceptions of what mentoring would, or for those who had experienced it, did, involve. Unfortunately, despite mentoring being the second highest response to ‘What training would help you to be an effective governor?', not all Governors had the opportunity to be mentored. For Charlie, this was something that he felt was a missed opportunity within his own induction.

From the interview data, four main approaches to mentoring were identified: modelled monitoring, shadowing, opt-in mentor matching, and a buddy system. These four models would appear to fit into Macpherson and McKillop’s (2002) suggestion that there are two approaches to mentoring – formal, with a set structure, and informal based, on collegial support. For some Governors, mentoring was ineffective because the person assigned to mentor did not have the time to do so. Ava, for example, was assigned the CoG as her mentor. However, the time commitments within her own governing role combined with external responsibilities meant that although she may have had the knowledge to mentor successfully, she found it difficult to allocate the time needed to the role, leaving Ava feeling unsupported. For other Governors, the effectiveness of mentoring was hindered by

mentors who seemed unprepared for the depth of the role; Ronan, for example, described his mentor simply sitting beside him during initial governing body meetings, offering real-time explanations. The informal nature of the mentoring experienced by Ava and Ronan would suggest a need for some formal structure, making mentoring a deliberate part of Governor development rather than ad hoc support that reduces the governors' ability to reflect on their own growth, as suggested by Varghese et al. (2022).

The role of mentor was clearly perceived differently in terms of a clear understanding of time commitment to the role, as well as what that role entailed. However, it was also clear that there was a notable difference in governors' perceptions of the 'type' of person who should undertake the role. Sara, for example, felt that a mentor should be "friendly", "supportive", and someone they could "talk to and become friends with". This was in stark contrast to Ronan, who felt that a mentor should be someone who dealt with the role from a practical perspective, supporting the mentee to understand the physical aspects of governance. However, for Macpherson and McKillop (2002) and Varghese et al. (2022), mentoring needed to move past simple information sharing, with junior Governors "banking" (Freire, 1970) the necessary knowledge. A more collegial and collaborative approach, sitting somewhere between Sara and Ronan's suggestions, would allow for a more balanced relationship between mentor and mentee. A collaborative approach would move mentoring past knowledge transfer, towards a more mutually beneficial knowledge exchange (Macpherson and McKillop, 2002; Jones and Brown, 2011; Varghese et al., 2022). Mentoring would also allow for the training to be more contextualised (Varghese et al., 2022), something that most respondents and participants felt was important.

Whilst mentoring may be considered beneficial, it is impacted by the inconsistency of who should mentor, how they should do so, and whether the mentor is prepared for the role in terms of knowledge and time commitment. Most Governors suggested that there should be some form of mentor training available to ensure the role was executed effectively. However, one Governor felt that to reduce training costs and potentially extraneous time commitments, mentors should have some form of handbook to refer to. Unfortunately, with little published data on mentoring in governance, a systematic understanding of how mentoring contributes specifically to Governor training/development is still lacking.

6.3.2 How Do Serving Governors Assess Their Own Training?

6.3.2.1 Helpfulness Of Training

Training was generally thought of in a positive way, with most Governors reflecting on the impact that training can have on a governor's ability to do their role. However, some Governors highlighted aspects of training they viewed negatively, noting that training that did not directly impact their role or support the strategic overview expected of them was not beneficial. Most respondents shared that they felt their training had been either 'Extremely helpful' or 'Somewhat helpful', which was echoed in general during the interviews. There were 10 main reasons why Governors selected 'Extremely helpful', including but not limited to, helping Governors to clarify their role(s). The importance of clarifying the role was also highlighted by Perry (2011) and Unda et al. (2023), who suggest that for governance to be effective, both Headteachers and Governors need to have a clear understanding of their roles. This was reflected within the interviews, with clarity within the role demonstrably important to most governors. There were numerous examples of how the lack of clarity has impacted their ability to effectively govern. An overarching theme throughout was the

importance of clarifying the role so that Governors understood exactly what was expected of them, enabling them to fully participate in governing body activities. Lack of clarity impacted governors' ability to take part in meetings, with Governors unsure as to what questions they could ask or how much they could challenge. This uncertainty created a level of anxiety, something addressed by multiple authors, with clarifying the role considered the most appropriate way to address these concerns (Merrell, 2000; Hayden, 2006; Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren, 2009; Connolly and James, 2011; Quesel, Näpfli and Buser, 2017; Gibson and Bailey, 2021; Unda et al., 2023).

The ability to monitor and challenge is seen as intrinsic to the role of a governor, with modern governance embracing the notion of bringing Governors to the table who have external, professional skills. Interestingly, most participants acknowledged that even though external skills were considered beneficial, there were notable drawbacks, which included Governors crossing boundaries, using their skills in a more operational manner, a concern also highlighted by Merrell (2000). Additionally, it was suggested by some participants that despite having specific, professional skills, such as finance, these skills did not always translate to an educational environment, suggesting the need for additional training, regardless of their skill set. Building on the work of Merrell (2000), it could be argued that external skills can potentially reduce the clarity of the role if boundaries are not monitored, and training is not provided that can help contextualise their skills. Another significant factor in the importance of clarity was the ability to ensure that Governors had a thorough understanding of the weight of responsibilities within the role. Most participants argued that clear, documented role descriptions, as well as training, would be

beneficial to ensuring that Governors were aware of what the role entailed and would allow them to understand their place within the wider governing body (Merrell, 2000).

Maintaining boundaries and crossing boundaries were both suggested to be a source of some friction during interviews and within the wider literature (Shearn et al., 1995; Merrell, 2000; Hayden, 2006; Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren, 2009; Connolly and James, 2011; Gibson and Bailey, 2021). It was evident throughout the interviews that both Governors and SLT have experienced difficulties in terms of either understanding or implementing the strategic and operational boundaries. In part, this is a result of a disparity in boundary expectations. Indeed, Governor perception of using flexible boundaries to ensure that the governing body were able to able to support their Headteacher effectively, differed greatly from that of the SLT, who all noted the need for a stricter adherence to boundaries, something that both Gibson and Bailey (2021) and Quesel, Näpfli and Buser (2017) have addressed within their research. Both noted the need for Headteachers to control the narrative and inform the Governors in a direct manner of their boundary expectations, which is reflected in the responses from SLT participants. Additionally, although the Governors perceived understanding of utilising a flexible boundary to ‘support’ newer Headteachers was based on the belief that they were ‘guiding’ them, SLT’s perception of this was very different, with some noting that it appeared to allow Governors to ‘lead’ someone who should be perceived as the ‘expert’.

Furthermore, the observations reported here by both Governors and SLT appear to support the belief that the blurring of strategic and operational boundaries occurred through both physical expectations of a governor’s role (Baxter, 2017; Merrell, 2000), and parental understanding (both as a parent Governor and a Governor who is a parent) (Heystek, 2004; Lewis and Naidoo, 2004; Hayden, 2006; Gibson and Bailey,

2021). Additionally, Merrell (2000) also notes that there can be difficulties for those with ‘professional’ knowledge to adhere to boundaries, suggesting that restrictions are placed on Governors with ‘professional’ knowledge, creating a clear boundary and therefore removing the potential conflict. As previously noted, most Governors felt that clearly defined roles and responsibilities, in addition to an atmosphere of openness, helped with understanding where the boundaries lay. With the latter, survey responses and interviews suggest most agree that training would be particularly helpful.

For those who selected ‘Somewhat helpful’, Governors provided 15 supporting reasons. These were similar to those given by respondents who selected ‘Extremely helpful’, but with added clarification that the training, while useful, lacked nuance, context, and was ultimately quite basic. This was very similar to the conversations held within the interviews which suggested that although Governor training was conceptually a good idea, and provided a basic understanding of the role, it was ultimately flawed because of the quality of training provided (Turner, Mountford and Morris, 1991; Jones, 1998; Perry, 2011).

6.3.2.2 Training - Mandatory

The literature on mandatory training suggests that it can help to support Governors as they begin a role that is held to a professional level of accountability, by clarifying roles and responsibilities (Jones, 1998; McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011; Perry, 2011; Garrington, Henson and Ebbs, 2020). Building on this literature, most Governors in the survey and interviews felt that both regular and mandatory training would be beneficial, emphasising the importance of mandatory training in particular aspects of governance, such as clarifying the roles and expectations, and situating ‘real-world’ experience within the training. However, prior studies have also raised

concerns over the potential impact of enforcing mandatory training on recruitment and retention of Governors (McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011), with this concern reflected in the responses of participants who felt it could potentially impact Governor retention and recruitment negatively. Overall, it was clear that most Governors and Headteachers felt that mandatory training would be beneficial, especially those considered new to the role. Most felt that it would help to establish a clear understanding of the role and would ultimately ensure that Governors had a distinct understanding of the boundaries of governance. However, they also felt that given the diverse educational landscape today, it was important to ensure that this diversity was adequately represented within the training provided. Georgia argued that it is essential to ensure that training reflected the wider educational landscape, such as the role of LGBs, in any form of mandatory training. It could be argued that view is legitimised by Louis, who notes the difficulties some Governors have experienced when trying to find appropriate training, which he argues is not only a result of LAs inability to support Governors, but also a result of the variations seen within training available within MATs and a lack of “systemic support for governance”.

6.3.2.3 Support

It is obvious that support for Governors varied greatly in terms of sources of support and how effective they were. Governors shared examples of ineffective and inconsistent sources of support, with one particular example showing how the lack of support heavily impacted the well-being of a CoG. Most Governors felt that there was support available within their governing body, but fewer opportunities for external support via LAs or Trusts, although there were some Governor networking sessions available. Furthermore, most Governors felt that the effectiveness of the support could positively influence the feelings of isolation and self-doubt experienced

by some Governors. This was evident when Governors shared the relationships they had built up with other Governors, providing them the opportunity to share the burden of the role, using each other as a “sounding board”. For some, mentoring was a training option that allowed them to network whilst supporting Governor development, which appears to be consistent with the findings of Varghese et al. (2022), who notes that mentoring provides support for less experienced colleagues through creating a safe space to question and contextualise their experiences and other forms of training.

6.3.2.4 Negative Experiences

Whilst the overall impression of Governor training was positive, there were aspects that some displayed more negative feelings towards. For most Governors, it was essential that training was focussed, practical, and relevant to both the role of the Governor and the situation of the school. It was suggested that training that was non-targeted, non-practical, and irrelevant in terms of role and school context was potentially useless and ultimately frustrating for those involved. Unsurprisingly, these findings do seem to suggest that earlier views, such as that of Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991), who noted the desire for Governors to have training that was both practical and well informed, do still prevail. Moreover, in the years since the Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991) study, there has been very little research or training that attempted to address these concerns. In terms of contextualisation, the responses from Governors within this research appear to be consistent with research from Thody and Punter (2000), which highlights the support from Headteachers and Governors for contextualised training, held in situ.

6.3.2.4.1 Non-Targeted, Non-Practical, And Irrelevant

The relevance of training was, of course, dependent on the needs of each Governor

and school. However, some Governors reflected on specific training that they had received, which they felt was irrelevant to either their individual role or that of the underlying core mission of school governance. Although acknowledging their importance, Governors flagged topics such as ‘Healthy Schools’ and ‘Well-being’ as being of little support to the strategic role of the governor. However, ‘Healthy Schools’ and ‘Well-being’ were not the only subjects of training highlighted as potentially irrelevant for governors. There were also some concerns raised regarding the current safeguarding training that Governors were expected to attend, specifically that they were expected to undergo safeguarding training that is operational by design. The Governors who raised this as a concern did so as they felt it went against the general principles of the strategic/operational divide usually emphasised. The belief was that safeguarding training should be aimed more at the strategic side of the role, rather than the physical.

Although there were some similarities, this differed to the findings of Perry (2011). In terms of similarities, respondents also selected areas for professional development, such as HR and data, as seen in Perry’s (2011) research. However, moving beyond Perry’s work, in terms of differences, most respondents and participants in this research requested training on finance, closely followed by training on challenge and understanding the strategic/operational divide, with some even suggesting specific training on Ofsted.

For most Governors, it was essential that any training they attended should be targeted to their role, topics of concern for their school, or even specifically to the “Governor competency framework” or the “three core roles of governance”. Frustration was expressed by a few Governors when talking about training that they had been expected to attend, but had little value to their own personal

understanding. It was not only Governors that felt this way, as some Headteachers also expressed frustration at Governors being offered training that did not benefit the school as a whole. Although it was clear that there was some frustration at being offered generic training, for Governors, it was predominantly because they felt unable to address the specific gaps within their own knowledge. However, for the Headteachers, the frustration revolved around the training not meeting the wider needs of the school. Additionally, both parties also agreed that contextualisation was key in ensuring that training was relevant to both Governors and schools as a whole, with some suggesting that training placed within ‘real life’ scenarios would enhance any training that they received.

6.3.2.4.2 Healthy Schools And Well-Being

Whilst most agreed that Healthy Schools and Well-being were both exceptionally important to the wider school community, some questioned the value of including them within Governor training. Most arguments put forward were based on the belief that both of these, whilst important, would not fall within the strategic overview of governance, would not benefit Governor development, and are therefore irrelevant to them.

6.3.2.4.3 Safeguarding

Although there is little research on the type of training that would be beneficial to Governors, particularly in terms of areas like Safeguarding, most respondents and participants confirmed that they had attended training on Safeguarding. However, not everyone agreed with its inclusion, at least in its current format. Whilst the inclusion of safeguarding in a section on the negatives of training may seem to some “controversial”, its inclusion is not as simple as participants feeling the training was outside the remit of their role. Unlike Healthy Schools and Well-being, which

Governors felt did not support overall Governor development and was therefore irrelevant, safeguarding was seen as important for Governors, but needed to be adapted to address the more strategic nature of safeguarding, rather than the more operational training currently offered. Governors explained again that they were “frustrated” by attending training aimed at an “inappropriate audience” and which some felt was forced on them, in an attempt to pre-empt any potential safeguarding issues, reducing it to little more than “red tape” adherence. For some, they understood the importance of safeguarding training, but felt a greater emphasis should be placed on training that develops the skills to monitor strategically.

6.3.2.4.4 Challenges

6.3.2.4.4.1 A Fractured System

There were two main challenges to Governor training raised during the interviews: the fractured nature of the education system and ensuring Governors take the opportunity to attend training. In terms of the former, Governors reflected on how the role of a Governor has changed exponentially through the creation of Trusts and LGBs, which were designed to create a newer approach to school governance (DfES, 2001). This change has been exacerbated by the development of different school types and governance structures, something that most Governors felt was not reflected in current training provision. Georgia, for example, felt that there should be more training on academies and how they work.

6.3.2.4.4.2 Attendance

As noted by McCrone, Southcott and George (2011), there are multiple reasons that may impact Governor attendance. Within this research, the challenges raised in terms of getting Governors to attend training were fourfold. Firstly, it was noted that the quality of training impacted governors' willingness to attend training sessions.

Some Governors reflected on the difficulties they faced in ensuring Governors attended training, noting that even if they attended training, they could not force them to engage, especially as the English governance system has little in the way of repercussions for those who do not attend or engage.

Additionally, there were concerns raised over the impact on governors' time, with timing and locations of training making it difficult at times for Governors to attend, coupled with their own personal commitments. This is a barrier also highlighted by McCrone, Southcott and George (2011), whose research findings noted that 85% of their co-ordinator respondents acknowledged time constraints to be a substantial barrier. However, some respondents did note that when training moved online, it made it more accessible for certain Governors, such as those with family commitments. Similar findings were made by McCrone, Southcott and George (2011), in which online training is considered a more flexible option for those who are ‘time poor’. Although it should be noted that McCrone, Southcott and George (2011) also suggest that moving online could be a barrier in itself, in terms of access, for example. For some Governors, showing the willingness to overcome these difficulties was akin to demonstrating their commitment to the role, believing that ultimately it was a way to ensure that those who were not as “dedicated” were, in effect, filtered out.

Recruitment and retention were also raised in the context of training challenges. Whilst some felt it better to allow dedication to training to become a ‘de facto’ method of filtering out those who would appear to be less dedicated, Governors also shared that some schools were “scared” to push too hard for training attendance in case they frightened away potential or existing governors.

6.3.2.5 Positive

6.3.2.5.1 Contextualised And Networking

The concept of contextualising training to more specifically meet the needs of those attending was a common theme throughout the interviews and the literature (Turner, Mountford and Morris, 1991; Jones, 1998; Thody and Punter, 2000). Governors felt it allowed them to develop a better understanding of their roles, elevating Governor training to a higher level, that of Governor education. They ultimately felt it moved them past a simple list of instructions to a point where they could create a circular approach to learning (Figure 54).



Figure 54 Circular model of training

Figure 54 is based on the cumulative views of interview participants, who reflected on the importance of both external Governor training to understand the wider governance landscape, and internal training to understand governance within the

confines of their own school. Attending external training with an understanding of their school allows the Governor to ask specific questions and understand how their school fits into the wider governance landscape. Taking the external training back to their school allows the Governor to challenge more effectively as they are now able to contextualise the information being presented to them, situating it in the wider educational landscape.

Whilst considered important, networking was also considered by some as almost an extension of contextualised training, an opportunity to share experiences and run through scenarios with others who may be able to provide a different perspective. The idea of online chat forums was also considered as a potential form of networking by McCrone, Southcott and George (2011), although they prefaced this with emphasising the need to consider the additional workload this might entail for those who need to monitor it.

6.3.2.5.2 Induction

Governors experienced induction in a multitude of ways, with reflections ranging from positive to negative. For most, it was basic and little more than a ‘welcome to governance’ type of support that covered the fundamentals. Training was held in a variety of ways, with some Governors attending more formal sessions, such as a series of LA sessions, or attending MAT-specific training on-site. For others, their training was more informal and conducted in-house. However, there were some for whom induction involved simply watching online videos and taking a quiz, although it is possible that the Covid-19 pandemic was an influencing factor in this. For some, access to online training was a positive, creating opportunities for those who were ‘time poor’ or who had caring responsibilities and restricted availability, to develop their governance skills, a finding mirrored in the research (McCrone, Southcott and

George, 2011). For others, online training was ineffective, lacked the nuance of in-person training and the associated networking opportunities, and was considered by some to be less rigorous. For many, induction training, regardless of how it was conducted, needed to have more structure, with Thody and Punter (2000) highlighting Headteachers who felt it should cover the ‘basics’ of educational terminology, strategic versus operational, and funding. Specific induction inclusions were also considered by De Bruin (2014), who felt there should be both generic financial training in induction, as well as a more nuanced version after this. However, my findings suggest that it should go beyond this, as there were some who felt that it should potentially continue over a set period of time, for example, over their initial year as a governor, believing that it can take a year to understand the expectations and responsibilities of governance.

6.3.2.5.3 Roles And Responsibilities, Delegation, And Questions

In line with the literature (Sallis, 1993; Perry, 2011; Unda et al., 2023), it was clear that many saw induction training as an opportunity to ensure Governors had a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and what they should expect in terms of commitment to the role. This was something that many, but SLT especially, felt would reduce gaps in Governor knowledge whilst also helping to develop a more thorough understanding of boundaries. It was the latter that was a consideration in terms of creating a smoother transition for parent Governors, ensuring that not only were they aware of what they were expected to do, but more importantly, as noted by Elizabeth, what they were “not there to do”. It was clear that for many, clarifying the role also clarified the boundaries they were expected to adhere to.

Although understanding the roles more generally was considered essential, it was also considered important for Governors to personalise their training – a need also

identified by Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991). Governors reflected on the benefits of being allowed to personalise and contextualise their training, giving autonomy to each individual Governor and removing them from the banking model of education highlighted by Freire (1970). With Governors like Elizabeth, sharing the benefits of choosing their own developmental pathway, it suggests that those who make their own choices in terms of training are more reflective and therefore potentially more inclined to attend training.

6.3.2.5.4 Finance, Operational And Strategic, School Life, Safeguarding, Using Resources

Most Governors were aware of their knowledge deficits, speaking freely throughout the interviews. For many, financial training was considered to be amongst the most beneficial types of training, as monitoring school finance was considered by most to be different from financial oversight in other areas. This was something that De Bruin (2014) also supported. Again, the importance of contextualisation was raised because of the difference of school-based finance in comparison with other sectors, in addition to having Governors on the board who may not deal with financial monitoring on a regular basis.

Another area of training that Governors felt contributed positively to overall Governor development was Safeguarding. Although there were some concerns raised around the focus of Safeguarding in its current iteration, most participants agreed that there should be some form of safeguarding training. For SLT, it was predominantly about Governors understanding how children are kept safe. For others, it was to ensure that the Governors were aware that safeguarding issues could happen anywhere, even within their own school environment. Whilst there was clearly agreement in terms of the need for safeguarding training, there was some disparity in the content

of this training. As previously discussed, there were concerns that the safeguarding training currently available was heavily operational by design, meeting the needs of those who are actively involved in safeguarding children, as opposed to those who are there to monitor that safeguarding is taking place and that it is effective. Others shared that their own experience of safeguarding training involved less formal training, with expectations simply being that the Governors would read the KCSIE (DfE, 2023a) document or attend Safer Recruitment training.

6.3.2.5.5 Mentoring

As with the Varghese et al. (2022) study, most Governors interviewed recognised that having some form of mentorship would be beneficial, as detailed in chapter section 6.3.1. However, it was also stressed that there should be guidance on how to effectively mentor, to ensure that the mentoring received supports good practice. There were a variety of thoughts on how to develop the role of the mentor, with some feeling that all a mentor needed was a pamphlet or handbook. Others felt that a practical approach would be more beneficial, using methods such as ‘shadowing’, which was brought in via external occupations. Furthermore, Governors also shared their own models of mentoring, with four main models discussed: modelled monitoring, shadowing, opt-in mentor matching, and a buddy system. Although their work does not focus on governance, most of the examples of mentoring shared focused on a more collegial, informal approach, which is in line with the form of mentoring suggested by Varghese et al. (2022) and Macpherson and McKillop (2002).

In addition to exploring the available options for mentoring, Governors also touched on the effectiveness of mentoring in the interviews. They pointed out that it was impacted by the inability to fulfil the time commitment aspect of the role, as well as a

lack of clarity in terms of what the role was, with a few Governors sharing their personal view of what a mentor should be. Some argued that mentors should be a ‘friendly ear’, whilst others felt the role entailed a more direct instruction approach. Whilst there is little work on mentoring within the context of school governance, there is literature that explores mentoring as a more general concept within volunteer groups, such as Varghese et al. (2022), who explore the role of mentoring in Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO). Varghese et al. (2022) argue that for effective mentoring, it should take place in an environment that welcomes open dialogue and mutual learning. This is seemingly supported by Macpherson and McKillop (2002), who consider a less formal, more collegial approach to be more effective.

It was clear that most Governors agreed that mentoring was beneficial and could play a significant role in Governor development. However, there were mixed opinions on who should mentor and whether this should be a role allocated internally, to a member of their own governing body, or externally to a member of a different governing body. Some argued that internal mentoring allowed the Governor to contextualise the information they were receiving, whilst also allowing them to develop a better understanding of their governing board and governors. Whereas other Governors felt adopting an external mentoring system would allow the mentor to be objective and provide the mentee with an opportunity to ask questions they might not feel comfortable asking within their own governing body.

6.3.3 How Do Senior Leaders Assess The Training Of Governors Based On Their Performance In Meetings?

6.3.3.1 Boundaries

As previously noted, discussions around boundaries have been ongoing for some time, with these discussions continuing within this research (Ranson et al., 2005b; Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren, 2009; Smith, 2010; Quesel, Näpfli and Buser, 2017). For some Headteachers, such as Bob, it was important to ensure that boundaries were fixed. Although some Governors reflected on the benefit of a flexible boundary when dealing with less experienced Headteachers, arguing that they could better support them, Bob disagreed, instead feeling that it was less about guidance and more about controlling the Headteacher. Merrell (2000) noted that ambiguity in terms of their role, not only caused Governors anxiety but also created conflict and discomfort with SLT, a view supported by other authors and which suggests some support for Bob's belief in fixed boundaries (Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren, 2009; Connolly and James, 2011; Quesel, Näpfli and Buser, 2017; Gibson and Bailey, 2021; Unda et al., 2023).

Much of the literature notes that the most basic understanding of boundaries is through the overarching strategic and operational (Wilkins, 2015; Gibson and Bailey, 2021) For some, part of ensuring boundaries were adhered to was through ensuring that Governors did not use their external skills in an operational manner, which was suggested by Headteachers as a way to keep boundaries clear. However, not all Headteachers felt this way, with some, such as Lawrence, arguing that utilising a Governor's external skills enriches the work of the governing body.

Using external skills was not the only concern in terms of difficulties enforcing boundaries. It was evident that some Headteachers felt that a governor's motivation

for joining played an important part, suggesting that parent Governors for example may only join “to fight their corner” or under the perception that they are there to present the “point of view of a group of parents”, a concern highlighted by both Bauch and Goldring (1998) and Hill and Lake (2008). Bauch and Goldring (1998) also suggest that by allowing Governors to become more knowledgeable about schools, it would be easier to work with educational professionals. This is supported by the views of SLT participants who also believed that training helped them understand their role and allowed them to work more easily with SLT.

In addition to boundaries and clarity of their roles, power was another factor suggested by Headteachers. For Bob, it was important to ensure that the Headteacher led from the front. This view is supported by Quesel, Näpfli and Buser (2017) and Gibson and Bailey (2021), who argue that for some Headteachers it was important to control the narrative and be direct about their expectations for Governors. Gibson and Bailey (2021) expand on this further, sharing examples of Headteachers who have given explicit instructions about the role of Governors in their governing body. However, consideration should be given to whether this approach is in line with the National Governance Association (NGA, 2021, 2024a) guidance on being involved in all decisions, taking away power from both Chairs of Governors and governing bodies as a whole.

6.3.4 Which Strong Claims Could Be Made To Improve The Quality Of Governor Training?

6.3.4.1 Quality

A theme throughout the interviews and survey responses was the need to improve the overall quality of the training provided. Concerns were raised over the how the

information was presented, with many complaining of feeling “talked at”, having to follow a “cascade of information” that was “basic”, “generic”, and lacked nuance, which resulted in Governors feeling that they did not have details that were “specific enough to know how we monitor it as governors”. In addition to the basic nature of the training, there were complaints over the accuracy of the information presented. These are all themes seen in the earlier studies of Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991), Thody and Punter (2000), and Perry (2011), suggesting that concerns over the quality of training have been a long-term problem. The literature suggests that quality training should cover education-specific knowledge in addition to more specific leadership knowledge, for example, HR processes, as well as role-specific information (Turner, Mountford and Morris, 1991; Perry, 2011). Further to this, there is also a clear agreement on the need for contextualisation and practical approaches (Turner, Mountford and Morris, 1991; Thody and Punter, 2000; Perry, 2011), with mentoring and school-based training suggested as an appropriate method for implementation (Thody and Punter, 2000; Perry, 2011). The findings of these earlier studies are reflected within this research, with Governors like Ava and Charlie commenting on the importance of contextualisation to connect theory to practice, and Georgia, who felt that mentoring would be a good conduit for understanding the information in situ. There is also seemingly an agreement between the literature and this study in the types of information that should be included, with this study building on studies by identifying more modern training needs, for example, MAT-specific training or Well-being.

Further to the content of and approaches to training previously discussed, Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991) highlighted the importance of qualified and prepared trainers in leading high-quality training sessions. This was something also identified

by Governors within this study, with concerns raised around the accuracy of information provided by trainers. This suggests that there should be some reflection on how to ensure that trainers are adequately prepared to teach, given the impact that inaccurate information can have on a Governor's understanding.

6.3.4.2 Relevance

For most Governors, it was important that training was targeted to meet the specific needs of an individual Governor or role. Moreover, they felt it was essential to have training that was aimed at meeting the needs of the school, with links to either the Governor competency framework (DfE, 2017a), the three core functions of governance, or prominent educational matters, such as the role of LGBs, workload management and well-being, and Ofsted.

6.3.4.3 Practicality

It was suggested that the usefulness of training was impacted by the lack of practical elements, with many noting the importance of contextualising the information. Suggestions were made to include "practical examples" and "real-life examples", which would allow the Governors to "work through scenarios" and create a more practical and participatory type of training. Additionally, consideration was also given to the role of mentoring in helping Governors to contextualise their training, allowing them to reflect on their training and ask questions around how it is implemented within their own school environment.

6.3.4.4 Accessibility

Most identified the need to update training to meet the needs of school governance in the 21st century, helping Governors to adapt to the increased expectations placed on them, as a result of the new, multilayered educational landscape and higher

levels of accountability that now exist. However, consideration should be given to how to improve attendance at training, which has been noted to be impacted by both quality and time requirements.

6.3.4.5 Mandatory Induction

For many, the idea of mandatory induction training was ultimately extremely beneficial, supporting the earlier findings of McCrone, Southcott and George (2011) and Perry (2011). However, there were concerns over the impact of recruitment and retention. Most felt that mandatory training would establish a solid foundation for new Governors to begin their governance career. However, mandatory induction is not currently in place in England, so consideration should be given to how to introduce it whilst limiting the impact on the recruitment and retention of governors.

6.4 Linking Empirical Themes to Theoretical Constructs

This section draws together the empirical findings of the study and connects them to key Freirean theoretical constructs, including empowerment and critical consciousness. It also considers the potential for transitioning from the current model of governor training, often characterised by didactic delivery and basic information, towards a more holistic and reflective model of Governor education. Using Freire's (1970) framework, the discussion explores how such an educational model could enhance governors' capacity to act as transformative agents within school governance.

For Freire (1970), education extended beyond the simple transference of knowledge from teacher to student, it was a process that involved dialogue and participation which fostered autonomy, agency, and the capacity to transform reality. Within the context of school governance, empowerment arises when governor development

moves away from purely competency-based training towards participatory and reflective Governor education. Evidence from this study suggested that when governors engaged in dialogic training—where they could question, discuss, and contextualise information—they reported increased confidence, deeper critical understanding, and a stronger ability to contribute meaningfully to governance processes.

Whilst the government's provision of resources, such as the Governor Handbook and Competency Framework, appears to signal support for Governor development, this should be critically examined through Freire's (1970) concept of true and false generosity. Notably, despite the government creating resources, the financial responsibility for training remains with often financially restricted schools, perpetuating existing inequalities and limiting governors' capacity for meaningful engagement. In comparison, true generosity would be to ensure that all Governors had access to high quality training. Moving from false generosity to true would enable Governors to navigate potential barriers, referred to as limit-situations by Freire (1970) that would limit true participation.

Using the Freirean concept of limit-situations (barriers to Governors' achieving their full potential) and limit-acts (actions that break through limit-situations), it is evident that the false generosity displayed by the government contributes to the limit-situations experienced by Governors. For Governors, the provision of training documents is simply not enough to address barriers to understanding their roles and responsibilities if adequate training to support cannot be accessed due to a lack of funds. The provision of participatory, interactive Governor education, with financial

support from the government, would create a limit-act to enable Governors to fulfil their roles.

Freire's (1970) oppressed/oppressor contradiction highlights systemic oppression, wherein dominant groups impose control over marginalised ones. While this concept may initially appear linear, with the dominant always oppressing and the marginalised always oppressed, the dynamics within school governance are more nuanced and therefore the concept has less linearity. Whilst Ofsted/Government often take the role of the oppressor, with SLT and Governors in the role of the oppressed, this could be considered a somewhat simplistic overview of the situation. In the context of school governance, governors and senior leaders can simultaneously experience oppression (e.g., from government accountability frameworks) and exert oppression (e.g., over each other). Examples of this dichotomy were seen throughout the interviews, as well as in the wider literature (Gibson and Bailey, 2021; Hayden, 2006; Lewis and Naidoo, 2004; Heystek, 2004), with SLT often taking on traditional Governor responsibilities or dictating the type of challenges they wished to see in the minutes. Conversely, Governors who overstepped boundaries often exerted undue pressure on SLT. In both situations those who might normally be considered the oppressed adopted the role of oppressor. This can happen when those considered oppressed gain a level of power without developing conscientização (critical consciousness), often leading to, for example, Governors focusing on the minutiae of operational tasks and SLT dictating to Governors the challenge (including questions) they belief Ofsted expect to see. However, as critical consciousness begins to develop and the oppressed become more aware, they gain the ability to resist oppression. This suggests that the oppressed/oppressor relationship is not fixed or unidirectional, but is rather a fluid

interaction influenced by a person's ability to engage in critical thinking and shared dialogue.

6.4.1 Developing Conscientização (Critical Consciousness) in Governance

As a central concept of Freirean theory, conscientização (critical consciousness) involves reflecting on and developing an understanding of systemic social and political forces, whilst also developing the ability to challenge and create change. Within this study, it was evident that some Governors developed a more thorough understanding of social injustice during the Covid-19 pandemic. Ewan, for example, reflected on the impact of job losses, furlough, and the increased dependency on benefits on children and their wellbeing and academic performance.

An important aspect of conscientização is developing the knowledge, confidence, and critical thinking skills to actively engage and challenge situations in which oppression occurs. Applying the Freirean concept to school governance, it suggests that training can help Governors to move beyond the passive roles that some experience, in which questions are given to the Governors to ensure they are being seen to challenge (Young, 2016), to a reality in which they are active participants in both their individual roles and governance overall. However, for this to take place they need training that provides them with the opportunity to not only gain knowledge but also to gain a level of critical thinking, which would enable them to reflect on their roles, responsibilities, and the information that is presented to them, liberating them from their dependency on others. As demonstrated within the findings, training that Governors attended was often considered to be too didactic and little more than the passing on of information with no opportunity to contextualise. What has been identified within this study is the importance of high-quality training that provides a practical approach which enables their training to be contextualised. This approach

to training moves governors away from simple compliance and allows governors to intervene in their own reality and make informed decisions. This was particularly evident in Emilia's reflection of the impact finance training made to her ability to take part in authentic dialogue and govern effectively.

6.4.2 Governor Empowerment Through Training

Waring (1992, p. 77), when reflecting on the benefits of Governor training, posited the dichotomy of "empowerment or emasculation", weighing up the potential loss of "authentic voice" with the gains gathered from developing skills that could support the role they are undertaking as Governors. However, for Freire (1970) there is no dichotomy, only the belief that true education leads to liberation. Arguably, although liberation is achieved through education, it must be achieved through Governors' active participation. Notably, within the literature (Turner, Mountford and Morris, 1991), survey and interviews, Governors' identified training that provided a practical approach and contextualised their learning, as the most helpful. At present, and with little change through the years, Governor training is considered overly didactic. Framing this within the Freirean lens, training in its current iteration is akin to the "banking model" so highly criticised by Freire (1970, p. 72) as the depositing of information by teachers into passive recipients who are considered to be empty vessels. For Freire, this dehumanises students, limits the opportunity for critical thinking, and contributes to the maintenance of hierarchical power structures. However, through the development of training that has practical elements, with the opportunity to contextualise their learning, it would be possible to move away from the long-standing "banking model" of training towards a model more aligned with Freire's (1970, p. 79) belief that "Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information." It is significant that respondents and participants

within this study actively highlighted the need for contextualisation and practical elements in order to improve their training experiences and ultimately support the development of their confidence. What is even more important to acknowledge is that this need is not something that is new, with Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991) identifying the same needs within their study over three decades earlier. It was clear that some Governors felt they lacked the confidence needed to fully perform the role and that this confidence could be developed through training, again something noted in the findings of Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991). Conversely, it was also clear that for some, both within this study and prior literature (Young, 2016; Ofsted, 2012), the only way to ensure that Governors were seen to be performing their role was to tell the Governors what they should be doing, an example being the questions that should be asked to show challenge. This contradicts Freire's belief that the oppressed should not depend on others for their liberation. However, as noted by Young (2016) this could also undermine Governor confidence in their own abilities, and create a situation in which Governors are not part of authentic dialogue. Moreover, it would remove Governor agency, autonomy, and their ability to critical think, whilst also maintaining the hierarchical structure of paid leadership versus volunteer. This would ultimately reduce their ability to participate in true democratic oversight. Moving away from the “banking model” of training towards a version that cultivates knowledge and critical thinking through the use of practical elements and contextualisation elevates Governor development away from simple training and towards a newer model of Governor education.

6.4.3 Towards an Educational Model of Governor Training

The importance of transitioning away from the current, and long standing, “banking model” (Freire, 1970) approach to Governor training has been emphasised

throughout this research. It was evident that for most, whilst training gave them basic facts and information, it did not fully address the needs of 21st Century governors. With the focus on attracting Governors who bring external skills, as well as the increased level of accountability, most noted that training needed to evolve to adequately prepare Governors for the role. Referring back to Figure 54, it was notable that the views of interview participants reflected the need for an almost circular approach to training, valuing both internal and external training. Attending external training with an understanding of their own school through collegial conversations, which subsequently allowed Governors to contextualise their own experience and ask targeted questions to better understand where their school sits within the wider educational landscape. This would enable them to return to school with the capacity to critically challenge and make meaningful contributions. This resonates strongly with Freire's concept of praxis as a transformative process in which Governors reflect on information before applying it to their own context. Moving towards a model that permits contextualised, experiential, and reflective learning opportunities would permit governors to better understand their place within real-world school settings, allowing them to engage more meaningfully with their roles. This was noted in both survey responses and interviews, with Ronan, Sara, Georgia and Elizabeth all emphasising the importance of practical training elements, albeit through exemplars or the use of a mentor. Arguably, this model would empower Governors to move away from surface level compliance to critical engagement, which aligns with Freire's vision of education as liberation.

6.4.4 Implications for Practice and Policy

Exploring the findings through Freirean concepts, such as conscientização (critical consciousness), empowerment, and dialogic education, the implications for practice

and policy within school governance are significant. It is clear that there needs to be a sustained period of reflection on how governor development is both constructed and delivered. Demonstrably, the findings suggest that Governor training, with a focus on competence alone, is no longer adequate for a Governor with the level of responsibility and accountability seen today. The primary recommendation moving forward would be to move towards Governor education, which is focussed on comprehension and empowerment. However, to do so would mean changing the approach to Governor development to ensure that dialogue, reflection, and contextualisation were at the core of it, permitting critical engagement with both training and Governor practices. This would ensure that Governors not only knew what to do but why it mattered and what the wider impact might be. From a Freirean perspective, this shift would transform Governor training into Governor education by embracing participatory approaches that cultivate critical consciousness and disrupt traditional hierarchies, increasing Governor autonomy and supporting Governor agency.

Policy implications following this research, particularly in terms of how Governor development is defined and supported nationally and locally, are substantial. It is evident that current training frameworks do not meet the more nuanced needs of modern governance. The need to move away from compliance-focussed, task mastery towards a model that promotes ongoing, reflective learning with embedded critical dialogue, contextual learning and collaborative engagement, has been made abundantly clear within both survey and interview responses. This suggests that policies on national training standards should be updated to reflect this. Policies aligning with the Freirean emphasis on education as a mode of empowerment and which mandate ongoing professional development that is inclusive of mentoring,

internal and external learning opportunities, and reflection would reconceptualise training as an ongoing process rather than a one-off event, aligning with Freire's emphasis on education as a means of humanisation and personal growth. Moreover, by reevaluating the current model of Governor development and adopting a Freirean-inspired model of Governor education, there is the opportunity to develop policies in which all voices are respected and encouraged to develop within a collaborative leadership system.

In conclusion, the application of Freirean theory to current practice and policies around Governor development have highlighted a number of concerns and limitations around the current approach to training. However, it has also highlighted the potential of moving towards a model of Governor education, which could lead to more empowered, confident, engaged Governors who could then better serve the schools they represent in the complex educational landscape of the 21st Century.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the essence of the research, synthesising the overall research journey and conclusions. It will reflect on the overarching purpose of the research and how the research questions addressed this purpose, with a summary of findings, which also includes areas that require further exploration. Furthermore, it will explore both the limitations and weaknesses of the research as part of the reflexive approach to this research. To conclude, this chapter will outline any recommendations that have evolved from the research, in addition to outlining any areas that would benefit from further research.

7.2 Purpose

It was the intent of this research to determine the effect of Governor training in producing effective governing bodies. A mixed-method approach was adopted, using quantitative data to gain a broad overview of the current state of school Governor training and how it has been experienced, and qualitative data to develop a deeper understanding of the impact, if any, that the training has had. Through in-depth analysis of this empirical research, subsequently situated within the wider literature, the following research questions were addressed:

- What is the present provision for Governor training in England?
- How do serving Governors assess their own training?
- How do senior leaders assess the training of Governors based on their performance in meetings?

- Which strong claims could be made to improve the quality of Governor training?

A summary of the findings and how they relate to each question can be seen in the following section.

7.3 Summary

7.3.1 What Is The Present Provision For Governor Training In England?

Examining the Governor training offered to Governors over the years, it would seem that there are numerous options available to them. Whilst Thody (1998) noted that prior to 1990, training, consisting of short, non-standard, non-accredited courses, was provided by the LEA, this research has identified changes within that provision, in addition to the development of multiple formats of training by a wider variety of providers. The LEA is still involved in Governor training today, but generally under a more formal, governance-specific department, known as ‘Governor Services’. A notable difference between 20th-century training and current provision is the increased variety in both training providers and types of training available. 21st Century training, whilst still encompassing training provided by ‘Governor Services’, now includes a wider range of both formal (delivered through an official provider) and informal training (e.g. social media support groups) opportunities, with the potential for Governors to achieve qualifications in some formal training opportunities.

The number of governor training providers has increased substantially, marking a shift away from reliance on LEAs for training provision. This research identified several providers, including the National Governance Association (NGA), Freedom & Autonomy for Schools – National Association, The Key for School Governors, School Governors One-Stop Shop, The School Bus, and Modern Governor. Some of these

organisations, such as the NGA, also collaborate with local 'Governor Services' (e.g. Warwickshire Governor Services) to deliver training in a third-party capacity. In addition to the more formal providers of training, Governor development has seen an increase in the use of less formal avenues for Governor CPD. Increasingly, Governors are accessing conferences and social media-based Governor support groups, with the latter considered a ‘safe space’ to ask questions to further their understanding. These points are important for two reasons. Firstly, the increase in providers expands access to more formal training, giving governing bodies more options in terms of the type and focus of training. Secondly, the move to accessing more informal methods of training, through conferences and online social media-based support, allows Governors to contextualise their learning, which is something that most feel unable to do under the current training system.

The majority of respondents agreed that the amount of training provided was ‘good’, with a small minority disagreeing. One respondent admitted that they had not received any form of training during the previous two years. This suggests that whilst there appears to be a general consensus that the provision of Governor training is ‘good’, there are potentially areas that would benefit from further examination to understand why some are still not accessing – or potentially are unable to access – Governor training. For some respondents, one of the most prominent reasons for not accessing training was the poor quality of the training currently available.

7.3.2 How Do Serving Governors Assess Their Own Training?

Governor training as a concept is widely recognised as beneficial, both within this research and the wider literature. However, there are concerns. Whilst most agree that concerns around training have less to do with the concept of training for Governors, it is notable that within the wider literature and this research, concerns

revolve around the overall quality of the training (Turner, Mountford and Morris, 1991; Jones, 1998; Perry, 2011). Many within this research called for improvements to be made to the quality of the training in terms of both content and delivery, with an overarching theme of modernising the content to ensure it meets the expectations placed on those governing in the 21st-century educational landscape. This would include addressing the different types of governance (academies for example), as well as providing clarity over the expectations of Governors in how they monitor strategic direction, vision and ethos; ensure accountability for educational and staff performance; and ensure financial probity. Moreover, there was a call for better delivery of the training, ensuring that it was led by those who were qualified to do so, with consideration given to how training can be more inclusive, with suggestions around utilising technology to support this (McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011; McCrone, Lucas and Sims, 2021).

For many Governors within this research and the wider literature (Turner, Mountford and Morris, 1991; Thody and Punter, 2000), a part of improving the quality of training lay in contextualising their training and linking it to tangible aspects of governance, such as the Governor competency framework and the three core functions of governance. Whilst there was a high level of agreement on the importance of contextualisation in training, there were variations in the form that this contextualisation might take. There were suggestions of contextualisation through more informal approaches, such as Governor networking opportunities, which allowed Governors to share experiences. For others, a more formal approach to contextualisation was considered beneficial, with some recognising the importance of mentoring as an opportunity to contextualise the theory learnt at Governor training, creating a circular approach in which you take your perception of the current

approach adopted by your school, attend training to explore governance theory, and return to school/mentor to explore the school's approach in the light of the training they had received, with consideration given to how this can help to improve the school. In addition to utilising mentoring as a way to contextualise their learning, some argued that for contextualisation to be successful, it would need to have examples that Governors could potentially work through during more official training sessions. It would suggest that for most, how the contextualisation occurred was less important than the fact contextualisation was taking place.

Although training was generally considered essential to developing a governor's knowledge and understanding of their role and the wider educational landscape, it was evident that there were challenges other than the quality of the training. One example of this would be Governor attendance at training, with McCrone, Southcott and George (2011) suggesting multiple reasons why attendance could be impacted. Quality of training was one prominent reason acknowledged to negatively impact attendance, another was the impact of attending training on those who are potentially time poor. Consideration on how to support those who found training difficult to attend produced different approaches, with some literature suggesting the use of technology to create a level of flexibility for Governors, an approach also considered by some respondents as beneficial (McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011). Both of these challenges would suggest that any future focus on improving Governor attendance at training should concentrate on increasing the quality of training as well as exploring alternative methods for Governors to attend.

Further to the need to improve the quality of training, and alternative methods of access, it was noted by many that induction training was essential in ensuring new Governors started their governance career well informed. Moreover, it was

suggested within the literature (Jones, 1998; McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011; Perry, 2011; Garrington, Henson and Ebbs, 2020), and also seen within Governor responses in this research, that mandatory induction training could be beneficial. Whilst for some, mandatory training would ensure that all new Governors received a basic level of training before beginning their role, there were concerns that making the training mandatory might impact the recruitment and retention of governors. Given the potential of induction training to ensure that Governors begin with a basic level of understanding of their role, consideration should be given to exploring the impact of making it mandatory in England. Whilst there may be some impact in terms of recruitment and retention, consideration should be given to whether this could be beneficial, by enabling potential Governors to understand the commitment required within the role, enabling them to make an informed decision about whether to accept the position. Given that there is an existing model of mandatory induction training in Wales, it would be beneficial to explore how this was implemented and the impact, if any, on recruitment or retention.

7.3.3 How Do Senior Leaders Assess The Training Of Governors Based On Their Performance In Meetings?

It has been noted in prior literature that the perception of Governors in the recent past has been one of “well-meaning but ineffectual volunteers” (Baxter, 2017, p. 35) who are simply a part of a “bums on seats culture” (Wilkins, 2015, p. 183). Some, however, felt it was more than kind but ineffectual volunteers, as suggested by Baxter (2017), with Heystek (2004) exploring the perception that some Headteachers felt that the Governors, specifically parent Governors, were simply inept. These perceptions are clearly not shared by the government, which has placed a greater emphasis on recruiting Governors with a professional skillset to ensure that they can

participate fully and effectively. Regardless of this new emphasis on skilled Governors, there were Headteachers within the literature who emphasised the importance of establishing boundaries quickly to ensure that they kept their autonomy (Quesel, Näpfli and Buser, 2017). One way that they tried to achieve this was by keeping training in-house, with Headteachers leading (Gibson and Bailey, 2021). The overarching intention appears to be to ensure that boundaries remained fixed and that Governors understood that these boundaries should not be crossed to reduce the potential for conflict (Shearn et al., 1995; Hayden, 2006; Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren, 2009; Connolly and James, 2011; Gibson and Bailey, 2021). For SLT participants Stella and Bob, keeping boundaries fixed, as seen in this literature above, was the most appropriate approach. Although the Headteacher examples within the literature were steadfast in ensuring that boundaries were fixed and uncrossable, there were other examples in the wider reading that suggested that crossing boundaries with skilled Governors may be beneficial, as it may allow better challenge (Creese and Earley, 1999; Young, 2017). Unlike Stella and Bob, Lawrence adopted an approach more in keeping with Creese and Earley (1999) and Young (2017). However, given how concerned the Headteachers in the aforementioned studies were about ensuring that their autonomy was paramount, the question arises over whether they would embrace this challenge or see it as an attack on their autonomy.

The literature further suggests that the relationship between governing bodies and leadership can impact the overall ‘type’ of governing body formed, which in turn may influence its effectiveness (Ranson, 2011). For Ranson (2011), there were four main types of governing body: Governance as a deliberative forum; Consultative sounding board; Executive board; Governance as a governing body. Reflecting on the studies

by Quesel, Näpfli and Buser (2017) and Gibson and Bailey (2021) in which Headteachers expressed reservations over encroached boundaries and the perceived impact of this on their autonomy, it would seem that the first two types identified by Ranson (2011) would most adequately represent their governing bodies. Governance as a deliberative forum is defined as a governing body under professional control, with leadership coming from the Headteacher. Consultative sounding board, however, is defined as deferential governance in which the Headteacher controls what is presented to the governing body, limiting power to consent and authorisation. Again, this is similar to the expectations of the Headteachers interviewed by Quesel, Näpfli and Buser (2017) and Gibson and Bailey (2021). Within this research, it was clear that the SLT participants, in general, saw the need to ensure that their autonomy remained uncontested. This left many Governors feeling 'oppressed' (Freire, 1970) and unable to perform their role. However, for the SLT, taking on a more dominant role was a way to ensure that they were meeting Ofsted expectations, arguing that they were the educational professional who should guide Governors in their role. Clearly, there was a disconnect in how the need for uncontested autonomy from SLT was perceived, which often caused difficulties in Governor/SLT relationships and clarity of boundaries.

The focus on boundaries also had the potential to cause conflict and, in some cases, power struggles. The literature showed that for Headteachers there were concerns over sharing power, feeling that the level of risk in terms of accountability was higher for them as a paid educational professional (Hatcher, 2005), a view supported by Robinson, Ward and Timperley (2003) who argue that those who are non-education

based might have difficulty understanding the more nuanced aspects of educational concepts, language, or procedures and processes.

Discussions on the importance of boundaries also occurred within the interviews in this research. Whilst most Governors felt there needed to be some flexibility, SLT disagreed, feeling it impacted on their autonomy as leaders, as well as the clarity of the Governors' understanding of their role. Some Governors felt allowing flexibility would enable them to support less experienced Headteachers, although this was rebutted by some SLT themselves, who felt it would be open to abuse and manipulation, with Governors effectively 'controlling' Headteachers. This appears to support the Quesel, Näpfli and Buser (2017) and Gibson and Bailey (2021) findings in which Headteachers were reticent to share power through flexible boundaries because it could impact their autonomy. As seen in Gibson and Bailey (2021), some Headteachers in the interviews also shared a preference for running the training, which in part allowed the Headteachers to be seen to 'lead from the front', something also noted in Thody and Punter (2000). In addition to feeling that crossing boundaries could lead to a loss of autonomy, Headteachers in the interviews discussed feelings of concern that utilising external skills brought in by Governors will further damage Governors' understanding of the boundaries within their role, something agreed with by Bob. However, Lawrence contradicted this and suggested in a similar vein to Creese and Earley (1999) and Young (2017) that there is a benefit to utilising these external skills, arguing that they enrich the governing body.

Understanding the complexity of the relationship between governing bodies and Headteachers is vitally important when considering the boundaries that are often expected but inconsistently applied. It is clear that not only within the literature but also within this research, there are differing views of the importance of boundaries in

an effective governing body, with suggestions that an overly strict boundary can potentially lead to a governing body that simply defers to the Headteacher.

In summary, SLT interviews within this research would suggest that training is important for clarifying boundaries and roles, although there is some disparity in terms of how firm these boundaries should be. This disparity is mirrored in the wider literature, with some emphasising the importance of boundaries to Headteachers in reducing conflict and clarifying roles, with others arguing that some crossing of the boundaries (e.g. utilising external skills) could be beneficial. The latter contradicts the findings of Merrell (2000), who, as previously discussed, shared the importance of reducing volunteer anxiety by removing role ambiguity as well as avoiding unethical divisions of labour through stopping the allocation of certain responsibilities to unpaid volunteers. However, it does support the findings of Balarin et al. (2008) and Dobson et al. (2020) who believed that it allowed Governors to gain professional development in addition to creating a more diverse and less hierarchical governing body.

In terms of reducing conflict, based on participant responses, it would be beneficial to explore how to reduce concerns over the impact of Governor decisions on Headteachers' accountability to Ofsted. As previously noted by Freire (1970), the fear of job loss can lead to the oppressed (in this case the Headteacher) adopting or imitating the voice of the oppressor to try and appease this fear. This manifested itself in a variety of ways. Within this research, Governors reported that SLT would adopt a dismissive approach to governors' abilities or input, placing greater emphasis on the fact that they were the professionals. The dominance of a governing body by the SLT was something also noted within the literature, with Gibson and Bailey (2021) highlighting Headteachers who aimed to assert dominance

over their governing body and enforce boundaries, often done to ensure that they (both the school and SLT) meet the overarching expectations of Ofsted, with Headteachers fearing they alone will suffer consequences if failing to meet those expectations (Hatcher, 2005). Reducing concerns over Headteacher accountability could potentially help to reduce the impact of conflict on Headteacher-Governor relationships. Furthermore, this research suggests that it could also be considered beneficial to clarify the role Headteachers play in the leadership of the governing body, having explicit guidance to avoid the 'gatekeeping' experienced by some participants.

7.3.4 Which Strong Claims Could Be Made To Improve The Quality Of Governor Training?

The findings of this research confirm that despite the overall increase in Governor training provision, little has been done to either modernise or improve the quality of that provision, outside of increasing the number of topics covered. The need for mandatory induction training and continuous professional development that is high-quality, relevant, practical, and accessible is essential in creating effective Governors who can adequately perform their role.

The wider literature has established the ongoing reflection on the importance of training, harking back to the 1970s and the Taylor Report (1977), albeit with a caveat from later literature on the importance of acknowledging the external skills of Governors, which can reduce the potential for power struggles and its byproduct, power dominance. Whilst this importance was reflected within this research, there were also concerns about the quality of training. This mirrors concerns highlighted in existing literature, such as Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991) and Perry (2011). Governors felt that they were "talked at", enduring a "cascade of information" that

was “basic”, “generic”, and was ultimately not “specific enough” to support them in performing their role. Moreover, in addition to how the training was delivered and the lack of nuance, Governors also noted that training had at times been inaccurate in terms of the information they had been presented with. Given the time between both the Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991) and Perry (2011) studies and this research, it is clear that there has been little improvement in the overall quality of Governor training, as indicated by the findings of this research, leading to the first development point – quality.

In addition to the quality of training provided, Governors were concerned that the training they had attended was not specific enough to serve their needs, with most feeling it would be beneficial to have access to more contextualised, ‘real-life’ examples, which created development point two: relevance. Governors spoke of needing training to be “relevant” or a “hot topic”, with some requesting training specifically linked to the “Governor competency framework or the three core roles of governance”. However, Governors were not alone in feeling the need for relevant training, with some Headteachers, such as Bob, commenting on the lack of relevance of LA training to schools. He ultimately felt this rendered the training pointless. However, as noted by Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991), it is difficult to meet the preferences of multiple groups of Governors, which raises the question as to how to design training so that it is relevant to each governing body. Suggestions of utilising opportunities to talk informally within training sessions, as noted by Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991), could enable Governors to bring some form of contextualisation to their training, which was again something noted within both the survey and interviews. Although this would benefit from further exploration, Governors within this research did suggest that their training was impacted by the

lack of a practical approach, feeling that “practical examples” could enable them to “work through scenarios”, providing the basis for development point three – practicality. Potentially, anonymised or fictionalised examples of schools and their relevant data could be provided and worked through. Figure 55, for example, shows the attendance data for the fictionalised “Seren Primary School”. As can be seen in the example below, the school’s data has been contextualised within national, regional, and LA data. Furthermore, there are 5 schools included that are local to “Seren Primary” and are similar in terms of their demographics. This could provide Governors attending training with the opportunity to assess the attendance data for a school in a practical manner, discussing what it means when situated within the wider educational landscape.

Demographics

Demographic	"Seren Primary School"	Comparison school 1	Comparison school 2	Comparison school 3	Comparison school 4	Comparison school 5
Total pupils on roll (all ages)	612	604	618	609	615	600
Girls on roll (%)	57.0	49.8	51.5	53.0	52.1	48.9
Boys on roll (%)	49.3	52.0	48.5	49.7	47.9	51.0
SEN EHCP (%)	2.2	1.9	2.4	2.1	2.3	2.0
SEN Support (%)	13.5	12.8	14.2	13.1	13.7	13.0
First language not English (%)	28.2	26.5	31.0	27.9	29.3	28.7
Eligible for free school meals (past 6 yrs) (%)	19.1	17.8	25.0	18.9	19.7	18.3

Absence Data

School	Absence	Persistent Absence
National	8.30%	14.1%
Regional	8.10%	14.7%
LEA	5.30%	13.3%
"Seren School"	4.80%	8.8%
Comparison school 1	7.10%	25.4%
Comparison school 2	5.70%	16.3%
Comparison school 3	5%	11.3%
Comparison school 4	7.40%	18.8%
Comparison school 5	8%	25.9%

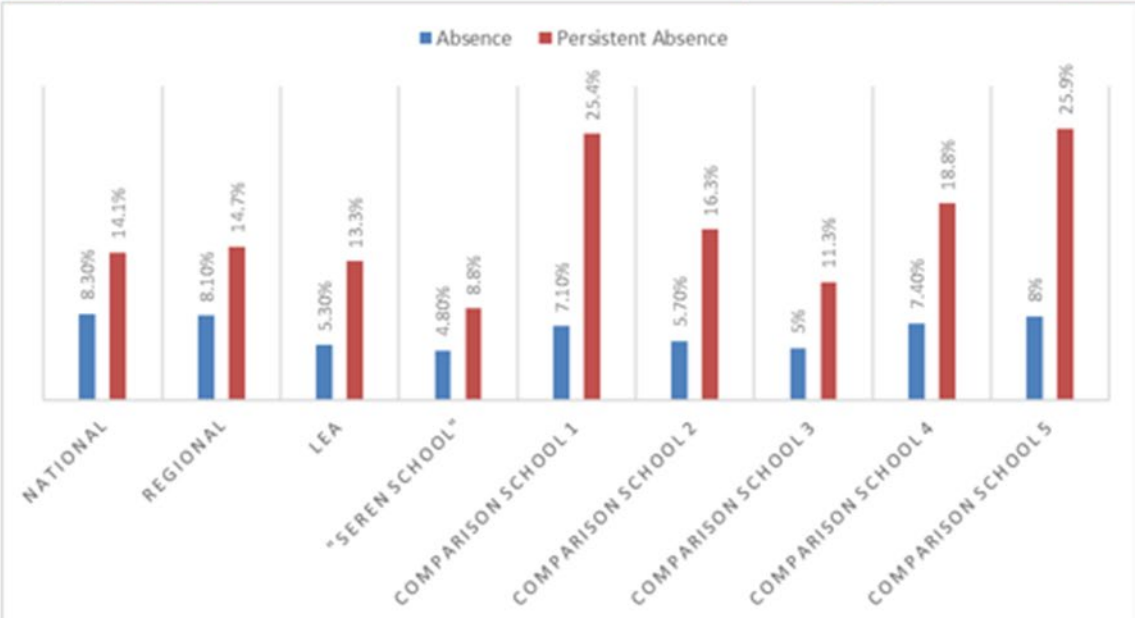


Figure 55 An example of a potential training resource using a Fictionalised example of school attendance data

Quality, relevance, and practicality are just some of the challenges that Governors felt impacted their training. For most, the need to have training that was fit for purpose and met the needs of the 21st-Century Governor situated in a multifaceted educational landscape with a level of accountability assigned to the role that has previously never been seen. However, further to the challenge of ensuring Governors have access to modern training, concerns were also raised about how to improve attendance, with Governors noting that, in addition to the quality of training, time constraints of Governors also impacted attendance.

As part of the interview discussions, the Governors reflected on the use of online systems to conduct training. Sara felt that online training had “huge benefits”, something that was seemingly agreed upon by other Governors who noted that online training was “efficient” and allowed a greater level of “flexibility”. Moreover, for Emilia, with lived experience of adapting to training online through the pandemic, there was actually an increase in the number of those attending training. Within the wider literature, there was some support for online training in terms of it being “less resource-intensive”, however it was also suggested that whilst beneficial, it could also be a barrier to in respect to a governor’s ability to access technology (McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011, p. 21). Therefore, although there was the potential to widen access to training, it is based upon the prerequisite that all Governors can access the technology needed. With this in mind, the fourth development point was created – accessibility.

In summary, the findings of this research have led to the creation of the following two models. :



Figure 56 Four Steps to Effective Governor Training

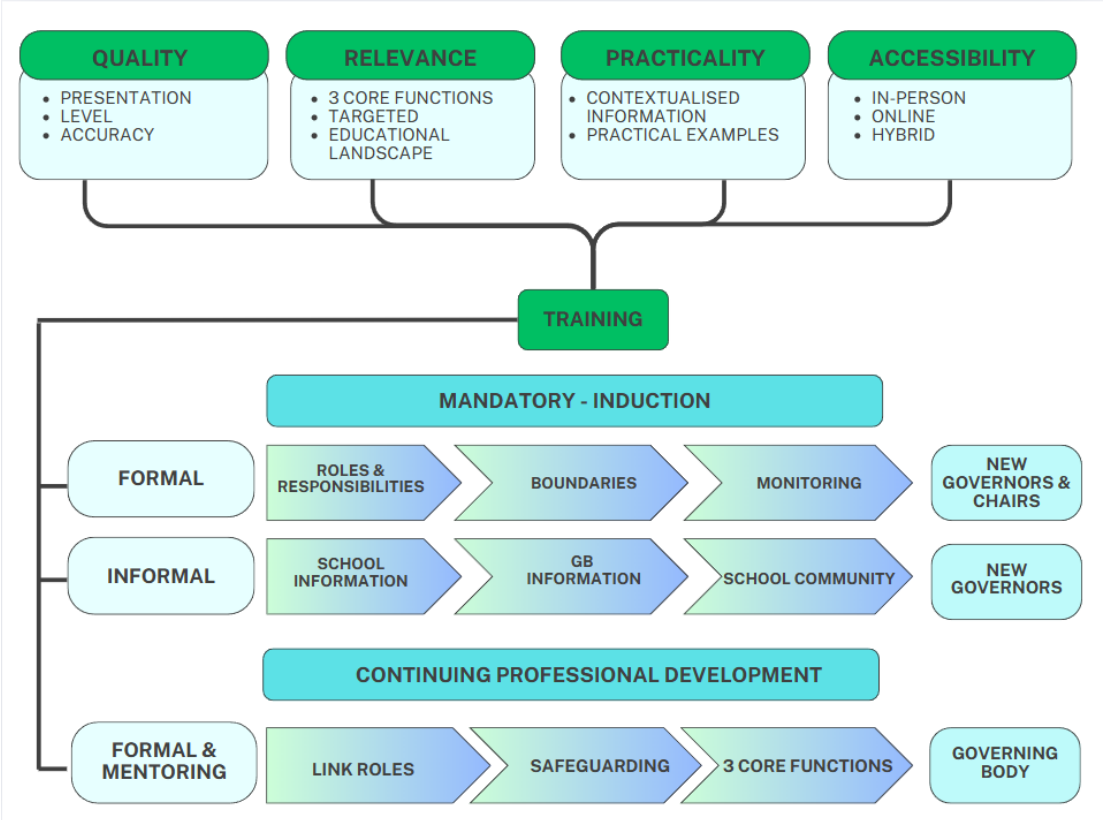


Figure 57 The BRIDGE Model of Training (Building Readiness and Integrating Development in Governor Education)

As seen in Figure 56, the findings of this research move beyond previous literature on Governor training by identifying that effective Governor training begins at the point of development. It is essential that training is developed with four specific steps guiding its development: Quality, Relevance, Practicality, Accessibility.

The creation of the first step towards effective governance, ensuring the quality of training provision, evolved as a result of respondents and participants who felt training was subpar, describing it as “poor quality”, “basic”, or “merely adequate”, as well as being “generic” and “inaccurate” at times. Those developing training schemes need to ensure that the training content is up-to-date, accurate, and addresses the needs of the varied roles governors undertake. The second step – relevance – was based primarily on three main areas of negative perceptions of training identified through the interviews: Non—targeted, Non-practical, and Relevance. Governors want and need training that is targeted both in terms of the needs of their school and their own training needs with respect to the role they have on the governing body (e.g. their link Governor role). Additionally, and contributing to the third step towards effective Governor training, is the need for training that has a practical element, with Governors like Elizabeth and Georgia wanting to move away from presentation-heavy training. There is a need for training that allows Governors to contextualise and use the training in a practical way. This could be through a practical element to the training or through mentoring, which would allow them to better understand how the training could be implemented within their own school environment. The final step of ensuring effective training is to ensure that it is accessible. As a byproduct of the impact of Covid-19, there was a move to online platforms, initially for governing body meetings but later for training. Respondent 22 shared the difference online training made to them, acknowledging that training was now far more accessible to

them. Whilst it was clear that online training was not a choice that everyone would make, it was also clear that having options made training a more realistic option for some. This model is designed to help those involved in Governor training to reflect on these four main points when designing a research programme.

It is important to acknowledge that there are two stages here. Along with utilising the four steps in governor training development, consideration must also be given to the second stage – implementation. Figure 57 demonstrates how these would feed into two main strands of Governor training: Mandatory Induction and Continuing Professional Development. Given the importance some felt of incorporating a more local, school specific form of induction, the Mandatory Induction has been divided into a formal and informal training approach, with the latter not only allowing Governors to develop a better understanding of their immediate school environment, but also giving them the opportunity to contextualise their more formal learning.

Situating these models within the theoretical lens of this research, the writings of Freire (1970), they have been designed to create a system of Governor training development that feeds into effective Governor training. The intention of this is to give the Governors (the oppressed) the opportunity to intervene in their own reality, reducing their need to rely on either Ofsted or SLT (the oppressors) for guidance and enabling them to fully participate in their monitoring role. Through educating Governors, it is possible to reduce the fears that exist around Ofsted inspections and judgements, often exacerbated by myths about what is expected. Using these models to develop Governor training provision supports Freire's (1970) overarching belief that it is essential to avoid hiding these fears by educating them.

7.4 Implications

These findings suggest that whilst there generally appears to be adequate provision for Governors in terms of the quantity of training, there are concerns in relation to the overall quality of the provision. This appears to support earlier findings from Turner, Mountford and Morris (1991) in which Governors reflected on the overall substandard quality of the training they had experienced, coupled with poor instructor knowledge, the didactic approach to delivering training, and the lack of practical sessions. 31 years later, the respondents and participants within this research shared similar opinions, suggesting that whilst training has potentially evolved in terms of subject matter, covering new areas of accountability, the quality of training has remained unsatisfactory. This may suggest that the focus of Governor training has remained on increasing training provision, as opposed to developing the overall effectiveness of the training delivered. These findings create an opportunity to open discussions on how to develop and utilise training in a manner that ensures Governors feel confident in their role and able to contribute effectively to the wider governing body. Moreover, this research demonstrates the importance of induction training in establishing a base level of knowledge as Governors begin their governance journey. Considered important by both Governors and SLT, induction training ensures that Governors have a solid understanding of their role and position in the wider educational landscape, resulting in more confident, effective governance.

However, whilst this research has explored current training provision and the perception of both SLT and Governors in relation to the effectiveness of this training, there are limitations that should be acknowledged.

7.5 Contribution To Scholarly Knowledge

> *"Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other." (Freire, 1970, p. 72)*

In addition to demonstrating that doctoral researchers can create independent research and think critically about their findings, it is an expectation that their work will be an "original and significant contribution to knowledge in their research field" (Hodgson, 2020; Chetcuti, Cacciottolo and Vella, 2022, p. 1360). The concept of a thesis contributing to existing knowledge is not a new concept, with authors, such as Golding, Sharmini and Lazarovitch (2014, p. 571), previously noting that a thesis "must be original…and make a contribution or have an impact on the field, discipline or practice". However, Chetcuti, Cacciottolo and Vella (2022) explore the concept of contribution further, explaining that there is some disparity on exactly what is meant by contribution. They note that for some, it is related to the originality of the contribution, whether that is through the development of a new theory or method, or identifying a new perspective. For others, they suggest that the significance of the contribution is most important, relating it to either the development of a new theoretical framework or even filling the gap in current research. In addition to originality and significance, Chetcuti, Cacciottolo and Vella (2022) also note that publication and a comprehensive understanding of existing literature, coupled with the ability to situate their own research within it, are also considered to be a contribution to knowledge. Although it should be noted that Chetcuti, Cacciottolo and Vella (2022) posit that publication appears to be discipline-specific. In light of these considerations, it is important to reflect on the findings of this research and the contribution it makes to the wider field of educational leadership.

Exploring the wider educational leadership landscape further, it was clear that most research revolved around how the role of Governor has been professionalised, accountability in terms of the role governance plays in school improvement and the monitoring of schools, and the challenges faced in terms of boundaries and power struggles. Whilst there is some literature available that discusses the importance of Governor training, there is little that explores the effectiveness of training. It is this deficit in the literature that creates a space for research that explores the effectiveness of Governor training, more specifically exploring the effectiveness from the perspective of those who are intrinsically linked to the role.

Focusing on the lived reality of those involved in school governance, this research has explored the multiple realities of SLT and Governors, and their experience of school Governor training (Robson and McCartan, 2011; Denscombe, 2017; Kelly, Dowling and Millar, 2018; Rapley, 2018; Ryan, 2018; Berryman, 2019; Wang, 2020). Through the dissemination of a survey (N=171) and deeper exploration of experiences through interviews (N=20), it has opened up conversations on current training provision and the impact it has had on both those performing the role of Governor and those working under the oversight of governance. Whilst this research is small-scale, it does contribute to current literature on governance and begins to fill the current gap in the literature around the effectiveness of Governor training through the dissemination of findings to both academic and non-academic (governors) audiences. This has already been achieved through conference presentations, poster presentations, visual representations of the research, and interviews. Moving forward, the intention is to continue to disseminate both the findings and models created to guide Governor training development and implementation to those

involved in school governance, as well as the wider educational research field, through publication.

7.6 Further Research

This is a small-scale research project that has taken a step towards addressing the research gap within the literature on school governance. However, as previously discussed, there were limitations. As this research project focused specifically on primary schools within England, it would be beneficial to expand on this by exploring perceptions of Governor training throughout the UK, potentially comparing and contrasting England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to widen the scope of the research in terms by mapping in greater detail current training modules.

In addition to the above, it would be interesting to explore differences or similarities of perceptions of Governor training between different educational settings, such as primary and secondary, or academies and maintained schools. It would also be prudent to conduct further research into the efficacy of Governor induction, exploring the impact of different approaches on Governor confidence over a longer period of time. This could include examining the method of delivery or content of the training.

7.7 Recommendations And Contributions To Governor Training Development

This research aimed to explore the fitness for purpose of both the content and the mode of delivery of governor training in England. To answer this, four research questions were developed that explored the present provision of training, Governor perception of their training experiences, SLT assessment of the effectiveness of Governor training, and what improvements could be made. It was clear that most felt that the level of provision was good, but exploring the perception of Governor training in terms of quality identified several areas that needed improvement.

Therefore, based on these findings, the recommendations of this research are as follows:

7.7.1 Training Improvements

The empirical findings in this research provide a new understanding of how to develop and implement school governor training. Two models were created in response to these findings - Four Steps to Effective Governor Training (Figure 56) and the Implementation of the Four Steps to Effective Governor Training (Figure 57). The initial model, Four Steps to Effective Governor Training, is designed to guide those creating Governor training by providing a framework for the development of governor training programmes. Training should be designed based on a circular model of development (see figure 56), focusing on 4 specific stages: Quality, Relevance, Practicality, Accessibility. During the development phase, the initial focus should be on ensuring the quality of training in terms of the content, mode of delivery, and accuracy of the information. Moreover, there should be a concerted effort to ensure that training is providing accurate and up-to-date information, which can be achieved through regular reviews of training provision and supporting materials. Additionally, training programmes should be modernised to reflect the needs of the 21st-century educational landscape, including information on the different models of school governance. In particular, those developing training should ensure that the roles and responsibilities of Governors, Chairs, and link Governors are covered, with explicit guidance on boundaries and areas that fall under the remit of Governor monitoring. Given the more in-depth nature of the role today, consideration should also be given to the creation of guidance on building relationships and creating confidence, which would be applicable to both governing bodies and SLT.

Reflecting on the second step of training development, training should be relevant. The training needs to be aimed specifically at the needs of Governors, explaining their roles in monitoring areas such as safeguarding, as opposed to current, more generic training aimed at other school staff, such as the designated safeguarding lead or SENDCO. It should also be linked to any future Governor competency framework or guidance released by the government, in addition to the three core functions of governance.

The usefulness and practicality of training should also be improved through the introduction of contextualised information and practical examples, with the provision practical examples (e.g. “dummy” school budgets or data) and scenarios that face governing bodies (e.g. panels or deficit budgets). These can either be worked through during training sessions or post-training. When considering the latter, thought should also be given to the implementation of a mentoring scheme as part of the cycle of training, which would support Governors to reflect on their training in the context of their own school environment.

Finally, training providers must ensure that training is accessible and inclusive, with consideration given to the development of training that is delivered in-person, online (live and pre-recorded), or hybridised (both live and online).

Following on from the improvements suggested for Governor training development, Governor training providers should then implement the four steps to effective Governor training (Figure 56), into an overall Governor development programme (Figure 57 - Implementation of the Four Steps to Effective Governor Training) that consists of two main strands: mandatory induction and continuing professional development. This will ensure that Governors not only start with a solid

understanding of the expectations of the role but will continue to develop the skills and knowledge needed to remain effective. The mandatory induction aspect has been designed to ensure new Governors and new Chairs are fully apprised of their responsibilities and expectations of the role through formal training, with informal training covering governing body-specific information, the school, and the school community. Given the emphasis placed on the importance of training throughout the interviews and survey, the second strand, continuing professional development, combines more formal training with a mentoring aspect. This will allow Governors to target their training to more specific aspects of their role, such as their link role, with mentoring allowing them to contextualise their learning.

Of course, with the implementation of these new models, consideration should also be given to the creation of training material that would accompany them. It is clear that respondents and participants did not enjoy being presented with information via PowerPoint, an even more important consideration following the introduction of digital training. The findings have shown that Governors want training that contains a more practical aspect, with requests for exemplars and practical examples that can be worked through, either in the training itself or post-training within their own governing environment. Additionally, Governors want the opportunity to talk with other Governors, to share and contextualise their own experiences. The role of peer support, either through networking opportunities or mentoring, was considered exceptionally important. With this in mind, training developers should attempt to integrate both exemplars and practical examples, as well as opportunities to network during training sessions. Below is an example developed based on responses within this study (Figure 58).

		Focus	Training	Training Activities	Independent Activities - induction portfolio
Month 1	Introduction to Governance	**Roles & Responsibilities**	The Role • Governor responsibilities • Operational vs Strategic • Legal requirements and statutory duties	Case Study: Review and discuss a real-life governance challenge (e.g. operational vs strategic).	Identify the roles and the associated responsibilities in your GB
Month 2		**Educational landscape & Language**	School Types and Policies • Different types of schools and governance • Policies and their importance	Case Study: Review and discuss a real-life governance challenge (e.g. policy)	Identify three key legal duties of school governors. Identify one area where you need further training or clarification.
Month 3		**Strategic oversight and accountability**	School Improvement and Strategic Planning • Setting the vision and ethos • School development plans • Holding the headteacher accountable	Scenario: Discuss different governance scenarios and decide how to respond.	Research your school's current School Development Plan (SDP). Answer the following: What are the three key priorities outlined in the SDP? How can governors support these priorities?
Month 4		**Challenge**	Challenge in Governance • Why challenge? • Support vs Challenge • Triangulations Effective vs. Ineffective Challenge • Effective vs ineffective challenge examples. Asking Effective Questions • Types of questions to ask • Open-ended vs. closed questions • Probing vs. leading questions • Asking questions effectively **Provide a list of effective questions to take away at the end**	Group discussion - rewrite ineffective questions into effective ones. Role play - Each group is presented with a scenario and must develop questions to challenge.	Develop a list of at least 5 effective questions that you could ask the leadership team about the finance/educational performance/staffing, ensuring that these questions: Are open-ended to encourage detailed responses. Use probing techniques to explore the effectiveness of the intervention. Avoid leading questions, allowing the leadership team to provide an honest and comprehensive answer.
		NETWORKKING EVENT			
Month 5	Monitoring	**Finance**	Financial Oversight • Budgets and financial planning • Funding and financial regulations • Financial accountability	Budgeting Workshop: Work in small groups to allocate a school's budget and justify spending decisions	Review your school's most recent financial statements and prepare one question to ask at the next finance committee meeting Look up your school's most recent financial report or government funding guidelines. Answer the following: What are the school's main sources of income? What funding regulations must governors be aware of? Identify one financial risk the school might face and how the governing board can mitigate it.
Month 6		**Educational Performance**	Data and Performance Monitoring • Understanding school data (exam results, attendance, progress) • Using data to challenge and support school leadership • Ofsted expectations	Data Analysis Exercise: Review anonymised school data and identify key trends.	Identify which subjects or year groups are performing well and which are underperforming. Look at attendance trends: Are there particular year groups or times of year with noticeably lower attendance? Review progress data: Which students or subjects show the greatest gap between predicted and actual progress?

Month 7		**Safeguarding**	Safeguarding • Safeguarding training and child protection	Safeguarding Dilemmas Discussion: Work through safeguarding case studies and decide on appropriate responses.	Write a 1-paragraph reflection on the following questions: Why is it important for school governors to be actively involved in safeguarding and child protection? What actions can you take as a governor to ensure that safeguarding remains a priority in the school? How can you work with the school's leadership team to continuously improve safeguarding practices?
Month 8		**SEND**	Inclusion, and SEND • SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) responsibilities • Equality, diversity, and inclusion in schools	Case Study Exercise: Discuss the support required for a hypothetical student with additional needs. In groups, reflect on your role as a governor in supporting EDI in the school. Answer the following questions: How can you, as a governor, actively contribute to promoting EDI in the school? What steps can you take to ensure that EDI is not just a policy but a lived practice in the school community? How will you ensure that EDI is consistently monitored and reviewed in the school's policies and practices?	Review the SEND Policy provided by the school. Pay attention to key sections like: The process for identifying students with SEND. The roles and responsibilities of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). The support structures in place for students with SEND (e.g., interventions, resources). How the school monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of SEND provisions. Answer the following questions: What are the key responsibilities of the school in meeting the needs of students with SEND? How does the school ensure it is identifying and supporting students with SEND effectively? What are the roles and responsibilities of the governing body in relation to SEND provision?
		NETWORKKING EVENT			
Month 9	**Administrative Functions of the Governing Body**	**Stakeholder Engagement**	Working with Parents, Students, and the Community • Effective communication with parents and students • Community partnerships • Addressing complaints and concerns	Stakeholder Mapping Exercise: Identify key stakeholders and create a plan to engage them effectively.	Identify key stakeholders in your school community. How can you improve engagement?
Month 10		**Skills Audit & Succession planning**	What is a Skills Audit? • Explore a skills audit template Key areas covered in a skills audit: • Strategic leadership • Education sector knowledge • Financial management • Data interpretation • HR and personnel expertise • Legal and compliance knowledge • Safeguarding and inclusion Is a diverse skill set necessary for an effective governing board?	Governors complete a personal audit, identifying areas they feel most and least confident. Board Skills Gap Analysis – Review anonymised skills audit results and discuss areas of strength and weakness. How can these be addressed?	Governors will set one development goal based on their skills audit results and record this in their portfolio.

Month 11		**Safer Recruitment**	HR Responsibilities of School Governors The role of governors in HR oversight Working together on HR matters Ensuring legal compliance HR & Safeguarding HR Challenges & disciplinaries	Scenario/Case Study Discussion – Discussion on handling situations with concerns about fairness or bias. Review a sample school performance management policy - what key areas should governors monitor? Safeguarding Audit – Governors review a checklist of safeguarding HR requirements.	Step 1: Research and review key legal compliance areas for HR in schools, focusing on: Equal opportunities and anti-discrimination laws. Contracts of employment and staff rights. Data protection and confidentiality in HR processes. Health and safety responsibilities in the workplace. Step 2: Write a compliance check (200-300 words) addressing the following: What key HR legal obligations must the school meet? How can governors ensure that the school is compliant with these HR legal requirements? What steps can governors take to support the leadership team in maintaining legal compliance in HR matters?
Month 12		**Panels**	Types of Panels Governors May Lead. The Role and Responsibilities of a Panel Chair Preparing for a Panel Hearing Conducting a Fair and Effective Panel Handling Difficult Situations and Appeals	Case Study Review – match real-life scenarios to the appropriate type of panel. Mock Panel Preparation – Governors receive a case file and identify key areas to investigate. Participants discuss how they would handle challenging panel situations.	Create a checklist (200-300 words) for preparing for a panel hearing, which includes the following: The documents and information you need to review beforehand. The steps you need to take to ensure all panel members are well-prepared. Any practical arrangements that need to be made (e.g., meeting location, communication with parties involved). How to ensure transparency and fairness from the outset of the panel hearing.
		NETWORKKING EVENT			

Figure 58 Example 12-month induction training schedule

7.7.2 Training Challenges

Low attendance should be addressed by improving the quality of training and exploring options other than in-person training, such as online and pre-recorded. This will support Governors who are time poor or who may have family/caring responsibilities, which means they struggle to attend training events. Consideration could also be given to implementing smaller, pre-governing body meetings, training sessions. However, the Government should also consider placing greater emphasis on training for Governors, through the introduction of mandatory training, particularly induction training.

7.7.3 Induction Training

Mandatory induction has been noted to be highly beneficial, particularly in ensuring that Governors begin their tenure with an understanding of the roles and responsibilities that they are accepting as part of their position. Given that there is a current model of mandatory induction training within the UK, having existed in Wales since 2013 (see Figure 59), the Government should consider implementing this as part of an improved model of Governor training in England. Consideration should be given to exploring the current Welsh model to explore the potential impact, if any, on recruitment and retention.



Regional Governor Professional Learning Programme

May 2022 – July 2022

Links to Resources (Presentation and Recordings)

EAS

- As recordings and presentations for the new range of training become available, links will be provided here.
- If you wish to work through the materials independently, then you are welcome do so. However, to register that you have completed in this way, please use the evaluation link at the bottom of this page.
- Please note that due to a change Welsh Government have made to Hwb for some newer playlists you will need to login

The Core Role of the Governor	
Governor Induction - Welcome to being a School Governor (Mandatory)	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/luk5n3
Understanding **Performance Data – Primary** (Mandatory for Primary Governors)	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/m4wcuo
Understanding **Performance Data - Secondary** (Mandatory for Secondary Governors)	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/o8d8g8
Your role as a **Newly Appointed Chair** (Mandatory - Chairs of Governors)	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/vtb4of
Understanding and making use of **EAS online resources, technology and 'Hwb'**	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/cprsps
How to deal with **Complaints** to the Governing Body effectively	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/xuthlq
Preparing for your role in **Statutory Committees**, as the Chair and a member	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/tg4ibg
Preparing for your role in **Headteacher Performance Management**	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/yzdax3
Preparing for your role in **Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher Recruitment and Selection (REVISED)**	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/gvtgyj

Understanding your role and contribution to school development priorities	
Creating a great school: Your role in supporting your school to improve	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/4n4snl
Your role in supporting **Whole School Approaches to Wellbeing and Inclusion**	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/6ccyfj
Developing an **Innovative Curriculum** with your school	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/4bov8k
Creating a great team: Your role in supporting your staff to develop	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/76o71b
EAS Governor Conference 2022 Resources and Recordings	https://hwb.gov.wales/go/a1cut8

Please contact governor.support@sewaleseas.org.uk if you want more information or are unable to access any resources

Governor PL Evaluation Form 2022-2023 Llwodraethwr DP Gwerthuso

Figure 59 Example of a governor induction training schedule in Wales (Hwb, 2022)

7.7.4 Training Materials

In line with recommendations on improvements to training provision noted within this research, it is recommended that consideration be given to the production of specific training materials. These include, but are not limited to, the development of virtual training materials, scenario-based training resources, induction programmes for Governors and trustees, and guidance on mentoring within a governing body.

7.7.5 Summary

This research clearly shows that the amount of training available to Governors is considered to be ‘good’. However, there are concerns around the quality of the training provided. The substandard training experienced by Governors, with the subsequent impact of this training witnessed by SLT, substantially impacted the effectiveness of the training. Whilst still a voluntary position, the government needs to understand that the role has grown exponentially, and the quality of training provided no longer meets the needs of the role. The reliance on recruiting Governors with additional, external skills in the hope that they provide a more professional volunteer to oversee the monitoring of schools is simply not working. This is clearly seen in the experiences shared by Governors, many of whom come from a professional background, who felt dismissed and ineffective. This was exacerbated by SLT sharing feelings of concern over their governors’ abilities to perform their duties, whilst staying within the boundaries of the role, often feeling the need to lead them. Developing training that is high quality, relevant, practical, and accessible, and implementing it into a programme of Governor training, will help to create Governors who not only have an understanding of their role but are confident in how they enact it. In line with the theoretical writings of Freire (1970), it is this confidence that would both awaken and liberate the Governors, removing the distrust of their

own knowledge and allowing full participation in their governance journey. The development of high-quality, relevant, practical, and accessible training, coupled with the creation of a Governor training programme as suggested within this research, are limit-acts that help Governors to overcome the limit-situation that is ineffective governance. By developing training that encompasses both practical and contextual elements, it is moving training past the current banking model of Governor education intended to fill empty vessels with knowledge, towards one that embraces Freire's (1970, p. 79) belief that "Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information". Effectively, Governors will no longer be passive recipients of information that is presented to them and will instead become active participants in their own learning journey. By gaining knowledge through training and then critically reflecting on this training through contextualisation, Governors will be better prepared to fulfil their role, which will ultimately lead to a more effective governing body.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Ethics

Appendix 2 - Recruitment

Appendix 3 - Survey

Appendix 4 - Interview

Appendix 5 - Data analysis

Appendix 6 - Governor Training UK

Appendix 7 - Communications

Appendix 8 – NGA: Skills Audit

Appendix 9 – Induction Training for School Governors in Wales

Appendix 1 - Ethics

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Application for Ethics Review Form

Guidance Notes:

What is the purpose of this form?

This form should be completed to seek ethics review for research projects to be undertaken by University of Birmingham staff, PGR students or visiting/emeritus researchers who will be carrying out research which will be attributed to the University.

Who should complete it?

For a staff project – the lead researcher/Principal Investigator on the project.
For a PGR student project – the student's academic supervisor, in discussion with the student.

Students undertaking undergraduate projects and taught postgraduate (PGT) students should refer to their Department/School for advice

When should it be completed?

After you have completed the University's online ethics self-assessment form (SAF), **IF** the SAF indicates that ethics review is required. You should apply in good time to ensure that you receive a favourable ethics opinion prior to the commencement of the project and it is recommended that you allow at least 60 working days for the ethics process to be completed.

How should it be submitted?

An electronic version of the completed form should be submitted to the Research Ethics Officer, at the following email address: [redacted].

What should be included with it?

Copies of any relevant supporting information and participant documentation, research tools (e.g. interview topic guides, questionnaires, etc) and where appropriate a health & safety risk assessment for the project (see section 10 of this form for further information about risk assessments).

What should applicants read before submitting this form?

Before submitting, you should ensure that you have read and understood the following information and guidance and that you have taken it into account when completing your application:

The information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages (https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-of-Research.aspx)

The University's Code of Practice for Research (https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/research.pdf)

The guidance on Data Protection for researchers provided by the University's Legal Services team at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/legal-services/What-we-do/Data-Protection/resources.aspx.

Section 1: Basic Project Details

Project Title: Primary school governor training: exploring the fitness for purpose of the content and mode of delivery in England

Is this project a:

University of Birmingham Staff Research project ☐
University of Birmingham Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student project ☒
Other (Please specify below) ☐

Details of the Principal Investigator or Lead Supervisor (for PGR student projects):

Title: Dr
First name: Celia
Last name: Greenway

Position held: Director of Student Engagement
School/Department School of Education

Telephone: [redacted]
Email address: [redacted]

Details of any Co-Investigators or Co-Supervisors (for PGR student projects):

Title: Dr
First name: Nicola
Last name: Smith

Position held: Lecturer in Primary/Early Years
School/Department School of Education

Telephone: [redacted]
Email address: [redacted]

Details of the student for PGR student projects:

Title: Mrs
First name: Sarah
Last name: Chung

Course of study: PhD
Email address[redacted]

Project start and end dates:

Estimated start date of project: 01/01/2021
Estimated end date of project: 01/06/2021

Funding:

Sources of funding: CoSS scholarship

Section 2: Summary of Project

Describe the purpose, background rationale for the proposed project, as well as the hypotheses/research questions to be examined and expected outcomes. This description should be in everyday language that is free from jargon - please explain any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases. Please do not provide extensive academic background material or references.

The development pathway of school governance has clearly shown a move away from the initial concept, in which well-meaning volunteers 'managed' schools. A 'stake-holder' model of governance, filled by 'well-meaning' but ultimately untrained volunteers, was condemned by government figures, such as Michael Gove and Sir Michael Wilshaw, who heavily encouraged governing bodies develop through placing skilled professionals at the core of the governing body. The move towards a skills-based model of governance, in conjunction with the increased autonomy of schools and amplified powers for governing bodies, raises questions of whether or not a governing body can rely solely on governors who have been deemed to have the most appropriate skillset, or whether additional training would still be required. In an attempt to answer this, four research questions have been developed:
What is the present provision for governor training in England?
How do serving governors assess their own training?
How do Headteachers assess the training of governors based on their performance in meetings?
Which strong claims could be made to improve the quality of governor training?
In order to answer these questions, a three-phase approach will be taken. In Phase 1, a document analysis (publicly available documents provided by LA Governor Services and other private governance provision) and survey will be conducted. This is to ascertain what is the present provision for governor training is, as well as what are the rudimentary thoughts of both Headteachers and governors on the quality/suitability of the training provided. Phase 2 will then progress to one-to-one interviews, to allow the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the thoughts of governors and Headteachers, expressed in Phase 1. Then intention is to extrapolate a theme within Phase 3's qualitative content analysis.
The research intends to address the current void in the governance research landscape by exploring through three phases, what research is available, whether it is suitable or of a standard to support the role of a governor and whether the current provision enables effective governance or whether there are areas that can be improved.

Section 3: Conduct and location of Project

Conduct of project

Please give a description of the research methodology that will be used. If more than one methodology or phase will be involved, please separate these out clearly and refer to them consistently throughout the rest of this form.

Phase 1: Survey (conducted online)/Document Analysis Phase 2: Interviews Phase 3: Qualitative Content Analysis

Geographic location of project

State the geographic locations where the project and all associated fieldwork will be carried out. If the project will involve travel to areas which may be considered unsafe, either in the UK or overseas, please ensure that the risks of this (or any other non-trivial health and safety risks associated with the research) are addressed by a documented health and safety risk assessment, as described in section 10 of this form.

West Midlands, UK (Physical interviews): In the school of the interviewee if possible. If not, an alternative will be offered on the University campus or a location (public) that is known to the participant.
UK (Digital Survey). However, given the current global pandemic it is important to note that physical interviews may not be possible, therefore all interview participants will be offered a 'virtual' interview conducted on either Zoom or Microsoft Teams (the platform that is most beneficial to the interviewee).

Section 4: Research Participants and Recruitment

Does the project involve human participants?

Note: 'Participation' includes both active participation (such as when participants take part in an interview) and cases where participants take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time (for example, in crowd behaviour research).

Yes ☒
No ☐

If you have answered NO please go on to Section 8 of this form. If you have answered YES please complete the rest of this section and then continue on to section 5.

Who will the participants be?

Describe the number of participants and important characteristics (such as age, gender, location, affiliation, level of fitness, intellectual ability etc.). Specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used.

The survey will be purposive, with the criteria for selection being the participants active position as a governor or headteacher.
Whilst the interviews will be purposive in terms of meeting the same criteria as the initial survey, they will also require an element of convenience sampling to meet the needs of the researcher (Robson and McCartan, 2011; Denscombe, 2017). The convenience sample will be based on those who volunteer to continue into the interview phase of the research at the end of the phase one survey and their location (West Midlands based).

How will the participants be recruited?

Please state clearly how the participants will be identified, approached and recruited. Include any relationship between the investigator(s) and participant(s) (e.g. instructor-student). Please ensure that you attach a copy of any poster(s), advertisement(s) or letter(s) to be used for recruitment.

The survey will be conducted online (via Survey Monkey) with a link disseminated to the research population via several methods; Governor Services within Local Authorities, autonomous governor support services like the National Governors Association (NGA) and The School Bus, directly to schools and finally, via "research populations" (Denscombe, 2017, p. 18) on social media, such as governor and leadership support groups.

A letter will be attached to the beginning of the survey, which will detail the rights of the participant to withdraw at any time. All recruitment material will also highlight this, in addition to explaining how the data will be kept confidential.

Section 5 - Consent

What process will be used to obtain consent?

Describe the process that the investigator(s) will be using to obtain valid consent. If consent is not to be obtained explain why. If the participants are under the age of 16 it would usually be necessary to obtain parental consent and the process for this should be described in full, including whether parental consent will be opt-in or opt-out.

The introductory page of the survey will contain a letter detailing the purpose of the research and clarifying the respondent's right to withdraw at any point (BERA, 2018). Additionally, it will explain that the survey results will be anonymised, with all responses allocated a respondent number and that they are only required to supply further contact details if they wish to volunteer for the follow up interviews. Furthermore, prior to the interviews being conducted, a letter will be given which reiterates the participant's right to withdraw and how the research will ensure their privacy by storing all data in an encrypted system.
Please be aware that if the project involves over 16s who lack capacity to consent, separate approval will be required from the Health Research Authority (HRA) in line with the Mental Capacity Act.

Please attach a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (if applicable), the Consent Form (if applicable), the content of any telephone script (if applicable) and any other material that will be used in the consent process.

Note: Guidance from Legal Services on wording relating to the Data Protection Act 2018 can be accessed at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/legal-services/What-we-do/Data-Protection/resources.aspx.

Use of deception?

Will the participants be deceived in any way about the purpose of the study?

Yes ☐
No ☒

If yes, please describe the nature and extent of the deception involved. Include how and when the deception will be revealed, and the nature of any explanation/debrief will be provided to the participants after the study has taken place.

Section 6: Participant compensation, withdrawal and feedback to participants

What, if any, feedback will be provided to participants?

Explain any feedback/ information that will be provided to the participants after participation in the research (e.g. a more complete description of the purpose of the research, or access to the results of the research).

All respondents/participants can request access to the results of the research. In the letter to respondents/participants, it explains that after completion of the PhD, a copy will be e-mailed to any respondent/participant who has contacted the researcher to request a copy.

What arrangements will be in place for participant withdrawal?

Describe how the participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project, explain any consequences for the participant of withdrawing from the study and indicate what will be done with the participant's data if they withdraw.

The introductory page of the survey will contain a letter detailing the purpose of the research and clarifying the respondent's right to withdraw at any point (BERA, 2018). Additionally, a letter will be given before each interview, which will reiterate the participant's right to withdraw. In the case of both the survey and interview recordings/transcripts, all data will be stored within an encrypted system and all recordings destroyed 10 years after the completion date of the research unless a request is made within 1 month of the survey/interview being conducted.

Please confirm the specific date/timescale to be used as the deadline for participant withdrawal and ensure that this is consistently stated across all participant documentation. This is considered preferable to allowing participants to 'withdraw at any time' as presumably there will be a point beyond which it will not be possible to remove their data from the study (e.g. because analysis has started, the findings have been published, etc).

A deadline of 1st March 2021 (Survey) and 1st July 2021 (interview)

What arrangements will be in place for participant compensation?

Will participants receive compensation for participation?

Yes ☐
No ☒

If yes, please provide further information about the nature and value of any compensation and clarify whether it will be financial or non-financial.

If participants choose to withdraw, how will you deal with compensation?

Section 7: Confidentiality/anonymity

Will the identity of the participants be known to the researcher?

Will participants be truly anonymous (i.e. their identity will not be known to the researcher)?

Yes ☐
No ☒

In what format will data be stored?

Will participants' data be stored in identifiable format, or will it be anonymised or pseudo-anonymised (i.e. an assigned ID code or number will be used instead of the participant's name and a key will kept allowing the researcher to identify a participant's data)?

Survey: All respondents allocated a respondent number. Interview: All participants given a pseudonym. A key will be kept, allowing the researcher to identify participant data if required (e.g. if the respondent/participant withdraws).

Will participants' data be treated as confidential?

Will participants' data be treated as confidential (i.e. they will not be identified in any outputs from the study and their identity will not be disclosed to any third party)?

Yes ☒
No ☐

If you have answered no to the question above, meaning that participants' data will not be treated as confidential (i.e. their data and/or identities may be revealed in the research outputs or otherwise to third parties), please provide further information and justification for this:

Section 8: Storage, access and disposal of data

How and where will the data (both paper and electronic) be stored, what arrangements will be in place to keep it secure and who will have access to it?

Please note that for long-term storage, data should usually be held on a secure University of Birmingham IT system, for example BEAR (see https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/it/teams/infrastructure/research/bear/index.aspx).

During research:
BEAR Research Data Store (RDS) – Access will be controlled by the researcher and restricted to the researcher (Sarah Chung), supervisors (Dr. Celia Greenway & Dr. Nicola Smith), and thesis examiners. Additionally, all data can only be accessed on campus or through the two-factor authentication remote access service.
After research:
BEAR Archive – Anonymised data will be stored for a period of 10 years, with instructions to dispose after this period.

Data retention and disposal

The University usually requires data to be held for a minimum of 10 years to allow for verification. Will you retain your data for at least 10 years?

Yes ☒
No ☐

If data will be held for less than 10 years, please provide further justification:

What arrangements will be in place for the secure disposal of data?

It is essential to acknowledge that data cannot simply be deleted as data can be recovered using data recovery tools. As such, all data will be disposed of using specialised file 'shredding' or 'secure erase'.

Section 9: Other approvals required

Are you aware of any other national or local approvals required to carry out this research?

E.g. clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Local Authority approval for work involving Social Care, local ethics/governance approvals if the work will be carried out overseas, or approval from NOMS or HMPPS for work involving police or prisons? If so, please provide further details:

If interviews are conducted on a school site, the researcher may require a DBS. One is currently in place:
Certificate number: 001527739362
Expiry date: 26/04/2021
Renewal: Automatic via DBS Update Service

For projects involving NHS staff, is approval from the Health Research Authority (HRA) needed in addition to University ethics approval?

If your project will involve NHS staff, please go to the HRA decision tool at http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/ to establish whether the NHS would consider your project to be research, thus requiring HRA approval in addition to University ethics approval. Is HRA approval required?

Yes ☐
No ☐

Please include a print out of the HRA decision tool outcome with your application.

Section 10: Risks and benefits/significance

Benefits/significance of the research

Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research

The research will fill a gap in the current research on school governance by exploring the options available to governors in terms of training and establishing whether any current provision is adequate enough to produce an effective governing body.

Risks of the research

Outline any potential risks (including risks to research staff, research participants, other individuals not involved in the research, the environment and/or society and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap.) ***Please ensure that you include any risks relating to overseas travel and working in overseas locations as part of the study, particularly if the work will involve travel to/working in areas considered unsafe and/or subject to travel warnings from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (see***

https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)***. Please also be aware that the University insurer, UMAL, offers access to RiskMonitor Traveller, a service which provides 24/7/365 security advice for all travellers and you are advised to make use of this service (see https://umal.co.uk/travel/pre-travel-advice/).***

The outlining of the risks in this section does not circumvent the need to carry out and document a detailed Health and Safety risk assessment where appropriate – see below.

Lone working – The researcher must conduct all interviews in public buildings (e.g. a school, University of Birmingham campus). They must not conduct any interviews in a private home. A copy of the interview schedule, listing the place and time of the interview will be submitted to the PI.

University Health & Safety (H&S) risk assessment

For projects of more than minimal H&S risk it is essential that a H&S risk assessment is carried out and signed off in accordance with the process in place within your School/College and you must provide a copy of this with your application. The risk may be non-trivial because of travel to, or working in, a potentially unsafe location, or because of the nature of research that will carried out there. It could also involve (irrespective of location) H&S risks to research participants, or other individuals not involved directly in the research. Further information about the risk assessment process for research can be found at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/wellbeing/worksafe/policy/Research-Risk-Assessment-and-Mitigation-Plans-RAMPs.aspx.

Please note that travel to (or through) 'FCO Red zones' requires approval by the University's Research Travel Approval Panel, and will only be approved in exceptional circumstances where sufficient mitigation of risk can be demonstrated.
Section 11: Any other issues

Does the research raise any ethical issues not dealt with elsewhere in this form?

If yes, please provide further information:

No

Do you wish to provide any other information about this research not already provided, or to seek the opinion of the Ethics Committee on any particular issue?

If yes, please provide further information:

No.

Section 12: Peer review

Has your project received scientific peer review?

Yes ☒
No ☐

If yes, please provide further details about the source of the review (e.g. independent peer review as part of the funding process or peer review from supervisors for PGR student projects):

Peer review from supervisors.
Section 13: Nominate an expert reviewer

For certain types of project, including those of an interventional nature or those involving significant risks, it may be helpful (and you may be asked) to nominate an expert reviewer for your project. If you anticipate that this may apply to your work and you would like to nominate an expert reviewer at this stage, please provide details below.

Title:
First name:
Last name:
Email address:
Phone number:

Brief explanation of reasons for nominating and/or nominee's suitability:

Section 14: Document checklist

Please check that the following documents, where applicable, are attached to your application:

Recruitment advertisement ☒
Participant information sheet ☒
Consent form ☒
Questionnaire ☒
Interview/focus group topic guide ☒

Please proof-read study documentation and ensure that it is appropriate for the intended audience before submission.
Section 15: Applicant declaration

Please read the statements below and tick the boxes to indicate your agreement:

I submit this application on the basis that the information it contains is confidential and will be used by the University of Birmingham for the purposes of ethical review and monitoring of the research project described herein, and to satisfy reporting requirements to regulatory bodies. The information will not be used for any other purpose without my prior consent. ☒

The information in this form together with any accompanying information is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it. ☒

I undertake to abide by University Code of Practice for Research (https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/research.pdf) alongside any other relevant professional bodies' codes of conduct and/or ethical guidelines. ☒

I will report any changes affecting the ethical aspects of the project to the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer. ☒

I will report any adverse or unforeseen events which occur to the relevant Ethics Committee via the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer. ☒

Please now save your completed form and email a copy to the Research Ethics Officer, at [redacted]. As noted above, please do not submit a paper copy.

Ethics Approval

Outlook

Application for Ethical Review ERN_20-0460

From [redacted]
Date Thu 17/12/2020 10:35
To Celia Greenway (Vice-Chancellor's Office) <[redacted]
Cc Sarah Chung (PhD Education - PT) [redacted]>; Nicola Smith (Teacher Education)
<[redacted]

Dear Dr Greenway,

Re: "Primary school governor training: exploring the fitness for purpose of the content and mode of delivery in England" Application for Ethical Review ERN_20-0460

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project, which has now been reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to confirm a favourable ethical opinion for your project, subject to your adherence to the following conditions:

- Please ensure you follow your local school/college Health and Safety guidance regarding face-to-face work during the pandemic (usually this requires a risk assessment and details of your local advisor can be found at: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/wellbeing/worksafe/coords/hscoordinators.aspx)

For clarification, as long as the conditions above are met and the details of the proposed work do not change, your project has ethics approval and no further ac on is necessary.

I would like to remind you that any substantive changes to the nature of the study as described in the Applica on for Ethical Review, and/or any adverse events occurring during the study should be promptly brought to the Committee's attention by the Principal Investigator and may necessitate further ethical review.

Please also ensure that the relevant requirements within the University's Code of Practice for Research and the information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages (available at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Links-andResources.aspx) are adhered to and referred to in any future applications for ethical review. It is now a requirement on the revised application form (https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/EthicalReview-Forms.aspx) to confirm that this guidance has been consulted and is understood, and that it has been taken into account when completing your application for ethical review.

If you require a hard copy of this correspondence, please let me know.

Kind regards,

[redacted]
Research Ethics Officer
Research Support Group

C Block Dome (room 137)
Aston Webb Building
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston B15 2TT
Tel: [redacted] (if you leave a voicemail message and number I will get back to you) Email: [redacted] (also available on Skype for Business)

Please remember to submit a new Self-Assessment Form for each new project. Click Ethical Review Process for further details regarding the University's Ethical Review process.

Click Research Governance for further details regarding the University's Research Governance and Clinical Trials Insurance processes, or email [redacted] with any queries

Notice of Confidentiality:
The contents of this email may be privileged and are confidential. It may not be disclosed to or used by anyone other than the addressee, nor copied in any way. If received in error please notify the sender and then delete it from your system. Should you communicate with me by email, you consent to the University of Birmingham monitoring and reading any such correspondence.

Appendix 2 - Recruitment

Recruitment Advert



UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Research Focus:

As school governance has evolved, moving away from the initial concept of the 'stake-holder' model of governance towards a skills-based model, it raises questions of whether or not a governing body can rely solely on governors who have been deemed to have the most appropriate skillset, or whether additional training would still be beneficial. In an attempt to answer this, we will explore the current provision for governor training, how serving governors assess their own training, how Headteachers assess the training of governors through their performance within the role, and what the overall quality of governor training is perceived to be.

SEEKING PARTICIPANTS WHO:

* Are serving school governors within the UK.
* Are serving Headteachers within the UK.

WHAT IS INVOLVED:

* PARTICIPATE IN A SHORT (APPROXIMATELY 15 MINUTES) ONLINE SURVEY.
* OPTIONAL PARTICIPATION IN A ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEW (NO MORE THAN 60 MINUTES).

CONTACT:

* IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT SARAH CHUNG AT S.J.CHUNG@PGR.BHAM.AC.UK .

Survey Dissemination

Good Afternoon,

I am a PhD researcher, based at the University of Birmingham, exploring the role of governor training in producing an effective governing body. I am writing to ask if you would possibly disseminate a link to my research survey, to governing bodies that use your services. I am also attaching a copy of the call for participants, which will give governors further information about the study. The Qualtrics link is: **HTTPS://T.CO/BMXZUTKZ5E?AMP=1**

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the completed research, a copy can be made available after my Viva has been completed.

Kind regards,

Sarah Chung
Doctoral researcher
School of Education,
University of Birmingham,
Edgbaston, Birmingham
B15 2TT,

Pronouns: She & Her

Invitation To Interview

“Primary school governor training: exploring the fitness for purpose of the content and mode of delivery in England”

Good morning,

I am conducting interviews as part of my doctoral research which explores the role governor training plays in producing an effective governing body. As a governor you are in an ideal position to share your lived experience of training.
The interview, which will take place on Zoom, will take no longer than 60 minutes and will be very informal. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential and each participant will be assigned a participant ID to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis. For further details on the study and to complete a letter of consent, please follow this link: **LETTER OF PARTICIPATION AND CONSENT FORM**.

Your participation will be a valuable addition to this research and could further our understanding of the role of training within school governance. If you are willing to participate, please use the link to select a date and time that would suit you: **CALENDLY**. If you have any questions or cannot find a suitable date, please do contact me at [redacted].

Kind regards,
Sarah Chung

Sarah Chung
Doctoral researcher
School of Education,
University of Birmingham,
Edgbaston, Birmingham
B15 2TT,

Pronouns: She & Her

Appendix 3 - Survey

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM | COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Default Question Block

Title of the study

Primary school governor training: exploring the fitness for purpose of the content and mode of delivery in England

Description of the study

As school governance has evolved, moving away from the initial concept of the 'stake-holder' model of governance, towards a skills-based model, it raises questions of whether or not a governing body can rely solely on governors who have been deemed to have the most appropriate skillset, or whether additional training would still be beneficial. In an attempt to answer this, we will explore the current provision for governor training, how serving governors assess their own training, how Headteachers assess the training of governors through their performance within the role, and what is the overall quality of governor training is perceived to be.

Invitation to participate and explanation of what participation entails

You are invited to participate in a research study survey on the training available/provided for members of school governing bodies. It is important that you take the time to read the information provided carefully before deciding whether to take part. Please feel free to contact the researcher on the provided e-mail if you have any questions or concerns.

Why have I been invited?

You have been chosen because you are a Headteacher or member of a governing body at a primary school.

Do I have to take part?

The choice will always remain with you as to whether you take part in the study. Should you wish to proceed, you will be asked to sign a consent form to indicate that you have agreed to take part. You will remain free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason, up to the 1st June 2021.

What will happen to me if I take part?

How long will I be involved in the research?

* The survey should take no longer than 15 minutes.

What is expected of me as a participant?

* Participant involvement will be via survey.

What happens if I withdraw from the study?

* At all times, the choice to participate remains with you. If you choose to participate but later withdraw from further participation in the study, all identifiable documents will be destroyed but any data collected will remain within the study.

What if there is a problem?

* If you are concerned at all, please feel free to contact the researcher, Sarah Chung on the following e-mail address: S.J.Chung@pgr.bham.ac.uk or the research supervisor, Dr. Celia Greenway: c.a.greenway@bham.ac.uk .

Use of equipment?

* The respondent will use their own personal equipment to complete the online survey.

Will my information be made public?

* No – all results used within the study will be kept confidential. All survey respondents will be allocated a respondent number at the end of the survey. Please make a

note of your respondent number, to allow the researcher to identify participant data if required (e.g. if the respondent/participant withdraws).

Where will my information be stored?

* The information will remain stored with the University of Birmingham in the BEAR Research Data Store, for a period of 10 years after submission of the research. After this, all data will be disposed of using specialised file 'shredding' or 'secure erase'. Access will be restricted to and controlled by the researcher and the research supervisors. The data held is extremely secure as it can only be accessed on campus or through the two-factor authentication remote access service.

Results of the study

The results from this study will be used within a PhD thesis at the University of Birmingham. Survey respondents are welcome to request a copy of the results, which will be released upon completion of the PhD. To request a copy, please contact the researcher, Sarah Chung, via S.J.Chung@pgr.bham.ac.uk .

Who is funding the study?

The researcher is a recipient of the College of Social Sciences (CoSS) Scholarship

Fair Processing Statement

This information is being collected as part of a PhD thesis concerned with primary school governor training, by PhD researcher, Sarah Chung, who is based within the School of Education in the University of Birmingham. The information which you supply and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into BEAR Research Data Store and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research, and statistical and audit purposes. By supplying this information, you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by Sarah Chung in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018. No identifiable personal data will be published.

Statements of understanding/consent

I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information information above for this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily.

○ Agree

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. If I withdraw my data will be removed from the study and will be destroyed.

○ Agree

I understand that my personal data will be processed for the purposes detailed above, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

○ Agree

Based upon the above, I agree to take part in this study.

○ Agree

Select a Date:

Month

Day

Year

Block 1

What made you choose to become a governor?

- ○ Support my child(s) school
- ○ Support the local community
- ○ Career development
- ○ [ ] Other (e.g. Ex Officio - Headteacher)

I feel that I understand how governors ensure clarity of vision.

- ○ 1 (No confidence)
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 (Moderate confidence)
- ○ 6
- ○ 7
- ○ 8
- ○ 9
- ○ 10 (Complete confidence)

I feel that I understand how governors ensure clarity of ethos.

- ○ 1 (No confidence)

- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 (Moderate confidence)
- ○ 6
- ○ 7
- ○ 8
- ○ 9
- ○ 10 (Complete confidence)

I feel that I understand how governors ensure clarity of strategic direction.

- ○ 1 (No confidence)
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 (Moderate confidence)
- ○ 6
- ○ 7
- ○ 8
- ○ 9
- ○ 10 (Complete confidence)

I can clearly explain how the governing body hold the head-teacher to account for the educational performance of the

school and its pupils.

- ○ 1 (No confidence)
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 (Moderate confidence)
- ○ 6
- ○ 7
- ○ 8
- ○ 9
- ○ 10 (Complete confidence)

I can clearly explain how the governing body hold the head-teacher to account for the management of staff.

- ○ 1 (No confidence)
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 (Moderate confidence)
- ○ 6
- ○ 7
- ○ 8
- ○ 9
- ○ 10 (Complete confidence)

I can clearly explain how the governing body oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent.

- ○ 1 (No confidence)
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 (Moderate confidence)
- ○ 6
- ○ 7
- ○ 8
- ○ 9
- ○ 10 (Complete confidence)

Please read the following statements and tick the response that is most applicable to you.

	Click to write Column 1				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Regular training is essential to an effective Governing body.	○	○	○	○	○

	Click to write Column 1				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Governor training provides me with the necessary skills to be an effective governor.	○	○	○	○	○
The amount of governor training offered is good.	○	○	○	○	○
I have received good quality governor training.	○	○	○	○	○
I know the person who is responsible for monitoring governor training on my governing body.	○	○	○	○	○
In governor meetings, I actively participate in discussions.	○	○	○	○	○
In governor meetings, I feel my opinion is valued.	○	○	○	○	○

	Click to write Column 1				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In governor meetings, I can freely express my opinions.	○	○	○	○	○
A strong chairperson is essential.	○	○	○	○	○
There are systems in place to support new governor inductions (e.g. governor buddies).	○	○	○	○	○
I feel I had support during my induction year.	○	○	○	○	○
I have a good knowledge of school data.	○	○	○	○	○
I have a good knowledge of staff.	○	○	○	○	○
I have a good knowledge of children at the school.	○	○	○	○	○
I have good knowledge of the community my school serves.	○	○	○	○	○

	Click to write Column 1				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel equipped to ask probing questions.	○	○	○	○	○
I have a solid understanding of my roles and responsibilities.	○	○	○	○	○
My role as a link governor has been defined clearly.	○	○	○	○	○
I understand the role I play within Ofsted inspections.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel the time commitment is proportional to the responsibilities.	○	○	○	○	○

What training have you received in the last two years?

- ☐ Safeguarding
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Health and Safety
- ☐ Safer recruitment
- ☐ National education policy (e.g. curriculum, teaching and learning)
- ☐ Attainment and Progress

- [ ] Human Resources (HR)
- [ ] Ofsted
- [ ] Wellbeing
- [ ] Working with stakeholders
- [ ] Legal
- [ ] Other (please comment below)

Reflecting on the training that you have received, how helpful do you feel it was to your role as a governor? (Please select one of the options below and explain your choice in the comment box)

- ○ Extremely helpful because...
- ○ Somewhat helpful because...

○ Neither helpful nor unhelpful because...

○ Somewhat unhelpful because...

○ Extremely unhelpful because...

In your opinion, what training would help you become a more effective governor?

Do you feel that your role as a governor was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic?

- ○ Yes (go to Q13)
- ○ No (go to Q14)
- ○ Unsure (go to Q14)

Can you describe how the Covid-19 pandemic affected your role as a governor?

Please estimate the number of hours, on average, you have spent each week engaging in governor activities

- ○ Less than 1 hour
- ○ 1 - 2 hours
- ○ 3 - 6 hours
- ○ 7 - 10 hours
- ○ 11 - 15 hours
- ○ 16 - 20 hours
- ○ 20+ hours

Block 2

Age of respondent

- ○ 18 - 20
- ○ 21 - 25
- ○ 26 - 30
- ○ 31 - 35
- ○ 36 - 40
- ○ 41 - 45
- ○ 46 - 50
- ○ 50+

Highest level of education.

- ○ No formal qualification
- ○ GCSE/Equivalent
- ○ A Level/Equivalent
- ○ Degree (e.g. BA, BSc)
- ○ Masters degree
- ○ Doctoral degree
- ○ [ ] Other

Occupation

How long have you been a governor?

- ○ Less than a year
- ○ 1 - 2 years
- ○ 3 - 4 years
- ○ 4 - 5 years
- ○ 6 - 7 years
- ○ 8 - 9 years
- ○ [ ] 10+ years (please specify)

What phase of school are you a governor at?

- ○ Infant
- ○ Junior
- ○ Primary
- ○ Secondary
- ○ All phases (FS - Yr 13)
- ○ [ ] Other

What is your school's designation?

- ○ Mainstream
- ○ Special
- ○ [ ] Other

What type of school are you a governor at?

- ○ Community
- ○ Foundation
- ○ Voluntary
- ○ Academy
- ○ Grammar
- ○ Private
- ○ [ ] Other

Where is your school situated? (For reasons of confidentiality please restrict your response to area only, e.g. Birmingham).

[ ]

Would you be happy to discuss some of these issues in more depth? If you would be willing to participate in a short interview

to discuss the training needs of governors, please leave your name and email address here.

Name

Email Address

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Pilot Survey Feedback

1. I don't know if it's possible to do this but it could be good to differentiate the subheadings and other text on the coverage e.g. make the titles in bold and the other text not, or make the titles slightly bigger etc. I think this would just help to make it easier and quicker for participants to read (But I realise this may be a formatting issue with Survey Monkey).
2. The question ' will my info be made public' doesn't quite fit the with the answer. I agree with the bit where you say 'no' i.e. nothing will be shared with the public but the rest of that section seems to focus on anonymity rather than data sharing and their quite different. I think you do need to mention anonymity/confidentiality but I'm not sure re. anonymity how this will work as you ask twice for participants' names. This isn't necessarily a problem but the info isn't then going to be anonymous *to you*. However, you can assure people that it will be confidential which is fine (but v different to anonymity). I just think this needs ironing out. It's also worth considering why you need their names (twice) – if it's for follow up for interviews or further info etc, then that's fine. But otherwise, consider why you're asking for it. Once they have agreed to complete the survey, do you then need to know who they are? You might have a good reason for this but it's worth thinking through.
3. The sentence 'additionally….two-factor authentication…' could be confusing to a participant. It isn't clear who will be accessing it (although I know it is obviously you!). I'd perhaps just add 'The data held is extremely secure as it can only be accessed on campus or through the….'
4. You say that there is a participant information 'leaflet' – is there? Or do you mean this info page?
5. Is there a rationale for having an Open Question 1 rather than providing possible multiple choice responses and an 'Other' box?
6. Q2 has multiple elements (vision, ethos and strat direction). We tend to try and avoid this as it can be confusing and participants don't know which bit they are actually trying to respond to. Also (and this applies to other questions), to what extent do you want people to comment on 'how governors can clearly explain' things rather than how they actually feel/experience this stuff – I feel like thiere is a difference here but not sure…
7. Have you trialled this on a mobile phone – I completed on my laptop and it was OK. I know Qualtrics surveys are good and work well on phones so may be worth checking if same for Survey Monkey.

Appendix 4 - Interview

Letter Of Consent

Title of the proposed study

Primary school governor training: exploring the fitness for purpose of the content and mode of delivery in England

Description of the proposed study

As school governance has evolved, moving away from the initial concept of the ‘stake-holder’ model of governance, towards a skills-based model, it raises questions of whether or not a governing body can rely solely on governors who have been deemed to have the most appropriate skillset, or whether additional training would still be beneficial. In an attempt to answer this, we will explore the current provision for governor training, how serving governors assess their own training, how
Headteachers assess the training of governors through their performance within the role,

and what is the overall quality of governor training is perceived to be. Invitation to

participate and explanation of what participation entails

You are invited to participate in a research study interview on the training available/provided for members of school governing bodies. It is important that you take the time to read the information provided carefully before deciding whether to take part. Please feel free to contact the researcher on the provided e-mail if you have any questions or concerns.

Why have I been invited?

You have been chosen because you are a Headteacher or member of a governing body at a primary school.

Do I have to take part?

The choice will always remain with you as to whether you take part in the study. Should you wish to proceed, you will be asked to sign a consent form to indicate that you have agreed to take part. You will remain free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason, up to the 1st July 2022.

What will happen to me if I take part?

How long will I be involved in the research?

* Those selected for interview would be involved for no longer than a period of 1 hour.

What is expected of me as a participant?

* Participants will be selected for a one-to-one interview where the interviewer (Sarah Chung) will ask you to discuss your experiences of governance and training.

What happens if I withdraw from the study?

* At all times, the choice to participate remains with you. If you choose to participate but later withdraw from further participation in the study, all identifiable documents will be destroyed but any data collected will remain within the study.

What if there is a problem?

* If you are concerned at all, please feel free to contact the researcher, Sarah Chung on the following e-mail address: [redacted] or the research supervisor, Dr. Celia Greenway: [redacted] .

Use of equipment?

* During the interview, the researcher will use an audio recording device. These are used to help transcribe our interviews.

Will my information be made public?

* No – all results used within the study will be anonymised. All interview participants will be assigned a pseudonym. A key will be kept, allowing the researcher to identify participant data if required (e.g. if the respondent/participant withdraws).

Where will my information be stored?

* The information will remain stored with the University of Birmingham in the BEAR Research Data Store, for a period of 10 years after submission of the research. After this, all data will be disposed of using specialised file ‘shredding’ or ‘secure erase’. Access will be restricted to and controlled by the researcher. Additionally, all data can only be accessed on campus or through the two-factor authentication remote access service.

Results of the study

The results from this study will be used within a PhD thesis at the University of Birmingham. Interview participants are welcome to request a copy of the results, which will be released upon completion of the PhD. To request a copy, please contact the researcher, Sarah Chung, via [redacted] .

Who is funding the study?

The researcher is a recipient of the College of Social Sciences (CoSS) Scholarship Contact

details

PhD Researcher: Sarah Chung E-mail: [redacted]

Research supervisor: Dr. Celia Greenway E-mail: [redacted]

Fair Processing Statement

This information is being collected as part of a PhD thesis concerned with primary school governor training, by PhD researcher, Sarah Chung, who is based within the School of Education in the University of Birmingham. The information which you supply and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into BEAR Research Data Store and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research, and statistical and audit purposes. By supplying this information, you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by Sarah Chung in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018. No identifiable personal data will be published.

Statements of understanding/consent:

	Agreed
I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information leaflet for this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily.	○
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. If I withdraw my data will be removed from the study and will be destroyed.	○
I understand that my personal data will be processed for the purposes detailed above, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.	○
Based upon the above, I agree to take part in this study.	○

Confirmation of participation - name of participant and date.

Name of participant

Date

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Interview Schedule - Governors

Participant Name:		**Participant ID:**	
Date of Interview:			
Interviewer:	Sarah Chung		

Introduction

Firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I am currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance – during our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this. Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability and financial oversight expected within your role.

We will also discuss the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your role as a governor – how it has impacted participation, duties and training.

I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation you have signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of 6 months, with anonymised data destroyed after a period of 10 years. Should you wish a copy of the results, please e-mail [redacted] .

(For use only with interviews taking place on the University of Birmingham campus)

As a precaution, I would just like to take a moment to explain the fire evacuation procedure and explain where we congregate in the event of a fire.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Q 1. How long have you been a governor?

Q 2. What has been the most…

a. Enjoyable part of your governance?
    a. Why?
b. The least enjoyable part of your governance
    a. Why?

The NGA describe governors as being responsible for "Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction". The following questions will explore your understanding of vision, ethos, and strategic direction.

Q 3. In your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?

a. If it helps, think of it in terms of your own school.

Q 4. Using your own experience as a governor, can you explain how you shape your school's strategic direction?

a. Have you faced any difficulties or uncertainties whilst trying to set the strategic direction? Is there any training that would help?

Q 5. In your own words, can you describe what is meant by a school's ethos?

a. Can you tell me how you shape your school's ethos and how it was developed?
b. Are you happy with this ethos? Why?
c. Is there any further training that you feel would be of benefit to this aspect of governance?

Q 6. In your own words, can you describe what is meant by Vision?

a. Are you happy with this vision? Why?
b. Is there any training that would help?

Q 7. Can you explain a little about how your governing body oversees pupil performance?

a. How do you know pupils are performing as expected?
b. How comfortable are you with your understanding data presented to you?

Q 8. Do you feel able to challenge or raise questions when necessary?

a. Can you describe in your own words, a time that you have challenged? Do you feel the response received adequately resolved your concerns?
b. Can you describe in your own words, a time that you have felt uncomfortable challenging? Can you explain why? What could help you to challenge effectively?

Q 9. Another area of governance is holding the head-teacher to account for the management of staff. How confident are you in this area?

a. What methods are used to examine the head-teachers management of staff?
b. How do you ensure that you have the right staff?
c. What are the developmental and rewards arrangements in your setting?

Q 10. Could you explain the process involved in appointing a new head-teacher?

a. Do you feel confident in this process? Why?

Q 11. As well as setting the ethos and strategic direction of the school and also ensuring there is a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing, probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight of your school. How comfortable are you within this situation?

a. Can you explain how you as a governor ensure that the school budget is managed well?
b. Can you give examples of questions raised during financial meetings?
c. Can you think of a time where you (or another governor) challenged a financial decision?
    a. How was this received by the head-teacher/SLT?

Q 12. The eight elements of effective governance have been identified as essential to good governance. In your own words, can you explain what these mean to you:

a. The right people around the table.
b. Understanding the role and responsibilities.
c. Good chairing
d. Professional clerking.
e. Good relationships based on trust.
f. Knowing the school.

g. Asking challenging questions.
h. Having courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people.

Q 13. The line between strategic and operational can be seen as a grey area for some. How confident are you in knowing where governance ends and head-teacher/SLT responsibility begins?

a. For example, can you explain the roles played within the development and implementation of policies within your school?

Q 14. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been immense. Can you describe your experience of governance during this time?

a. For example, can you explain the impact of Covid-19 on your ability to govern effectively – e.g. how did the lack of governor visits impact your ability to monitor?
b. How did the GB communicate? Was it effective?
c. Did you feel that you were kept up to date by SLT?
d. Did governing in a pandemic highlight any areas that you felt under qualified/under trained for?

Q 15. If you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the U.K., what would it be and why do you think this is essential?

Q 16. Conversely, what is in your opinion, the least valuable piece of training for governors and why?

Q17. I'd like you to think back to your initial year of governance. Did you feel supported?

a. Did you have a mentor or 'governor buddy'? If so, what was the experience like?
b. What are your thoughts on mentors for governors, chairs of governors and clerks? Are they helpful? Should the mentor be from another governing body and not your own?

Q 18. The NGA have openly stated that they feel that induction training should be mandatory within the first year. In your own words can you explain whether you agree with this and why?

Q 19. If mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following:

a. Content – what should be included?
b. How should the training take place – for example currently most training is conducted within LEAs and in-house within schools. Would on-line training be beneficial?
c. What are your thoughts on a modulated course, delivered on-line and resulting in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year?

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you once again for your participation and offer you the opportunity to add anything you feel beneficial to the study.

Interview Schedule - Headteachers

Interview Schedule: School Governor Training (Headteachers)

Participant Name:		**Participant ID:**	
Date of Interview:			
Interviewer:	Sarah Chung		

Introduction

Firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I am currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance – during our interview, we will discuss whether the training your governors have received has helped them achieve this. Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that your governors have received appropriate training to help them address the strategic direction, accountability and financial oversight expected within their role.

We will also discuss the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the role of a governor – how it has impacted participation, duties and training.

I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation you have signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of 6 months, with anonymised data destroyed after a period of 10 years. Should you wish a copy of the results, please e-mail [redacted] .

(For use only with interviews taking place on the University of Birmingham campus)

As a precaution, I would just like to take a moment to explain the fire evacuation procedure and explain where we congregate in the event of a fire.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Q 1. How long have you been a Headteacher?

Q 2. What has been the most…

c. Enjoyable part of your role in relation to governance?
    a. Why?
d. The least enjoyable part of your role in relation to governance?
    a. Why?

Q 3. Do you feel that your GB understand the expectations around their role in your school's strategic direction?

b. Can you give any examples?
c. Have you faced any difficulties or uncertainties whilst trying to set the strategic direction with your GB?

Q 4. Can you tell me about your school's ethos and how it was developed with your GB?

d. Are you happy with this ethos? Why?
e. Is there any further training that you feel would be of benefit to this aspect of governance?

Q 5. Can you explain a little about how your governing body oversees pupil performance?

c. How do they know pupils are performing as expected?
d. How comfortable are they with their understanding data presented by you?
e. Do they feel able to challenge or raise questions when necessary?
    a. Can you describe in your own words, a time that you have been challenged effectively?
    b. Can you describe in your own words, a time that you have felt uncomfortable being challenged? Can you explain why?

Q 6. Another area of governance is holding the head-teacher to account for the management of staff. How confident are your GB in this area?

d. How do your GB ensure that you are held to account for your management decisions?

Q 7. As well as setting the ethos and strategic direction of the school whilst also ensuring there is a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing, probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight of your school. How confident are you that your governors can achieve this?

d. Can you explain how you as a Headteacher ensure that the school budget is shared with the GB?
e. Can you give examples of questions raised during financial meetings?
f. Can you think of a time where you were challenged on a financial decision?
    a. Was the challenge appropriate?
    b. Did the challenge show an understanding of the school's situation?

Q 8. The eight elements of effective governance have been identified as essential to good governance. In your own words, can you explain what these mean to you:

i. The right people around the table.
j. Understanding the role and responsibilities.
k. Good chairing
l. Professional clerking.
m. Good relationships based on trust.
n. Knowing the school.
o. Asking challenging questions.
p. Having courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people.

Q 9. The line between strategic and operational can be seen as a grey area for some. How confident are you in knowing where governance ends and head-teacher/SLT responsibility begins?

b. For example, can you explain the roles played within the development and implementation of policies within your school?

Q 10. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been immense. Can you describe your experience of governance in 2020?

e. For example, can you explain the impact of Covid-19 on your governors' ability to govern effectively?
f. How did the GB communicate? Was it effective?
g. Did the GB offer support/critical friendship throughout the pandemic?
h. What role do you feel that the GB should have played in the pandemic?
i. Did governing in a pandemic highlight any areas that you felt your governors were under qualified/under trained for?

Q 11. If you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the U.K., what would it be and why do you think this is essential?

Q 12. Conversely, what is in your opinion, the least valuable piece of training for governors and why?

Q13. I'd like you to think back over your time as a Headteacher. Did you feel supported by your GBs?

c. Can you give an example of supportive/unsupportive GBs?

Q 14. The NGA have openly stated that they feel that induction training should be mandatory within the first year. In your own words can you explain whether you agree with this and why?

Q 15. If mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following:

d. Content – what should be included?
e. How should the training take place – for example currently most training is conducted within LEAs and in-house within schools. Would on-line training be beneficial?
f. What are your thoughts on a modulated course, delivered on-line and resulting in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year?

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you once again for your participation and offer you the opportunity to add anything you feel beneficial to the study.

Appendix 5 - Data Analysis

SPSS Coding Example

```
* Encoding: UTF-8.

*Q1 Why become a governor?

FREQUENCIES Q1

CODEBOOK Q1

RECODE Q1 (SYSMIS=0)

RECODE Q1 (0=1)  (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) INTO Whybecamegovernor

VALUE LABELS Whybecamegovernor 1"Unknown" 2"Support my child(s) school" 3"Support my community" 4"Career Development" 5"Other"

FREQUENCIES Whybecamegovernor

*question 2 Vision

FREQUENCIES Q2

CODEBOOK Q2

Recode Q2 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q2

CODEBOOK Q2

RECODE Q2 (0=1)  (1=2) (2 3 4=3) (5=4) (6 7 8=5) (9 10=6) INTO Vision

FREQUENCIES Vision

VALUE LABELS Vision 1"Unknown" 2"No confidence" 3"Low confidence" 4"Moderate Confidence" 5"Confident" 6"Complete Confidence"

FREQUENCIES Vision

*Q3

FREQUENCIES Q3

CODEBOOK Q3

Recode Q3 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q3

CODEBOOK Q3

RECODE Q3 (0=1)  (1=2) (2 3 4=3) (5=4) (6 7 8=5) (9 10=6) INTO Ethos

FREQUENCIES Ethos

VALUE LABELS Ethos 1"Unknown" 2"No confidence" 3"Low confidence" 4"Moderate Confidence" 5"Confident" 6"Complete Confidence"

FREQUENCIES Ethos

*Q4

FREQUENCIES Q4

CODEBOOK Q4

Recode Q4 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q4

CODEBOOK Q4

RECODE Q4 (0=1)  (1=2) (2 3 4=3) (5=4) (6 7 8=5) (9 10=6) INTO Strategic
```

FREQUENCIES Strategic

VALUE LABELS Strategic 1"Unknown" 2"No confidence" 3"Low confidence" 4"Moderate Confidence" 5"Confident" 6"Complete Confidence"

FREQUENCIES Strategic

*Q5

FREQUENCIES Q5

CODEBOOK Q5

Recode Q5 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q5

CODEBOOK Q5

RECODE Q5 (0=1) (1=2) (2 3 4=3) (5=4) (6 7 8=5) (9 10=6) INTO Accountabilityeducationalperformance

FREQUENCIES Accountabilityeducationalperformance

VALUE LABELS Accountabilityeducationalperformance 1"Unknown" 2"No confidence" 3"Low confidence" 4"Moderate Confidence" 5"Confident" 6"Complete Confidence"

FREQUENCIES Accountabilityeducationalperformance

*Q6

FREQUENCIES Q6

CODEBOOK Q6

Recode Q6 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q6

CODEBOOK Q6

RECODE Q6 (0=1) (1=2) (2 3 4=3) (5=4) (6 7 8=5) (9 10=6) INTO Accountabilitymanagementstaff

FREQUENCIES Accountabilitymanagementstaff

VALUE LABELS Accountabilitymanagementstaff 1"Unknown" 2"No confidence" 3"Low confidence" 4"Moderate Confidence" 5"Confident" 6"Complete Confidence"

FREQUENCIES Accountabilitymanagementstaff

*Q7

FREQUENCIES Q7

CODEBOOK Q7

Recode Q7 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q7

CODEBOOK Q7

RECODE Q7 (0=1) (1=2) (2 3 4=3) (5=4) (6 7 8=5) (9 10=6) INTO Accountabilityfinances

FREQUENCIES Accountabilityfinances

VALUE LABELS Accountabilityfinances 1"Unknown" 2"No confidence" 3"Low confidence" 4"Moderate Confidence" 5"Confident" 6"Complete Confidence"

FREQUENCIES Accountabilityfinances

*Q8

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_1

CODEBOOK Q8_1_1

RECODE Q8_1_1 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_1

RECODE Q8_1_1 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) INTO Regulartrainingessential

FREQUENCIES Regulartrainingessential

VALUE LABELS Regulartrainingessential 1"Unknown" 2"Strongly Agree" 3"Agree" 4"Neither Agree nor Disagree" 5"Disagree" 6"Strongly Disagree"

FREQUENCIES Regulartrainingessential

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_2

CODEBOOK Q8_1_2

RECODE Q8_1_2 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_2

RECODE Q8_1_2 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) INTO Necessaryskills

FREQUENCIES Necessaryskills

VALUE LABELS Necessaryskills 1"Unknown" 2"Strongly Agree" 3"Agree" 4"Neither Agree nor Disagree" 5"Disagree" 6"Strongly Disagree"

FREQUENCIES Necessaryskills

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_3

CODEBOOK Q8_1_3

RECODE Q8_1_3 (SYSMIS=-0)

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_3

RECODE Q8_1_3 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) INTO Amountofgovernortraining

FREQUENCIES Amountofgovernortraining

VALUE LABELS Amountofgovernortraining 1"Unknown" 2"Strongly Agree" 3"Agree" 4"Neither Agree nor Disagree" 5"Disagree" 6"Strongly Disagree"

FREQUENCIES Amountofgovernortraining

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_4

CODEBOOK Q8_1_4

RECODE Q8_1_4 (SYSMIS=-1)

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_4

RECODE Q8_1_4 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) INTO Qualityoftraining

FREQUENCIES Qualityoftraining

VALUE LABELS Qualityoftraining 1"Unknown" 2"Strongly Agree" 3"Agree" 4"Neither Agree nor Disagree" 5"Disagree" 6"Strongly Disagree"

FREQUENCIES Qualityoftraining

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_5

CODEBOOK Q8_1_5

RECODE Q8_1_5 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_5

RECODE Q8_1_5 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) INTO Monitoringtraining

FREQUENCIES Monitoringtraining

VALUE LABELS Monitoringtraining 1"Unknown" 2"Strongly Agree" 3"Agree" 4"Neither Agree nor Disagree" 5"Disagree" 6"Strongly Disagree"

FREQUENCIES Monitoringtraining

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_6

CODEBOOK Q8_1_6

RECODE Q8_1_6 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_6

RECODE Q8_1_6 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) INTO Activelyparticipate

FREQUENCIES Activelyparticipate

VALUE LABELS Activelyparticipate 1"Unknown" 2"Strongly Agree" 3"Agree" 4"Neither Agree nor Disagree" 5"Disagree" 6"Strongly Disagree"

FREQUENCIES Activelyparticipate

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_7

CODEBOOK Q8_1_7

RECODE Q8_1_7 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_7

RECODE Q8_1_7 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) INTO Opinionvalued

FREQUENCIES Opinionvalued

VALUE LABELS Opinionvalued 1"Unknown" 2"Strongly Agree" 3"Agree" 4"Neither Agree nor Disagree" 5"Disagree" 6"Strongly Disagree"

FREQUENCIES Opinionvalued

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_8

CODEBOOK Q8_1_8

RECODE Q8_1_8 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_8

RECODE Q8_1_8 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) INTO Expressopinions

FREQUENCIES Expressopinions

VALUE LABELS Expressopinions 1"Unknown" 2"Strongly Agree" 3"Agree" 4"Neither Agree nor Disagree" 5"Disagree" 6"Strongly Disagree"

FREQUENCIES Expressopinions

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_9

CODEBOOK Q8_1_9

RECODE Q8_1_9 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_9

RECODE Q8_1_9 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) INTO Strongchair

FREQUENCIES Strongchair

VALUE LABELS Strongchair 1"Unknown" 2"Strongly Agree" 3"Agree" 4"Neither Agree nor Disagree" 5"Disagree" 6"Strongly Disagree"

FREQUENCIES Strongchair

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_10

CODEBOOK Q8_1_10

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FREQUENCIES Q8_1_10

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FREQUENCIES Supportinductions

VALUE LABELS Supportinductions 1"Unknown" 2"Strongly Agree" 3"Agree" 4"Neither Agree nor Disagree" 5"Disagree" 6"Strongly Disagree"

FREQUENCIES Supportinductions

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_11

CODEBOOK Q8_1_11

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FREQUENCIES Q8_1_11

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FREQUENCIES Supportinductionsind

VALUE LABELS Supportinductionsind 1"Unknown" 2"Strongly Agree" 3"Agree" 4"Neither Agree nor Disagree" 5"Disagree" 6"Strongly Disagree"

FREQUENCIES Supportinductionsind

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_12

CODEBOOK Q8_1_12

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FREQUENCIES Q8_1_12

RECODE Q8_1_12 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) INTO Knowledgeschooldata

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FREQUENCIES Knowledgeschooldata

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_13

CODEBOOK Q8_1_13

RECODE Q8_1_13 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_13

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FREQUENCIES Knowledgestaff

VALUE LABELS Knowledgestaff 1"Unknown" 2"Strongly Agree" 3"Agree" 4"Neither Agree nor Disagree" 5"Disagree" 6"Strongly Disagree"

FREQUENCIES Knowledgestaff

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_14

CODEBOOK Q8_1_14

RECODE Q8_1_14 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_14

RECODE Q8_1_14 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) INTO Knowledgechildren

FREQUENCIES Knowledgechildren

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FREQUENCIES Knowledgechildren

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_15

CODEBOOK Q8_1_15

RECODE Q8_1_15 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_15

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FREQUENCIES Knowledgecommunity

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_16

CODEBOOK Q8_1_16

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FREQUENCIES Q8_1_16

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FREQUENCIES Probingquestions

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_17

CODEBOOK Q8_1_17

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FREQUENCIES Q8_1_17

RECODE Q8_1_17 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) INTO Understandingrolesandresponsibilities

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FREQUENCIES Understandingrolesandresponsibilities

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_18

CODEBOOK Q8_1_18

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FREQUENCIES Q8_1_18

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FREQUENCIES Definedlinkrole

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FREQUENCIES Definedlinkrole

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_19

CODEBOOK Q8_1_19

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FREQUENCIES Q8_1_19

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FREQUENCIES Ofstedinspections

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FREQUENCIES Ofstedinspections

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_20

CODEBOOK Q8_1_20

RECODE Q8_1_20 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q8_1_20

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FREQUENCIES Timecommitment

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FREQUENCIES Timecommitment

*Q9

FREQUENCIES Q9_1 Q9_2 Q9_3 Q9_4 Q9_5 Q9_6 Q9_7 Q9_8 Q9_9 Q9_10 Q9_11 Q9_12

CODEBOOK Q9_1 Q9_2 Q9_3 Q9_4 Q9_5 Q9_6 Q9_7 Q9_8 Q9_9 Q9_10 Q9_11 Q9_12

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RECODE Q9_12 (SYSMIS=0)

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IF Q9_2=1 Training=2

IF Q9_3=1 Training=3

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IF Q9_5=1 Training=5

IF Q9_6=1 Training=6

IF Q9_7=1 Training=7

IF Q9_8=1 Training=8

IF Q9_9=1 Training=9

IF Q9_10=1 Training=10

IF Q9_11=1 Training=11

IF Q9_12=1 Training=12

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ADD VALUE LABELS Training 1 'Safeguarding'

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ADD VALUE LABELS Training 2 'Finance'
ADD VALUE LABELS Training 3 'Healthandsafety'
ADD VALUE LABELS Training 4 'Safer Recruitment'
ADD VALUE LABELS Training 5 'Nationaleducationpolicy'
ADD VALUE LABELS Training 6 'Attainmentandprogress'
ADD VALUE LABELS Training 7 'HR'
ADD VALUE LABELS Training 8 'Ofsted'
ADD VALUE LABELS Training 9'Wellbeing'
ADD VALUE LABELS Training 10'Workingwithstakeholders'
ADD VALUE LABELS Training 11'Legal'
ADD VALUE LABELS Training 12'Other'
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FREQUENCIES Training
RECODE Training (SYSMIS=(SYSMIS=0))

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RECODE Q9_7 (SYSMIS=0)
RECODE Q9_8 (SYSMIS=0)
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IF Q9_11=1 Training=11
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IF Q9_12=1 Training=12

ADD VALUE LABELS Training 1 'Safeguarding'

ADD VALUE LABELS Training 2 'Finance'

ADD VALUE LABELS Training 3 'Healthandsafety'

ADD VALUE LABELS Training 4 'Safer Recruitment'

ADD VALUE LABELS Training 5 'Nationaleducationpolicy'

ADD VALUE LABELS Training 6 'Attainmentandprogress'

ADD VALUE LABELS Training 7 'HR'

ADD VALUE LABELS Training 8 'Ofsted'

ADD VALUE LABELS Training 9'Wellbeing'

ADD VALUE LABELS Training 10'Workingwithstakeholders'

ADD VALUE LABELS Training 11'Legal'

ADD VALUE LABELS Training 12'Other'

FREQUENCIES Training

FREQUENCIES Safeguarding

IF Safeguarding=1 Training=1

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IF Healthandsafety=1 Training=3

IF Saferrecruitment=1 Training=4

IF Nationaledpolicy=1 Training=5

IF Attainmentandprogress=1 Training=6

IF HR=1 Training=7

IF Ofsted=1 Training=8

IF Wellbeing=1 Training=9

IF Workingwithstakeholders=1 Training=10

IF Legal=1 Training=11

IF Other=1 Training=12

FREQUENCIES Training

IF Q9_1=1 Training=1

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IF Q9_3=1 Training=3

IF Q9_4=1 Training=4

IF Q9_5=1 Training=5

IF Q9_6=1 Training=6

IF Q9_7=1 Training=7

IF Q9_8=1 Training=8

IF Q9_9=1 Training=9

IF Q9_10=1 Training=10

IF Q9_11=1 Training=11

IF Q9_12=1 Training=12

FREQUENCIES Training

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RECODE Q9_2 (SYSMIS=0)

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RECODE Q9_9 (SYSMIS=0)

RECODE Q9_10 (SYSMIS=0)

RECODE Q9_11 (SYSMIS=0)

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*Q10

FREQUENCIES Q10

CODEBOOK Q10

RECODE Q10 (SYSMIS=0)

FREQUENCIES Q10

RECODE Q10 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) INTO Helpfulnessoftraining

FREQUENCIES Helpfulnessoftraining

VALUE LABELS Helpfulnessoftraining 1"Unknown" 2"Extremely Helpful" 3"Somewhat Helpful" 4"Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful" 5"Somewhat Unhelpful" 6"Extremely Unhelpful"

FREQUENCIES Q10_1_TEXT

FREQUENCIES Q10_2_TEXT

FREQUENCIES Q10_3_TEXT

FREQUENCIES Q10_4_TEXT

FREQUENCIES Q10_5_TEXT

*Q11

FREQUENCIES Q11

CODEBOOK Q11

*Q12

FREQUENCIES Q12

CODEBOOK Q12

RECODE Q12 (SYSMIS=0)

RECODE Q12 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) INTO Impactofcovid19

FREQUENCIES Impactofcovid19

VALUE LABELS Impactofcovid19 1"Unknown" 2"Yes" 3"No" 4"Unsure"

FREQUENCIES Impactofcovid19

*Q14

FREQUENCIES Q14

CODEBOOK Q14

RECODE Q14 (SYSMIS=0)

RECODE Q14 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) (6=7) (7=8) INTO Hours

FREQUENCIES Hours

VALUE LABELS Hours 1"Unknown" 2"Less than 1 hour" 3"1 - 2" 4"3 - 6" 5"7 - 10" 6"11 - 15" 7"16 - 20" 8"20+"

*Q15

FREQUENCIES Q15

CODEBOOK Q15

RECODE Q15 (SYSMIS=0)

RECODE Q15 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) (6=7) (7=8) (8=9) INTO Age

FREQUENCIES Age

VALUE LABELS Age 1"Unknown" 2"18 - 20" 3"21 - 25" 4"26 - 30" 5"31 - 35" 6"36 - 40" 7"41 - 45" 8"46 - 50" 9"50+"

FREQUENCIES Age

*Q16

FREQUENCIES Q16

CODEBOOK Q16

RECODE Q16 (SYSMIS=0)

RECODE Q16 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) (6=7) (7=8) INTO Education

FREQUENCIES Education

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FREQUENCIES Education

*Q18

FREQUENCIES Q18

CODEBOOK Q18

RECODE Q18 (SYSMIS=0)

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FREQUENCIES Lengthasgovernor

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FREQUENCIES Lengthasgovernor

*Q19

FREQUENCIES Q19

CODEBOOK Q19

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FREQUENCIES Phase

VALUE LABELS Phase 1"Unknown" 2"Infant" 3"Junior" 4"Primary" 5"Secondary" 6"All Phases (FS - Yr13)" 7"Other"

FREQUENCIES Phase

*Q20

FREQUENCIES Q20

CODEBOOK Q20

RECODE Q20 (SYSMIS=0)

RECODE Q20 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) INTO Schooldesignation

FREQUENCIES Schooldesignation

VALUE LABELS Schooldesignation 1"Unknown" 2"Mainstream" 3"Special" 4"Other"

FREQUENCIES Schooldesignation

*Q21

FREQUENCIES Q21

CODEBOOK Q21

RECODE Q21 (SYSMIS=0)

RECODE Q21 (0=1) (1=2) (2=3) (3=4) (4=5) (5=6) (6= 7) (7=8) INTO Schooltype

FREQUENCIES Schooltype

VALUE LABELS Schooltype 1"Unknown" 2"Community" 3"Foundation" 4"Voluntary" 5"Academy" 6"Grammar" 7"Private"
8"Other"

FREQUENCIES Schooltype

*Q22

FREQUENCIES Q22

*Q23

FREQUENCIES Q23_1

FREQUENCIES Q23_2

*Crosstabs

CROSSTABS
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   /CELLS=COUNT COLUMN

CROSSTABS
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   /CELLS=COUNT COLUMN

CROSSTABS
   /TABLES=Helpfulnessoftraining BY Vision
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CROSSTABS
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  /BARCHART.

CROSSTABS
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CROSSTABS
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  /CELLS=COUNT
  /COUNT ROUND CELL
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MEANS Age

FREQUENCIES Hours Timecommitment

FREQUENCIES

CROSSTABS Hours by Lengthasgovernor


CROSSTABS
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  /CELLS=COUNT
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  /CELLS=COUNT
  /COUNT ROUND CELL
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Interview Transcripts

Elizabeth

Ava

Charlie

Andrew

Emilia

Noah

Peter

Georgia

Ewan

Libby

Morgan

Ronan

Jessie

Sara

Luca

Louis

Zoe

SLT

Bob

Sarah Chung: 00:00	Okay. So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in the study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance during our interview. We will discuss whether the training your graduates have received has helped them to achieve this.
00:30	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel your governance have received appropriate training to help them address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within their role. We will also discuss the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on your governance and how it has impacted participation, duties, and training.
00:55	I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation that you've signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years.
01:19	And should you wish a copy of the results, then please do feel free to email me atchungs.uk. Do you have any questions before we begin?
Bob: 01:34	No, that's fine. Thank you.
Sarah Chung: 01:36	Wonderful. Thank you. It's always difficult reading those things back, even though I've written it. So should we jump in with a sort of easier question? How long have you been a head teacher?
Bob: 01:48	I've been a head teacher since January 2001, so almost 22 years.
Sarah Chung: 01:55	Wow. Okay. That's quite a long time. Are you enjoying it then?
Bob: 02:00	Yes. I've done several headships.
Sarah Chung: 02:02	Yeah. Okay. Lovely. So what has been the most enjoyable aspect then of your role in relation to governance?
Bob: 02:13	Yeah. Enjoyable.
02:19	As the senior leader in the school, being able to influence and steer a governing body in order to affect the changes that you need to happen in your school to improve outcomes is the kind of satisfaction you get with being a head teacher and governance. Erm, you know some people will say that governors get in the way.

02:49	Erm I fully understand the need for good governance and the reason why we have governance. And when you look at all the examples of schools that have failed, of even multi-academy trust that have failed, it's normally due to bad governance. And Ofsted, there was an analysis in Schools Week a couple of weeks ago where the Ofsted reports, if something goes wrong in Ofsted, they often blame governance.
03:19	Whereas if the Ofsted goes well, there's often only just one line about governance. So it is a key feature, and it's my responsibility to head teacher to ensure that my governors are challenging me effectively in order to improve those outcomes.
Sarah Chung: 03:36	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now then, reflecting on possibly the least enjoyable aspect of your role in relation to governance.
Bob: 03:46	It's the monotonous documents that you have to produce for governance. So you're almost not doing it for your school and to improve outcomes. You're literally doing it to tick a box for governors. And you might spend hours and hours analyzing data and providing a fantastic analysis of your data, and you give it to the governors. And there's two things here.
04:14	There is the frustration that some of them don't read it. And you go into meetings and think, "Why did I bother?" Because they haven't even bothered reading it. And then the other one is where they throw so many curveball questions at you that are not particularly relevant, but they think they need to do that because that's what they perceive as being challenge.
Sarah Chung: 04:36	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So do you feel that your governing body understands generally the expectations around the role in your school's strategic direction, for example?
Bob: 04:50	Yes. The answer would be yes as a corporate body, but that varies amongst the governing body itself. So the school I'm at at the moment, which is the maintained Church of England voluntary controlled school. So it's local authority-led. It has 12 governors, which includes myself.
05:17	And there's probably about four of those that are effective governors. And many of the others just turn up. One of them and I've been in this particular school since September, and one of them I've not seen yet.
Sarah Chung: 05:34	Oh, okay.
Bob: 05:36	I know. So it's kind of although I feel that they are providing reasonable governance, it's very varied within that governing body.
05:51	Okay. And have they made contact with you, or are they just not there or?
Bob: 05:56	Oh, the one that hasn't turned up.

Sarah Chung: 05:58	Yeah.
Bob: 05:59	Nobody can get hold of him.
Sarah Chung: 06:01	Oh, okay.
Bob: 06:02	He's on our governing body, and he's listed on GIS, but he's not turned up to any meetings. And every meeting is he hasn't sent apologies. Can anybody get hold of him? No. So he will have to come off at some stage soon.
Sarah Chung: 06:17	Okay. And who's going to deal with that?
Bob: 06:20	That'll be the clerk that deals with that.
Sarah Chung: 06:22	Okay. Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So with your strategic direction, how involved are the governors in setting it?
Bob: 06:32	That's an interesting one. Not particularly. You know I'm the professional. I'm the one who knows what the school needs. I think there is a difference, isn't there in terms of where a head teacher is on their journey as well?
Sarah Chung: 06:50	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 06:50	Because if I was a new head teacher and this was my first governing body, I would be very much probably led a little bit by the governors. But as I'm an experienced head teacher, and they appreciate that, and they know I'm the one in school day-to-day, and so I know what it is the school needs to improve. So I've set the five strategic priorities of the school and shared it with them. And they've asked me questions about it.
07:21	And they monitor that strategic plan through the school development plan. But it's very much led by myself and my other senior leaders in school.
Sarah Chung: 07:30	Okay. Lovely. So as you've set the strategic direction, have you faced any difficulties from the governors? Have they raised any issues with you, or were there any problems around that?
Bob: 07:48	No.
07:52	My difficulty with it is almost getting them to engage with it. So you'll know that some governing bodies allocate members of the board to different subjects. Some allocate it to key stages. Some don't use that model at all, and they just work as a body.
08:18	But what I was trying to get them to do was to allocate a person or two people, in some cases, to one of the strategic priorities so that, you know for instance, phonics and early reading is one of the priorities. And I wanted a couple of governors to be focusing on that. And I'm executive head over the two schools. So it's one governing body, but there are two schools.

08:43	So effectively, we're having two governors' meetings when we have one. And in the juniors, English is one of their key priorities. So we wanted these governors to be able to look at both schools and look at those priorities. So I set that up. They're not fully engaged with it. They're not really challenging. I'm the one who has to say, "Please, would you come and look at this?
09:11	I want to show you so that when we get to our next meeting, you'll understand what I'm talking about.".
Sarah Chung: 09:17	Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. And do you think that engagement is a lack of understanding on their part or...
Bob: 09:30	These people are busy people. This is the problem. Governors are all volunteers, and you've either got the governor who is a retired person who just likes to do it because they're retired.
09:44	And they often are the ones that have the most time. Then you've got the governors that are very, very busy people working, but they feel a commitment to the school or they feel a civic duty to be a governor. In some cases, it's related to their work so that they might be encouraged by their work to become a school governor. And so they're very busy people. It's hard to pin them down.
10:11	It's hard for them to come into school during school time. And then, of course, you've got the often parent governors who might not be working. So they can give a lot of time to school, but they are parents, and you have to be a little bit careful with parents. The confidentiality is sometimes an issue, and it's not about them going and telling all their mates what's been going on in governing body meetings.
10:42	It's more that they have that view. And you just have to be really careful that when they're in school looking at things, they are looking at the right things and not kind of overstepping their mark in terms of their line between being a governor, which is kind of a representative of parents rather than representing parents. It's not their role.
11:12	And sometimes that is very, very difficult to distinguish between.
Sarah Chung: 11:16	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So can you tell me a little bit now about your school's ethos and how that was developed and in what way your governing body helped or supported that?
Bob: 11:29	Yeah. So the school I'm in at the moment is a Church of England School. And I'm going to talk about the infant school because I've had a lot more to do with that one than the juniors at the moment, simply because the infants are due an Ofsted.
11:44	They're an outstanding school from 2013. When I got there in September, they were hitting some inadequate marks. I think we are a strong RI if that's the right. We're on the border between RI and good at the moment. And give me a few more

	months, please. But as a Church of England School, it has a Christian ethos.
12:12	And we have been trying to kind of refine it slightly and look at strap lines, look at what we actually stand for. And what I've found is that we haven't changed a lot in the schools from what it was before. But there are particular words like resilience, community, love, friendship that are on big boards around the school to represent the school values.
12:42	But there are too many of them. So we kind of slimmed it down to three, community, love, and resilience. And we're trying to kind of promote those. And we haven't yet taken down the other ones off the wall. But we're trying to keep it down because we're talking about infant children. We're talking about four to seven-year-olds who, if we're going to be talking that kind of language about what we stand for and what the school is about, and the ethos of the school, it needs to be in child-friendly language.
13:17	So we're trying to do that a lot. But we have a governor who was involved in that in the discussions, and we work with staff and with pupils. We have a school council. But the governing body as a whole hasn't particularly been very proactive in it. And it's partly to do with the rush of trying to move a school from a difficult position to a more stable one.
13:47	The governors have a term for governing body meeting, and then they have a termly resources committee and a termly data and pupil committee. So we only really meet three times a year as a full board, yeah although I will meet with the chair more regularly. Quite often, she comes in every two weeks or something, or I see her at other things.
14:12	So we're in contact, but I am driving that school forward at quite a rapid rate at the moment. And I'm almost bringing governors with me rather than governors setting strategic direction. Rather than governors telling me what to do, I'm the expert, and I'm moving the school forward.
Sarah Chung: 14:31	Okay. Okay. So I mean, obviously, in the situation you're in, you're in that cusp of RI and good, you were saying.
14:41	But if, if we were a little bit further along, and that wasn't a concern. Do you think there's training that would support your governors in helping you set...?
Bob: 14:50	Yeah. Yeah. Definitely. And this is another thing. You encourage governors to go on training courses, and these are provided by various organizations, including the school itself. So start with safeguarding.
15:10	You know We, as in myself and the DSL, run the safeguarding training in September that all staff have to attend, and we invite all the governors because if they do that, that's their refresher training for the year. And out of the 12 governors, I know I'm included in that and certain staff members, but only two of them came. So the others, therefore, had to do online training.

15:39 And we use Educare with the TS Educare for our courses for lots of things. So they had to do that. And actually, my business manager was chasing and chasing and chasing for ages before she got them all kind of signed off and done that refresher training. Now, that's statutory. That's mandatory. And it's really difficult to get them to do it. And then there's the prevent training every two years, which they should do.

16:09 And I know some of those are behind that. So getting them to do online courses is a challenge. The local authority runs some training. At the moment, it's okay because they are kind of doing it for their schools. Diocese run training as well. But when the schools become join a multi-commit trust, which is the journey that they're on at the moment, a lot of the training that local authority offers is not relevant to schools and trusts.

16:40 So you have to be a little bit careful. And then, of course, you've got the National Governance Association providing training and webinars and things. You've got CST for [redacted] Academy Trust. So there's lots of training and opportunities out there. And when we have a meeting, we ask the governors, "What training have you done?" And the clerk is supposed to collate all that training and make sure it's all there. And quite often, nobody's done any training you know since the last meeting.

17:12 And it's a shame. But on the other hand, I am also a Trustee in a Multi Academy Trust. I was a governor in my daughter's school many years ago. She left. The school then became an academy. I then became a trustee. And I've been on that board for about 12 years now. And as a head teacher, I do a lot of training. So I can use that as part of my Trustee work. So all my safeguarding training is through my employment rather than having to do it as a trustee.

17:45 But I'll also do some other things. Like We were asked to do some erm I can't remember what it was. It was to do with safeguarding. And I did that as part of my work as a trustee. But of course, I could use that in school as well and elsewhere. But yeah, it's really difficult getting governors to engage in training. Sometimes the most effective way is to do it within a meeting.

18:09 So you know if we want to look at data, for instance, and we know that our governors don't really understand the data, they don't really get the difference between working towards, expected, greater depth and how we assess that and how we do it. So we might run a 20-minute training session for them on, "This is what data looks like. This is how schools manage data." These are the types of questions that governors should be asking to give them that kind of input at the beginning of a meeting or something.

18:44 And then when they actually look at the school's data, they should have that to be able to do it. And I often find that the most effective way of giving them training, bespoke for the school that they need.

Sarah Chung: 18:58	Okay. So that bespoke aspect is quite important for you then?
Bob: 19:02	It is. It's the most effective way of doing it. None of us particularly likes sitting there for an hour watching a webinar because you get distracted by the things.
19:12	Whereas if you're not in a meeting and it's focused on something that those particular governors need to have in order to fulfill their role, that's the most effective training. But I am aware that in some schools, that could create a failure of governance. Because if the school itself is doing the training, you know they can miss things that's important for governors.
19:39	So it shouldn't be the only method of training that governors get. It's effective in my school, and it's effective at that kind of level. But from what I'm doing in my research and everything else, I absolutely understand that there could be a significant failure of governance if we're not careful.
Sarah Chung: 20:00	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. That's kind of brought us nicely onto the next question. So it was asking, basically, if you could explain a little bit about how your governing body oversees pupil performance.
20:13	So I know you've mentioned there that they don't really understand the data.
Bob: 20:19	Yes. So we have a it's called the Data and Learning Committee. And the chair, who is quite proactive, she's a national leader of governance, brought in by the local authority about two years ago because the governing body were not effective.
20:40	So she often works with the clerk to set the agenda and then runs it past me, and I've got two heads of school, one in each school. And we kind of look at the agenda, and I say, "Well, that's not really appropriate for this time of year. It's no good looking at that because we haven't got the data yet," etc. But you should be looking at attendance. You should be looking at progress of particular groups of children and things like that.
21:06	So we will adapt the agenda with the chair to make sure that we are looking at the right things. And then my heads of school and myself produce the kind of documents. They're always there seven days before the meeting to give them an opportunity to look at the data. And my chair will quite rightly remind them when it goes out.
21:35	Please email any questions in that you would like discussed in the meeting because often a question will require more data. You know It's not a matter of just answering a question in a meeting. If we're looking at if we've broken it down by SEN and we've broken it down by disadvantage, they might say, "What about the children who are both disadvantaged and SEN?" And it's no good throwing that question in a meeting if they want an answer.

22:02	You know If we've got a couple of days' notice, we can normally run that off and provide that as well. So it is very much steered by myself and the chair in terms of what the governors are looking at. And you know if you think about how schools are measured, not through Ofsted terms, but they're measured on outcomes at the end of key stage.
22:27	So we're looking at the end of key stage one, we're looking at the end of key stage two, and the end of key stage one figures are coming out so much better for the end of this academic year than they did last year. And we're kind of sharing that with the governors and saying, "Look, phonics last year was 60%. Phonics this year at year one will be 88%, we think. And this is what we've done. And then they can ask questions around why the difference. You know, what is it that you've done?
22:58	And we'll explain about fidelity to the scheme. We'll explain about monitoring and staff training. And yeah. So it's about kind of providing the data to them so that we know that they can challenge. Now, in the back of my mind, I've got Ofsted, and I know Ofsted will look at governing body minutes, and they will look to see whether the governors are challenging the senior leaders in school.
23:28	So I have to make sure that the right questions are being asked in the meetings and being recorded. And I often say to the chair, "Please write that one down," or, "Please highlight that as a challenge type thing." So that you know I am managing the process of getting the challenge and ensuring that the right questions are being asked, I can then prove to Ofsted that my governing body are challenging.
Sarah Chung: 23:57	Yeah. Okay. So that seems then you've got the underlying support there with running the sort of 20-minute mini trainings, but you've also got the strong structure with a very experienced chair of committee and an experienced head guiding things.
Bob: 24:20	Yes. Yes.
Sarah Chung: 24:21	Lovely. Thank you.
24:23	So can you describe a time that you were challenged erm effectively?
Bob: 24:39	Gosh. I suppose we were looking at I can think of one where we were looking at attendance.
24:57	And the attendance figures were reasonable. You know post-COVID, you'd expect it to be better, but it isn't actually. And we found nationally that it's lower. And the question was around why the attendance wasn't very high, wasn't back to normal rates.
25:27	And we had to kind of explain that you know there are lots of other illnesses that children are having at the moment. There's the strep and the chickenpox that had really affected the

	people's attendance. And then they were challenging as to whether we were actually doing all we could to ensure that children were in school. So we then had discussions around homeschooling workers.
25:57	We had discussions around the attendance officer, discussions around fining parents. So it opened up a lot of other areas around attendance, which I wasn't expecting at the time because I was just presenting the data. And I just expected them I expected them to accept it, actually, recognizing because I know that attendance isn't as good as it was because of lots of things. And I know nationally it's not as good as it was.
26:27	But they started to be a little bit challenging around what we were doing to make sure that children were in school.
Sarah Chung: 26:34	Okay. Okay. So there was almost the assumption that they would just accept it because.
Bob: 26:41	Yes, that's right.
Sarah Chung: 26:42	And then.
Bob: 26:43	Yes.
Sarah Chung: 26:43	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So has there ever been a time when you were challenged that was uncomfortable or?
Bob: 26:55	Not on this governing body, no.
26:57	No. I could think of other times in the past where you know I've presented something to a governing body or a board where it's not been accepted.
27:13	I can think back to a time when I was on a trust board where I had presented a quite radical change amongst staffing to make a saving of nearly half a million pounds a year because the trust needed to make those savings and the trustees rejected it. And I was really surprised.
27:43	And yeah, I think there's the difference of being the person there on the ground doing it and understanding it fully. And then the trustees or governors having that kind of helicopter view often from other areas of industry. You know So they see things in a different way.
28:10	And that's good governance, actually, because making sure that you know it's not just one viewpoint and always coming from education. And I didn't agree with it. And that was uncomfortable.
Sarah Chung: 28:26	Okay. Did they give you a reason for rejecting?
Bob: 28:30	They just didn't want it like that. That's not how they wanted it.
Sarah Chung: 28:34	Okay. Did they offer up an alternative or?

Bob: 28:39	Yes.
28:41	In the end. In the end, they did. And I didn't like it, and I left.
Sarah Chung: 28:46	Right. Okay. So that was quite yeah that must've been quite uncomfortable for you...
Bob: 28:50	Yes, yes, yes. So there is that fine line, isn't there between heads who...controlling heads...So if you've got weak governance, you can then as a head teacher, you can control.
29:11	And that's not good because we've seen examples in the press where things get out of hand and mistakes can happen, failures of governance, all sorts of things, including things like fraud and you know those are the things that hit the press mostly. Yeah So you need that balance.
29:35	You need the knowledge and experience to work effectively with your governors with the right level of challenge and support.
Sarah Chung: 29:51	Okay. Okay. That's lovely. Thank you. So now we know that another area of governance is for the governing body to hold the head teacher to account for the management of staff. How confident do you think your governing body are in that area?
Bob: 30:12	They are assured that effective appraisal processes are in place for the staff. And they are involved with approving progress against the pay scales and things. And they're involved in that.
30:37	So they have that assurance. And I talk to them quite openly but confidentially about the support that some staff need and about particular staff or their support. But they are aware and confident that there are some staff in school that are not performing where they should be and that I'm doing something about it.
Sarah Chung: 31:07	Okay. So there's that openness, obviously, still with the confidentiality.
Bob: 31:14	Yeah. Recognising you've got parents on that governing body, which is an awkward position for them to be in when you might even be talking about their teacher that is not performing as well as they should be. So you have to be really, really careful. I might tell the chair privately, but in a governing body meeting, you know it will be general stuff to assure them that things are happening.
Sarah Chung: 31:40	Right. Okay. That's wonderful. And do you think I mean, I know you mentioned in the previous question that you've got staff sorry, not staff, governors from other occupations as well. And sometimes that view can actually that different view can help. Do you think that helps within the whole performance management aspect of it as well, or?
Bob: 32:04	Yeah, it does.
32:09	It's interesting because quite often, if you're from business industry type areas, they don't always understand the legalities

and the strange systems that we have in schools and local authority type contracts. You know When somebody is not performing well in industry, you can say goodbye.

32:38 You can't do that in a school. You have to go through a process. Yeah So it's all about process. It's all about making sure that our policies are correct and that we have the right support and advice. And governors are there to have the oversight and to challenge and support. They're not there to do it. And you know I've been on different governing bodies where they've really got involved in HR things.

33:10 And even if they're the employer, even if it's a voluntary aided church school where the governing body is the employer of the staff, it still doesn't mean they should do it because you know we have HR support and proper legal advice that we should use. And I know governors are indemnified against various things, but they should really be using the experts.

33:39 Even if they are skilled, even if it's their line of work, that's their oversight of it rather than actually doing it.

Sarah Chung: 33:48 So yes. It's keeping that boundary clear and not blurring the lines...

Bob: 33:53 And it's my job as a head in a way to do that. But what I see often in perhaps less experienced head teachers is that they get kind of steered by their governors. You know They just accept that that's the way it should be.

34:10 But it's always about oversight in terms of governance.

Sarah Chung: 34:15 Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now we're moving on a little bit. As well as setting the ethos and strategic direction within the school, you know and ensuring there's a clear level of accountability for pupil results and staffing, financial probity must be clearly considered. How confident are you that your governance can achieve that?

Bob: 34:44 Now, that's an interesting one because the school at the moment, I would say not particularly confident. You know As a local authority school, I know that there is oversight from the local authority.

35:06 If I give you an example of something that happened at the junior school last year, was that they were financially having difficulties. They couldn't set a balanced budget. They were about to go into an overall deficit. And so they had to look at making a change that was going to bring them back into a credit balance and have an in-year surplus.

35:34 And so the governors were charged with providing the local authority with some scenarios. And the head teacher at that time at that school was off on long-term sick leave. So the deputy head was acting up as head teacher, not had a lot of knowledge about finances. The school does have a school business manager, and she did a lot of the work on the

modelling and put together three different scenarios for staffing.

36:06 And one would save 30K, one would save 80K, and one would save 150K. And basically, the local authority just said, "We are going with that one," which was the most drastic model that there was, which was basically making a lot of staff redundant and taking the staff down to the bare minimum. So literally, a class teacher in each class, a deputy head, a head teacher, and only support assistances for children that are funded.

36:40 So they put that in place. Lots of people left. And the behaviour in the school has got considerably worse. And you know I'm in there now as exec head, and I can see what the problems are. And we've already started re-recruiting.

37:01 We have a balance of over £200,000 in the account because they went far too far one way and have wrecked that school and caused a lot of other problems that are going to take a couple of years to resolve to bring that school back where it needs to be.

37:21 Now, when I say this to the governors, they say, "Of course, the local authority just went with that option because it was the cheapest option for them." And you kind of think, "So where's the understanding from the governors around the consequences of doing those changes? The school didn't have a substantive head teacher in the school at the time. She was on long-term sick leave.

37:48 So we had governors and local authority making decisions that affect education without an understanding of how that would be. And they've really messed up. Absolutely messed up. So no, I don't have confidence in the governors in terms of finances.

Sarah Chung: 38:08 Right. Okay. And is that something moving forward that you think you can develop through training, or?

Bob: 38:14 Well, the schools will be joining a Multi-Academy Trust that has very effective finance procedures.

38:21 And the finance in this Multi-Academy Trust is taken away from local governors.

Sarah Chung: 38:27 Right. Okay.

Sarah Chung: 38:29 They basically won't have anything to do with it. They'll see the budget yeah and they'll know how much money we've got, but they have no control or influence over the budget whatsoever.

Sarah Chung: 38:38 Okay. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So moving on a little bit now, then, to the eight elements of effective governance, what I'm going to do is I'll read those to you.

38:51 And it's almost like a words association, if you think of it that way. So I'll read them to you, and if you tell me what it means for you as a head teacher. That's great. So the eight elements of effective governance have been identified as essential to

	good governance. In your own words, can you explain what these mean to you? So A, the right people around the table.
Bob: 39:14	A mixture of skills and representation in terms of stakeholder governance.
Sarah Chung: 39:23	Okay. Thank you. And understanding the role and responsibilities.
Bob: 39:31	Having a clear understanding of I was going to say the responsibility is that's the same thing. If I think of a trust, it's the delegated level. It's really understanding what elements of governance.
39:52	You can go back to the competencies, can't you? Yeah, just having an understanding of their role in relation to the school.
Sarah Chung: 40:01	Okay. C, good chairing.
Bob: 40:18	It's about bringing in the different elements of governance and ensuring that all of the board are playing their part.
40:35	But also, the chair has quite a high level of accountability.
Sarah Chung: 40:41	Okay. Okay. Lovely. Thank you. D, professional clerking.
Bob: 40:49	Yeah. Again, this is about steering the governing body and making sure that compliance is there, making sure that all aspects of governance and compliance are managed effectively.
Sarah Chung: 41:01	Okay.
41:03	Lovely. Thanks. E, good relationships based on trust.
Bob: 41:12	So that can only be built up over time. And it's about senior leaders in school working effectively with the governors and the governor's understanding that senior leaders are being open and honest.
Sarah Chung: 41:32	Yeah. Okay. F, knowing the school.
Bob: 41:41	Physically visiting the school and so that when you're in a meeting and you're talking about something, they know what you're talking about.
Sarah Chung: 41:51	Okay. G, asking challenging questions.
Bob: 42:04	This is just trying to plug the gaps that you've not thought about. It's the question that you should have asked yourself that somebody else needs to ask of you to ensure that you've covered everything.
Sarah Chung: 42:19	Lovely. And H, having courageous conversations in the interests of children and young people?

Bob: 42:27	Yeah. This is a really crucial one because this is where schools can fail because if governors do not ask those courageous questions, head teachers and senior leaders can get away with things and that's when things can go wrong. So it's not being afraid to tackle things. You know If the head teacher was not performing effectively, the governors need to do something about it and not just ignore it.
Sarah Chung: 43:00	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So I think we touched on this very briefly at the beginning, but the line between strategic and operational can be seen as quite a grey area for some. How confident are you in knowing that your governors know where governance ends and where head teacher SLT responsibility begins?
Bob: 43:26	I think they're not too bad at that, but it does have to be reminded.
43:33	For instance, a health and safety walk. So a governor has the kind of responsibility for health and safety in the school. And you have to be really careful that they don't basically come in with a clipboard and go around checking files, checking this, that, and the other, and doing an audit because that's not their job. Their job is to ensure that the audit has happened. And again, it's about understanding the school.
44:01	So if we're doing a health and safety walk around the school, the school business manager, the head teacher, possibly even somebody from the local authority or an expert, like a fire officer, inviting the health and safety governor to join them on the walk so that they can report back to the governors and give them assurance that effective health and safety compliance is in place because this is what happens. It's not physically doing it themselves.
44:31	It's assuring the governors that it's taking place.
Sarah Chung: 44:36	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So now we're going to look at COVID-19 and the impact. So we know that the impact of COVID-19 has been immense. Can you describe your experience of governance you know from 2020 onwards?
Bob: 44:54	Okay. I'm going to have to mention another school here then because at that point, I was in a different school.
Sarah Chung: 45:00	Yeah, that's fine.
Bob: 45:03	So when COVID-19 hit, I remember at that point, we actually cancelled a governing body meeting because nobody knew what was going on. So we didn't have effective ways of doing online meetings. They couldn't physically come into school and be in a room together.
45:30	It wasn't allowed. And they recognised that we were dealing with a crisis. We were dealing with things that we'd never done before. And what they said to me was, "We don't want to get in your way of effectively running the school." So we don't want

you to be spending time writing governor's reports and doing things like that. Just get on with the day job. So I remember that...it was the March it was 23rd of March.

46:01 It was 2020, wasn't it? So that March meeting was completely cancelled. And then we kind of talked through email about what we were going to do. And we decided you know we had started to use Zoom at that stage. And then we decided that we would try and hold our next meeting online. So the summer term meeting became an online meeting.

46:32 But of course, the governors couldn't come into school. And then the following year, because we went into lockdown again, you know it was a bit of a mixture. But what we decided, because we had some elderly people on the governing body, we were going to keep our governor's meetings online and not expect any visits into school. So that went on for a period of time.

47:01 I can't remember when it finished. I finished in that school in April '21. That was a lockdown then, wasn't it after that? And then we were back to normal-ish. And I know that those governors then started to come in in the spring term. But yeah, it was fine.

47:26 But it was good that the governors recognised that the job of senior leaders completely changed. and, and...I want to say governance wasn't important at that stage. Clearly, it was. And in fact, that was a school that was in a multi-academy trust. And the trust were being very effective in providing risk assessments and making sure that all the heads of the schools were managing their schools effectively and taking the right decisions.

48:00 So in that case, a lot of governance came from the trust itself. And that's one thing that I haven't mentioned. You know So my work at the two schools as exec head, they're maintained schools, the Church of England Voluntary Control Maintained Schools, not in a trust. But my work in the trust, which because I'm Director of Education and Trust and leading on governance, it's really important to understand that a lot of governance actually takes place within the trust employees central team as well.

48:38 So who actually checks the finances of the schools? It isn't the trustees themselves. It's actually the central team. So we have an accountant. We have several finance people who scrutinise monthly each school's accounts. Now, that's governance, yeah? And then that gets reported to the trustees.

49:05 So a lot of governance in a big multi-economy trust is shared between the trust board and the actual central team that hold the schools to account as well. Whereas in a school that I'm in at the moment, we don't have that. The local authority are pretty ineffective. They don't do much. So it's really between the head teacher and the governors to make sure that things are happening well.

49:33	So I think, actually, Sarah, that in the Multi-Academy Trust, you've got better governance. You've got better it's less likely to go wrong for a school in a trust than it is a school in a local authority.
Sarah Chung: 49:49	Okay. So because there's that much more scrutiny?
Bob: 49:52	More scrutiny. Much more, yes.
Sarah Chung: 49:54	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So I know you mentioned that with your governors at the time, you were communicating initially via email, then on Zoom.
50:06	Did you find that effective?
50:08	Yeah. Okay. So in a way, it was better because meetings could be tighter. You could call a meeting at fairly short notice and have most people attending, even if they were attending from work or even from the car in some cases. Meetings tended to be shorter because you were sticking to the agenda.
50:35	You weren't chatting about other things. The negative side was having contributions for all members because it's really quite hard on the screen, isn't it, to engage everybody unless you ask them directly. Yeah Whereas in a room, you can just look at somebody and they're expecting you know to answer or something. So I think i think nothing beats getting people together in a room, yeah but you can hold governance meetings very effectively online.
51:11	And in fact, where I'm a trustee, we hold all of our main Trustee meetings in person. We do all our committees online.
Sarah Chung: 51:21	Okay. So that's kind of just it's continued almost naturally from that.
Bob: 51:27	Yes.
Sarah Chung: 51:27	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So I mean, I think we know that the governance almost effectively stopped in the traditional sense when COVID hit.
51:40	What happened in terms of...do you feel that your governing body offered you more of a support relationship throughout the pandemic?
Bob: 51:49	Yes. That's really good, actually. That's quite perceptive. Yeah, they understood. They recognised that we were going through something that we've never been through before.
52:02	And so they were basically saying, "Whatever we can do, you let us know, and we will support you with it." So I think they became much more supportive in terms of understanding workload, understanding that things were different, and we needed the time and space to get on with it.
Sarah Chung: 52:31	Okay.

52:32 That's great. So do you feel that was a role that the governors should have played, or do you think that they should have how do you feel the role of governance should have been during the pandemic? A bit of a balance of normal traditional governance and support? Or do you feel that that change to support was the most effective use of governor's time during that time?

Bob: 52:59 Yeah.

52:59 That's interesting because the thing is nobody knew, did they? Even Ofsted didn't know what to do. Local authorities didn't know what to do. The DFE guidance was muddled often too late. You know To tell you on a Sunday evening that you're closing the schools the next day is not good. That was just so funny. That was so funny.

53:33 I wouldn't like to say that they could have done it better or they should have done it a different way because that would be unfair because nobody knew what they should and shouldn't have done. I think what we then discovered over time, you know when Ofsted started to make the phone calls and start you know guidance came out and then Ofsted started to check that guidance and check that things were happening.

54:03 You know They wanted to ensure that all schools were doing some kind of remote learning offer. But I had had my governors say to me, "What remote learning offer are you having?" So there was that level of challenge being provided by the governors in advance of a potential Ofsted call or potential challenge by parents indeed. And in fact, I would say I had more challenge from parents than I did any other group of people because a lot of them were not happy with their children being in school.

54:39 If I tell you in that school, which was a three, form entry primary of 610 children, erm during the first lockdown, I went down to three children coming in because it was a fairly affluent area.

55:00 and it was literally if you could look after your children, you were supposed to look after your children, we would have vulnerable pupils and we would have pupil premium and looked after and all those in if necessary. But in most cases, in that particular environment, they could all look after them. And I had three children. And during Easter holiday, I spoke to my other local schools, and some of them had like 15, 20 children in.

55:34 And so I said, "Look, if I send a teaching assistant over to your school with my three children, I can then close my school entirely and lock it up." And that's what we did. And so one of my other local schools literally had my three children. And sometimes that was only one because the other two might not be. It was two sisters and then another child. And that was the first lockdown.

56:00	And then when we came back, the second lockdown, which obviously the DFE had changed the categories and it had to be critical workers or they were called not critical. It's critical now, isn't it? Ah can't remember what it was now. I then had 64 children in. You know So that was a big difference between that first lockdown and the second lockdown. And so we had school open for many more children. And then that 64 went up to about 150.
56:31	And that was when parents were starting to say, "Well, you know I'm working from home, but I need space. I need time without my children." And you know Johnny up the road's coming into your school. So you've got to have my child as well. So I had a lot more pushback from parents in the second lockdown about having their children in school. And I know we had children that didn't meet the criteria.
56:56	You know Literally, it was because they were pushy parents, but we could cope with it, and we did. So there's a very big attitude change both from parents and governors and staff and everybody between the first lockdown and the second lockdown. And indeed, staff were very different as well because we had some staff who were frightened. We had a lot of staff who didn't want to catch COVID.
57:28	And so they didn't come back to school in that interim period between the two lockdowns. And that was worrying. And obviously, there were lots of questions around whether that was right and fair and bits and pieces. That was something that I had to deal with rather than governance. Yeah. So I'm not going to say that they did anything wrong.
57:55	It was so new to everybody and so challenging that I think the way they stepped back, offered support, but stepped back from governance was the right thing to do at the time.
Sarah Chung: 58:06	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you.
Bob: 58:08	So in crisis, be prepared not to do the norm.
Sarah Chung: 58:15	I think that summarises it very well, doesn't it? So do you think, though, was there anything that arose from the pandemic that you think actually my governors could have done with a bit more training on how to do this?
Bob: 58:43	No, I wouldn't say as a result of the pandemic. You know when you go back to the three strategic aims of governance, yeah I don't think the pandemic has really changed that much. No.
Sarah Chung: 58:59	Okay. Lovely. Thank you.
59:02	Okay. So we're now going to look a little bit more closely at training. If you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be and why do you think this is essential?

Bob: 59:18	Well, immediately springs to mind is safeguarding. Yeah. If they could only have one piece of training, it would have to be safeguarding because they have to understand about keeping children safe.
59:32	That's the most important thing. But kind of expanding on that is governance is so varied. And when you look at how trusts are developing and how every trust has a different scheme of delegation, and all governors are part of a different kind of structure, one type of training is not right for all governors.
01:00:10	So you know it would be really hard to try and mandate something that everybody across the country would have. But the safeguarding has to be there. Okay. So there's an element of needing that training to be personalised, although you've got the underlying guard in here. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. You know There are still schools that are going into category because safeguarding is ineffective.
01:00:40	How is that possible?
Sarah Chung: 01:00:42	Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Lovely. So then, conversely, what in your opinion do you feel you may not feel at all, but what in your opinion do you feel is the least valuable piece of training for governors and why?
Bob: 01:01:07	It annoys me slightly when governors go off and do some training that they find online or local authority puts on that's irrelevant to their context.
01:01:19	And they come back and say, "I've done this brilliant piece of training," and you kind of think, "Well, why?" I've got anything specific, but I think that goes back to the so what I'm kind of thinking through this conversation I'm having with you is about the need to have bespoke training, the need to be relevant to your school because governance is different in different situations.
01:01:51	You and I both think the governance should be the same because the aims are the same. The rationale for good governance according to the DfE is very clearly laid out. But it has to be relevant to that. You know It's no good going on a general data thing when they learn about how schools do data. And then they come back and actually they find that the data drops are different.
01:02:23	You use a particular package that describes it in a particular way because things are so different. When we had levels, it was probably slightly easier. But because all schools do assessment in different ways, to go on a general assessment training course, it's not going to be right for every governing body.
Sarah Chung: 01:02:45	Right. Okay.
01:02:47	And do you think then that with that in mind, that bespoke nature in mind, do you think the training needs to be overseen

by somebody within your governing body to make sure that governors are choosing things that aren't irrelevant?

Bob: 01:03:02 Yeah. Yeah. Now, whether that's the clerk, so as a governance professional, that would be okay. So again, thinking about my other role in the trust, we now have a governance professional.

01:03:18 We've employed somebody, and she is really taking that on board. And so she will know what training all of our governors, all of our 108 governors in the trust called local committee members, and our 11 trustees, she will know all the training they've all had and will be able to recommend things. And you know she has that handle on it. Now, in a small individual school that has a clerk, I don't think the clerk's going to have that kind of level of skill necessarily.

01:03:51 And I know that we want all trust to have governance professionals. That's the CST push as well. Yeah, I think it would be the clerk. But it could be the head as well, couldn't it? The head could be saying, "you know In order for you to challenge me effectively, I need you to be doing these different courses or this particular training." And I go back, you know it might be my responsibility to put on some of that training for them.

01:04:19 But it's only effective if the head knows what they're doing. Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 01:04:27 Yeah. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now thinking back over your time as a head teacher, in general, did you feel supported by your governing body?

Bob: 01:04:42 Yes. Yeah.

01:04:44 Now, until I became a deputy head, I didn't really have anything to do with governors, which is really interesting. When you think of you know you try and elect a staff member on a governing body, but they won't know what governance is about. I never knew. Yeah And I knew these people came in and wandered around the school sometimes, and I knew meetings happened, but I didn't know much about it.

01:05:11 And when I became a deputy and then used to go and present at governing body meetings and join in with governing body meetings, I started to understand it. And of course, when I became a head teacher, I was then directly involved in governance and had that relationship with the chair and guiding governance and things. So I would say that, yeah, for the last 22 years that I've been ahead, I've always been involved with governors at a high level.

01:05:44 And it's always constant. You know My next four governing body meeting is towards the end of March. I've got a resources committee on the 9th of March. Paperwork's got to be done for the 9th. Paperwork's got to be done for the 20... whatever it is. And you're always thinking ahead to the next meeting, preparation, what do I need to do? So as a head teacher in a

	school, governance should always be part of what you're doing all of the time.
Sarah Chung: 01:06:13	Okay. Okay.
01:06:13	Wonderful. So the NGA have openly stated that they feel that induction training should be mandatory within the first year. So you know indeed, in Wales, it actually is. In your own words, could you explain whether you agree with this and why?
Bob: 01:06:35	Gosh. So you're talking about a volunteer
01:06:40	that might be in your school for four years, and you're making it mandatory. I don't know. I don't know whether that's necessary. And maybe, maybe, I think chairs should have some kind of level of training because they're the one that I as ahead will work with regularly. And they are guiding the meetings. They are the ones setting the agendas.
01:07:11	They are the ones ensuring that, that things are happening. But I think to ask a parent who's only going to be there for four years maximum, it's probably a little much, and you will put people off. It's already very, very hard to find enough governors. I would be a bit reluctant to do that for everybody.
Sarah Chung: 01:07:37	Okay. Lovely. Thank you.
01:07:39	If mandatory training was introduced, though, what would you like to see in relation to some of the following? So thinking now about content, what would you include?
Bob: 01:08:01	Yeah, I want to keep away from the kind of generic stuff because they will get confused and they will come back and wonder why things are not operating quite the same in your school.
01:08:16	I think you could do safeguarding. You could do that generically. That would be fine because that should be the same. But I think the key thing is how to work with the school, how to work with senior leaders in the school. And this idea of challenge and support, you know the old-term critical friend, you know you're not the friend, and they mustn't be overcritical. They mustn't be challenging you all the time that you then get fed up with them and don't want to work with them.
01:08:49	You've got to have a really, really fine balance of they're there to support you. They're absolutely there to support you and to raise the questions that you haven't thought about and to make sure that you are thinking about the things that are important. And I think even you know that kind of training on how to work with senior leaders would be the most effective training.
Sarah Chung: 01:09:15	Okay. Wonderful. So how do you think the training should take place?

01:09:20	So for example, a lot of training is currently conducted through LEAs or in-house within schools. What are your thoughts on online training? Would that be beneficial?
Bob: 01:09:35	Yes, it would because it allows them to do it in remote locations and things. It's easier to get to with remote training. They're actually more likely to do it.
01:09:47	You know If I've got to drive 20 miles park, go to a meeting, get home again in an evening when I've got to put my children to bed, etc. If you could just sit at your computer for an hour, that is so much easier and more people will like it. I think kind of online meetings where people are participating in small groups is much more effective than webinars because I know that lots of people don't really pay attention in webinars.
01:10:19	They just got it on. They get the certificate to say they've attended, but they don't actually participate. So I think if it's online, it's small groups, you know maximum 12, 15, where a good facilitator can bring them all in and make sure that they're engaged and discussing. And that can be more effective and probably much easier for these volunteers. Maybe for chairs, it might be different.
01:10:48	Maybe you know because they are...there's that argument about paying chairs as well, isn't there? There's papers and research on that. But they are chairs for a reason, aren't they?
Sarah Chung: 01:11:00	Yeah. Okay. Great. Thank you. So then thinking now about sort of potential courses, what are your thoughts on a modulated course possibly delivered online, which resulted in a certificate, which confirmed a completion of an induction year?
Bob: 01:11:23	Yeah, that would be okay. That would be okay, as long as it was actual participation rather than just attendance.
Sarah Chung: 01:11:32	Yeah. Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. So we've reached the end of all my questions, but I just want to ask if there's anything else that you feel that I've possibly missed or we've not covered that you think would help.
Bob: 01:11:52	It's really hard, Sarah, in terms of you know a lot of the research out there does not talk about specifics between multi-academy trusts and maintained schools. And even stuff from 2015 completely misses the point. So I think there are big distinctions between maintained and trust schools.
01:12:23	And I'm working in both, and I can see those differences, and I know which one I think is better.
Sarah Chung: 01:12:31	Which one is that, do you think?
Bob: 01:12:33	It's a trust. I think good governance. You know If you get your scheme of delegation, right, and you get your governance structure right, yeah I think it works really well much more effectively than a school being left on its own.

Sarah Chung: 01:12:52	So there's almost that collegiality then between the different schools within the trust?
Bob: 01:12:59	Yes. Okay. Yeah. As I say, you know in our trust, we've got about 108 governors, 108 local committee members across our schools. And then a trust board, I think, of 11.
Sarah Chung: 01:13:12	Yeah. Do you, as trust, actually, thinking about this, do you run your own in-house?
01:13:19	I know that you said you yourself do some.
Bob: 01:13:21	Yeah, I run it. Yeah. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:13:23	You run in-house for all of those governors?
Bob: 01:13:25	Yes. Yeah. So we do new induction meetings. So if you're new to a local committee, I do a session on what it means to be a local committee member. So again, it's bespoke. It's about our scheme of delegation. It's about what they should be doing. We make it absolutely clear that you are not there to do this.
01:13:48	You are not there to do that, etc. Yeah And then we run various training sessions throughout the year on safeguarding, on bits and pieces that they need to know. We did one on data the other day. Yeah. And they're all online because our trust stretches right from it goes across Surrey and Hampshire. So you know it's a good hour and a half drive between some of our schools.
01:14:18	So you can't necessarily bring them all in. They used to. Before COVID, they did. You went to the central office to do training. So there's COVID here. This was an advantage. You know This is now something that is now open up to many more people. Yeah. So I think it is quite effective. Yeah.
01:14:46	I think the trust model is working well, but the problem is the trust model is so different between every trust.
Sarah Chung: 01:14:54	Yeah. So there needs to be more awareness raised of that, do you think?
Bob: 01:15:02	Yeah. Again, again, we're not getting a good steer from DfE and government yeah on what the journey is.
01:15:12	You know The 2030 deadline of schools being in Strong Multi-Academy Trust has now been watered down. So schools don't know where they are. Yeah, a mess, isn't it?
01:15:28	That's brilliant. Thank you so much for doing this.

Lawrence

Sarah Chung: 00:02	So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance.
00:29	During our interview, we will discuss whether the training your governors have received has helped them to achieve this. Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that your governance have received appropriate training to help them address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within their role. We will also discuss the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the role of the governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training.
01:00	I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation you have signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymised data destroyed after a period of 10 years.
01:23	Should you wish a copy of the results, then please do email me at [redacted]. Okay. So do you have any questions before we begin?
Lawrence: 01:37	No. Merely one observation. I can't answer any of your questions about COVID.
Sarah Chung: 01:42	Oh, of course. That's not a problem. Yeah. You've submitted the consent form, haven't you on Qualtrics?
Lawrence: 01:53	I haven't seen it.
Sarah Chung: 01:55	Oh, okay. Two seconds.
Lawrence: 01:56	But I will do.
Sarah Chung: 01:59	Well, I can grab the link very quickly now. Let's have a look.
02:16	So I take it you're emailing that to me. I'll drop it into the Zoom chat now.
02:23	You can just yeah, it's very quick. There you go.
Lawrence: 04:17	Right. That's done.
Sarah Chung: 04:18	Brilliant. Thank you. Right. Shall we start with something simple? How long were you a head teacher for?

Lawrence: 04:27	28 years.
Sarah Chung: 04:29	Wow. And what was the most enjoyable part of your role in relation to governance?
Lawrence: 04:55	Would it be possible to come back to that?
04:57	Maybe when I've answered the other questions, I could give you a list of things I really enjoyed doing with them, which was the most enjoyable. I think I'd struggled to think, "Well, what was the most enjoyable?" I mean, off the top of my head, I think I would say it was the absolutely substantive things that made a huge difference to the school when they were fully invested in, let's say, appointing staff.
05:30	Or the one time we needed to operate redundancy procedures. No, we had to do that twice for two times. You then actually, because certainly with redundancy, you're in a position you don't want to be in owing to falling budgets and falling rolls. You really foster a real sense of teamwork because you've got to come up with a solution.
06:02	Basically, your backs are to the wall. But I reserve the right to come back to that and elaborate on maybe something else.
Sarah Chung: 06:15	Yeah. Well, yeah. The next part of the question is actually what was the least enjoyable aspect of your role in relation to governance. So it's up to you if you want to come back to it, or?
Lawrence: 06:29	I can think of that straight away.
06:33	It's managing the maverick individual who thinks having been appointed or elected a governor gives them a mandate to run their own personal kamikaze agenda-driven program of, "This is what I'm going to do with no reference to governors having corporate responsibility but no individual responsibility." They've just got absolutely no conception of what being a governor is.
07:08	And assuming that their predecessors as governors were all completely utterly brain-dead dodos. And everything that, let's say, 20 years of a governing body I'd worked with and worked towards a school, improving and moving forward was just well, they just bumbled their way through it, and they were a complete lot of idiots. And this one governor would clean [inaudible] single-handedly.
07:41	And you just think, "What a conceit. What a total lack of social awareness. And you live in a small rural community, and these are your friends and neighbours who you're basically just saying were completely and utterly morally bankrupt and intellectually inept. Yeah. Where it's actually the person with the issues is you. I think that covers that.

Sarah Chung: 08:12	Yeah, very much so. Okay. So in terms, I mean, I think from what you were just saying there, there was almost a lack of understanding of what they should be doing and what their role was. Did you ever feel that your governing body understood the expectations around generally their role in strategic direction?
Lawrence: 08:36	We worked so hard at that. It comes to two levels.
08:41	Yes. And when we come back to the training element, you'll see how and why. Yes, your question was understand, wasn't it?
Sarah Chung: 08:56	Yes.
Lawrence: 08:58	I would say they had a developing understanding because A, the target constantly changed. B, I personally think it's far too much to expect of an unpaid volunteer at times.
09:16	And because they weren't in school, the hours ahead teacher is, which is basically 24/7, their understanding of what really matters and what's going on in the statute requires in education, you wouldn't expect them to have the knowledge.
09:43	So when we were having those open, informal discussions about, "Well, what do we want to put into a school development plan this year? What should we put in?" They would come up with some completely off-the-wall things that they're having the opportunity to express their voice. They know that we put together a school development plan, but they would come up with things that we had been statutorily told we could no longer teach anymore.
10:18	This is what we think we should be doing. So you've got that element, the curriculum element of it, if you like, because at times, it was very prescribed. Erm It's not to do with governors because I can't remember the exact example I'm thinking of with them.
10:47	But I can remember, at one point, we had to teach the children about a faraway island. Okay. Fine. No problem. We as a school went for Japan as an interesting culture that is very different to our own Western European. There were no resources. There were no books. There was nothing. So you sort of did it from scratch.
11:14	And I've got a feeling this was at the very early stages when the internet became available. So if you're running a four-year Key Stage 2 topic programme, which is what we were doing at the time, you're looking at Japan every two years or four years, and I can't remember off the top of my head what I think it might have been. That was in a two-year. It was a cycle of things that ran in four-yearly cycles and the cycle of things that ran in two-yearly cycles.

11:44 And I think the faraway island, we'd incorporated into a two-year cycle. So the first time around, we did it from cold. The second time around, oh, some publishers had just brought out all these books and resources and materials. This makes life a bit more interesting and slightly easier for the teaching staff. And then the government brought out an edict; Primary schools need to study faraway island, but it can't be Japan because that's reserved for the secondary school curriculum.

12:18 And you just look at it and go, "So all these publishers have invested all this time and money in producing all these resources for primary schools, we as a school and probably zillions of other primary schools up and down the country have done the same, and now we can't do it." Because the way this country is just such short-term well, it isn't run, is it? It's just a chaotic back of an envelope, back of a fag packet.

12:49 "Oh, we've got an idea. We'll put it in." And the idea itself might be worthful, but there's no system strategy or coherence to it whatsoever. So it's that sort of thing. Now, I thought there were two other things. I had two lovely IT governors who had very high-powered jobs in IT. They were providing the IT support, as I remember, for the HMRC. They thought they could offer the school.

13:19 The children wouldn't need to be registered in. They could be all given their own credit card and swiped him to school. And I'm going, "But registering the children in in the morning." And because it was a rural school with a very sparse catchment area, not one child went home for lunch. So once they were in, they were in for the day. But we can register every child in the school, in every class, within 60 seconds, 90 seconds at the worst-case scenario.

13:53 Why do we need a solution to a problem that doesn't exist that you can guarantee two or three children will forget their cards or forget to swipe themselves in or whatever because they're four or they're 11. That's what four-year-olds and 11-year-olds do. Lovely idea. But you're solving a problem that doesn't exist. Yeah.

14:20 But then I think the skill of a headies or a governing body, we set up a healthy eating tuck shop. Because the children were transported in, running a preschool breakfast club really wasn't a viability. We looked into it several times because if the children don't arrive till five minutes before school starts because that's when their bus gets in, and they might have been on it for as much as 45 minutes plus some of them.

14:51 So the parents were getting their preschool childcare on the school bus. We set up a healthy well, the children did because it was I mean, they did all the research. Healthy eating touch shop. So they had fruit and rice crackers and milk and orange juice. And initially, we were asking the parents for contribution. Towards that. Now, we took the credit card thing, which actually was a credit card.

15:21 The parents would put credit on it, and the children would then scan it with the barcode scan at the end of it. So it was like doing their supermarket shopping. So we used these two parent governors' skills.

15:38 But the time then came when we were sort of evaluating that sort of we were definitely evaluating it and saying, "But the time it took to administer the accounts yeah and chase the parents up to say, "Please, can you top your credit card up because we let them go overdraw?" We said, "Actually, it would be cheaper just to give it away free yeah than it would be to the hours some administrative person was spending managing the financial side of it." So we ended up it was just free.

16:15 I suppose we're talking about doing that in about the year 2000, maybe even earlier than that. It might even be as early as early 1990s. No, no, I don't think so. So the question was about, wasn't it, governor's understanding.

Sarah Chung: 16:48 Yeah.

Lawrence: 16:50 Our intention always was that they would.

16:54 Their intention always was. But unless you're actually in school the whole time and see the micromanagement. It's the micro minutia of how a school runs. You can make suggestions that don't actually match up with what's needed.

17:16 If I can name and this might come up later, the things that they were absolutely indispensable work with, I would say, is things like the health and safety, the annual audit of that, they were better than Brilliant because you've got the representation of the farming community, and you've got people who worked in industry, and you've got a local authority's HR policy, and they're all quite different in both detail and philosophy.

17:55 So, oh, how do I put it? I thought it was a really healthy synthesis of machinery and that sort of risk. And then the management of humans, it actually enriched what would otherwise have been school staff having gone on the health and safety training run by the authority and just ensuring we were compliant with that.

18:26 We were compliant with that, but we were compliant with it because you get them going, "What on earth are they telling you this for? Gosh, why are they being so namby-pamby?" And ignoring these other things that seem to us to be much more of a risk to the children. And it's that creative dialogue that I thought was really useful.

18:47 And then the HR issues as well, if you've got people who come from private industry looking at the local authorities' HR policy in such like, they would have, let's use a proper term, a much more robust view of HR issues. So I would say those skills really do enrich the work of a governing body.

19:19 They actually make it better for it. So yes, there was one other thing that I think we almost needed a T-shirt printed with it. And it's all been well-meaning, but not understanding. And we'll talk about financial responsibility later.

19:43 But you've got governors coming in and saying, "Well, we've got some ideas about how we can save money on toilet paper and paper towels." Yeah. Absolutely fine. Look at the budget. 70 to 80% is spent on school staff. The amount of money we spend on paper, towels, and toilet paper is 0.2% of the school budget.

20:11 If you halve that to 0.1%, which we're not saying isn't a worthwhile thing doing, but we're saving such a small amount. What can we usefully spend that on? Yeah It's not understanding how staff-heavy a school budget is. And it's got to be safe.

20:40 It's got to be warm. It's got to be cleaned. Basically, you've got very little scope in you've got very little flexibility in the school budget. If you're pushed right against the wire, and I'm talking about the coruscating and corrosive despair schools felt during the Thatcher years.

21:10 Of having budget cut after budget cut after budget cut. Now, we didn't because we were a successful school and our role was increasing. So we'd basically have a 6% budget cut, but we'd have 6% more children each year. So we had the same amount of money, but it's more and more children to educate, which is a different pressure.

21:40 But that, I think, is easier to manage because it's positive and the school is successful and it's growing than it would be to have a static role in 6% budget cut after 6% budget cut after 6% budget cut. And if I come back to governors, particularly you governors, just not understanding how things work.

22:08 New parent governor, probably a year, 18 months in, we'd sat down. And even with our increasing role and offsetting the budget cuts, we'd sat down and said, "The only plan we can come up with, I think, is to make two people redundant.

22:30 It's going to be a technical redundancy because what we're doing is cutting their hours because we don't want to lose any staff because when the Thatcher government is replaced, they can't last forever. We couldn't conceive things would carry on being as austerity Britain mark one.

23:00 We will want to increase those staff hours again because we've invested all this time and effort training them and getting them to being an essential member of the school. So we probably spent two governors meetings going through this and getting to the point of you know this is what we're going to have to do. Lovely government then gave, I think, head teachers a £10,000 lump sum to spend in any way they saw fit.

23:32 So the next governance meeting arrives, she turns up and says, "These are my plans for spending the £10,000." And I

said, "Well, that's absolutely lovely. Really thought you put into it. But actually, the money is being given specifically to head teachers.

23:52 It's not a governor's decision." yeah And I think, because I will ask the governors, and I would have done anyhow, we have spent the last six months in a sense of despair and desolation, thinking we're going to have to cut the hours of two long-serving loyal members of staff because we had nowhere else to go. My immediate reaction would be because we were talking about cutting hours, and they were support staff, and they pay wasn't a great deal. That £10,000, we will spend not having to implement that decision.

24:23 And everyone, yes, of course, that's the best decision. But it shows a lack of awareness on the part of a new governor, but not a lack of willingness or commitment or intent.

Sarah Chung: 24:45 Okay.

Lawrence: 24:45 Right. I think that more or less answers the question.

Sarah Chung: 24:49 Yeah. Absolutely. No.

24:53 So with strategic direction, with setting the ethos, with setting vision, how involved were the governors?

Lawrence: 25:17 Right. We've got 28 years of how involved were they?

25:24 It wasn't a static thing. And I'm thinking back because it's a dynamic growing places. I'm thinking back to my very early years there. So I was in one school for 28 years, so it wasn't moving about hopping from school to school, being a moving target.

25:45 So you just present yourself as a static target, which I think does make it an awful lot harder because if things were not if things sort of come back to bite you in those 10 years' time, you can't say it was a previous ed. Yeah. I think they always were because that's the sort of culture I would have always instilled. So we're talking about in the mid-1980s now. And the most vivid recollection I can have, and he was a lovely man.

26:16 And again, his attention was right. He was a Second World War hero. So he always used his military title. So he was obviously a fairly high-ranking officer. But his view was that the school should be run on sort of military lines.

Sarah Chung: 26:38 Oh, really? Okay.

Lawrence: 26:40 My view and the rest of the governors was it should be much more child-centered, which is why they'd appointed me, obviously.

26:53	And I can remember having several heated discussions at governor's meetings. Yeah And it got to the point he was in a minority of one. He kept banging on about it. And I actually got to remember actually saying to him thinking, perhaps I shouldn't have said that because I had immense respect for him as a person and what he'd done for this country during the Second World War, which I think he'd served all the way through it.
27:20	I said, "Sorry, our decision is we're not going to run this school as a neo-military organisation. That is just not what we as a governing body want." yeah But it illustrates the fact that even in the 1980s, we were having open discussions about the ethos of the school. Yeah And it was a consensus decision.
27:46	And one person who was new and the outsider actually ended up being what's the word I'm looking for? Fairly forthright. Otherwise, we just would have wasted governor's meeting after governor's meeting letting him just have his half-hour. What's the word I'm looking for? Presentation.
28:18	But assuming that a governing body has appointed a head teacher because they interview and their previous employment record matches what the school wants. You've got that to use, "Oh, my current personal hero," Boris Johnson's phrase, "baked into the system, haven't you?" So it's already started before the sort of head sets foot in the school.
28:49	So I would say it just grows, and it develops.
Sarah Chung: 28:54	Yeah. Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So think now about pupil performance. Could you explain a little bit about well, let's have a look. How your governing body, over the time, oversaw pupil performance.
29:20	So did it evolve? Were they more involved at earlier points, or?
Lawrence: 29:34	I suppose what I'm leap motif of what I was saying is I always thought the governor should be involved in everything. We always faithfully and honestly presented how the children were doing.
29:50	Now, for us, that wasn't a problem because as I alluded to earlier, we were a successful school. And when lead tables were compiled, we were always in the top 10%. At times, we were the top school. At times, we were sort of the fourth school in the local authority.
30:12	So you haven't really got any pressure in terms of, as I know, other hints and I've actually witnessed them doing it bury dodgy sat results by presenting them in a slightly disingenuous way.
30:36	Now, I've seen that from personal experience of my headship, but I've also seen it in the research I'm doing at the University of [redacted] because a lot of my identification of schools was based on the attainment data for disadvantaged children. I've looked at the raw data that's published nationally. I then

looked at the school's website, the published data that's presented on the websites for parents.

31:06 And with some schools, I thought, "This is not being so much spun as it's a fast rotating top yeah because it is masking what I as an outsider and a researcher would look at and say, "There are some serious issues and concerns I would have if I was running this school about the attainment of some of the children." But the presentation does give that.

31:41 Now, I was never that sort of person. I think you've just got to be scripturally honest and I think that's part of being ahead, isn't it? Honesty is paramount. You're setting examples to children. And I don't suppose we're going to talk about pupil voice and children's involvement, but I think that is absolutely critical as well.

32:13 And you've got to be the role model to them. So I would talk to them about the moral decisions I would have to make because no matter what size the school, I always taught the oldest children part of the time to share the class and drove their curriculum. It's an awfully effective way of monitoring what the school's doing with the children because you're not taking a snapshot view. You're actually teaching them maybe one day a week, maybe three days a week.

32:44 It depends on how the week pans out. But I can remember my office was right next to the classroom where I taught them in. So the door from one to the other. It was that close. We had it built that way. And there were times when I just had to go and answer the phone when I was teaching them. Now I had an absolute Rolls Royce of a TA in there who was at times better than any teacher I employed.

33:18 So there was no problem with and I say to them, "Well, sorry, children. I'm just going to have to go now." It's a phone call. I just cannot answer. Sometimes I could go back and explain what it was about. I mean, if it was a child protection matter, you obviously don't even talk to the staff about the children. But I can remember the most concrete example.

33:45 I went back in and said, "They got on doing whatever they were supposed to be doing because they were taught to be independent, autonomous learners. But there are times when you plan to be actually doing something with them as a teacher totally focused either more of them or as a substantial group of them. And I went in and said, "Well, that was a really difficult one.

34:07 How easy would it have been just to say, "Sorry, I can't be bothered to speak to this person now." yeah And I came back in and said, "You know I forget what it was. You know we've been wanting to do something in the school. You've been wanting us to do something in the school, the pubic voice. And I can't remember for life what it was. You've been wanting to do something in the school for the last six months or so. We've

been talking about it, and we've been thinking about how we would find the money.

34:38 Well, that 20 minutes has just gained £3,000 from somebody else to do what you were asking for. And they go, "Oh, great. That was good then, wasn't it?" And I said, "Sometimes you've got to make a decision about what you do with your time." So I don't know how we got into morality, but it is about morality.

35:10 And honesty, I mean, the bits I loved about the job were there was a little baby in a hospital in Portsmouth who was seriously, seriously ill. And the Area Health Authority was thinking of I can't remember a name now. We're talking late '90s, I would say, withdrawing medical care from her.

35:35 And I think the dad was a solicitor or certainly the legal profession. And he fought and he fought and he fought. And it was caught battle after court battle after court battle. And it was coming up to Christmas, and he won the battle for the child to go home to spend Christmas with his parents, probably, for the last time. Because we always had one assembly a week with the altitude, "What's going on in the news?" Because they didn't always understand.

36:09 I'm not sure adults always understand either, but we'll gloss over that. And I said, "Well, this sounds good news. Does this seem fair?" "Oh, yes. Brilliant. The child's going home." And I said, "Okay. Well, we'll get every newspaper for a week and you work out what it's cost for that child to go home for its days at Christmas." So you've got all the staff doing the preparation. I think you've got one or two nursing staff at the parents' home 24 hours and a consultant there several visits each of the days.

36:43 And I said, "Okay." So those hospital staff are at that parent's home so that child can go home, which we all think is great. But what about the children in hospital who don't have those staff they're looking after and the consultancy isn't there? Is it morally the right thing to do? And I spent quite a lot of time considering the pros and cons.

37:10 And I can remember right at the end of it, this very, very capable he was male, boy who I'm sure went on to uni, to do a master degree, said to me, "Well, what's the right answer?" And I said, "Well, I don't know. I don't think there is a right answer. There's just options, and you have to make a judgment call on it." It's not like it what's the square root of 47 or something.

37:40 It just isn't. So sorry, I'm off task, I think. The question you asked was about honesty with governance? No, it was about the data, wasn't it? Sharing the data with them.

Sarah Chung: 37:53 Yeah. Pupil performance. Yeah.

Lawrence: 37:57 Yeah. No. I always shared everything with them. I wouldn't say all of them totally understood it.

38:07	The long-serving governors who maybe have been on a governing body for 20 years did better. They would pick up on things. I always analyzed it in a way that most schools didn't. I would use the fine gradations of the SAT schools, which one thing that horrifies me at the moment is I will go into schools and they would just look and see whether a child's at the expected level or working at a higher level or a deeper standard or whatever they choose to call it or exceeded level.
38:42	And as long as they're in that box, that's all they're bothered about. We looked at every individual child in school, and every single child had to be progressing throughout their school career as fast as they possibly could. Because if you look at it in that simplistic level and I can remember doing this with the governors and showing them, you can have it could be your child in, let's say, the year three class, and the teacher looks at them and says, "They're well above average." "Okay, fine." But I would look at them and say in year two, they were well above average plus.
39:22	And year one, they were well above average plus plus. So I'm really concerned that as a school, that child who's well above average and anyone else looking at the data will say, "This child's doing really well, we aren't. We're going, "What's going on with this child? Is it what we're doing? Is it the child?
39:46	Is there something in their home circumstances that means perhaps we ought to be expecting more of them?" So we were looking at every individual child which they knew, and I could show them the trajectories, just as I explained to you, the graphs of some children and say, "This is anonymised.
40:12	You don't know which child it is, but this is what we do." So it then means that when you're looking at sort of the headline figures, they would be saying, "Well, what about the children?" sort of think about them. What about the children on a special needs register? Are they making the same sort of progress, same rate of progress as the ones who are doing in national terms averagely well.
40:43	So I would say, yes, they were fully aware. At times, I think their eyes just glazed over because it's very dense. It's very data-driven, and it's very information-rich. But I don't think they ever questioned that we had a tracking system that meant every child was every child. And we didn't lump them into groups for any reason whatsoever.
41:12	We treated every child as an individual, which I suppose I'd come back to. That's why they appointed me.
Sarah Chung: 41:19	Did they ever have training to help them understand the data a little bit more or actually bespoke training from you if your presentation was slightly different?
Lawrence: 41:40	I mean, we will presumably talk about the training that I used to run for the group of schools that I worked with.

41:49 I can't remember. I don't think we ever did SAT training as a group of schools because I think it would have been oh, what am I looking for? Potentially harmful for some of the other schools if they've got new young heads and they were still finding their feet and still working at just three broadbands. Children are either above average, below average, or average.

42:20 If they were still finding their feet in the first two or three years into how to run a school, they don't want their governors put an inordinate amount of pressure on them, particularly if they're not particularly numerous. That's particularly twice in the sentence, isn't it? That's very boring. I'll edit that. But I think you have a duty of care as ahead to your colleagues.

42:43 If they've got all sorts of other issues they've inherited with their school, they don't want to be boxed into a position by their colleagues where their governors are saying, "We want to see the individual tracking of every single pupil because I mean, I'm acutely aware of the horrendous burnout. And yeah, I'll actually put it in words. Death rate amongst my colleagues.

43:12 And that was we're talking about the '80s and '90s. And I'm thinking the number of heads who retired with ill health and who died within a couple of years, and that was early retirement with ill health, just because the pressures of the job were so immense. You don't want to be adding to it. I certainly did with my own governors, governors in the school because we'd look at the figures and I would illustrate what interested us at the time, the staff.

43:43 This is what we're interested in. It may be a couple of children whose trajectory is the sort of one I've just described to you now yeah because that would be a concern to us. And the most vivid child I can think about with that, one of his parents was a governor, but they never realised I was talking about their child because that's how it should be.

44:12 And that opens up something else. It might not be a question, but I would answer it now. I always felt there was a tension that you had to work on with governors that they weren't there to fight their corner for their own child. Yeah And I know you get it. And I know some of mine did.

44:41 I think I would look back now and say, yeah, you would say a governor has actually assimilated the role of being a governor when they are able to step back and not say we look at their response to the following situation. We're thinking of reorganising the classes. We're thinking of moving teachers around.

45:12 They don't think, "Well, who will be teaching my child next year?" They're able to step back and say, "Dispassionately, yeah, what you're planning to do is in the best interests of the school in total." It might actually be my child is taught by a teacher who I'd rather not talk.

45:37 They were taught by based on possibly community gossip, but also because they do have privileged information, don't they?

What they know about the school. And I think it can take quite a long time to governors to get to that point when they're able to just walk away from the impact it has on their individual children.

46:02 And I think possibly one of the most gratifying it's not enjoyable aspects of governance is when you've got governors who are able to function in that role, they can see they are strategic.

46:27 And I think I mean, when we federated, that was probably that was a hard federation. So I was head of two schools. 18 months did that take us? Endless meetings setting it up. Sorry, that was a pejorative term, wasn't it? It was quite time-consuming. It was a relatively new governor, yeah but gendered statement.

47:02 She went up in my estimation. I mean, I'd known her as a parent. I've known her for quite some time. I've got quite a lot of sympathy from what she's putting up with, and I will come back to that in a minute because it illustrates a head and a governor's relationship. And she was superb in the whole process of the two schools federating.

47:36 She was able to step away from the impact it had on her two children and their lives. Though I would say it was beneficial to them. Yeah She was able to think strategically and dispassionately, and she'd probably been a governor five or six years by then. My gut feeling is that's possibly as long as it takes for a governor to grow into what being a governor actually is.

48:07 And it always used to say exasperating, frustrating. I'm sure you can think of the correct word that I ought to be saying when governors moved on yeah and you'd invested, say, the six to eight years in them becoming a strategic, dispassionate, disinterested governor. And then they stop because they no longer got children at the school and they can no longer be a parent governor.

48:36 And you'd think, "Okay. So we're back to square one again with somebody else." And I think if I come back to that particular governor and this might be of no use to you at all, her husband had a reputation, a terrible reputation of playing away with every available other woman in the village. We all knew it. She knew it. It made her quite miserable and unhappy at times.

49:10 And once we got over the got over it's a majority of terms as well, isn't it? Once we successfully managed the federation, I can remember sitting down with her in the office as well, basically, a friend. And she was talking about her life. And I just said to her, "I'm going to say I just said, "I can't quite understand why you put up with it." And the next thing I knew, they were getting divorced.

49:43 And I said to her, "Oh, he was terrible to her. He really was." And next time I saw her three or four months later, I said, "Well, what made you decide to get divorced now?" And she

looked me straight in the eye, and she said, "It was that conversation I had with you in the office when I was telling you how unhappy I was." And you just said, "Why do you put up with it?" And I thought, "Well, if he's asking me that, why do I?"

50:17 And I suppose that's the sort of relationship you want to have with your governors, isn't it? Where they can share. But you could argue it could just as easily have been a parent. No, it could just have easily been a parent. But actually, the bonds you form through being a governor, working together, mean you have potentially a closer relationship with them than I would have done with her if she'd just been a parent.

50:52 If I'd only known her as a parent, not as a parent and as a governor, I wouldn't have had that shared working experience, would I?

Sarah Chung: 51:02 Yeah. Gosh. Did you ever find that those bonds that formed had a negative effect?

Lawrence: 51:15 You need to elaborate what you mean.

Sarah Chung: 51:18 So within the governing body, obviously, you're working quite closely together.

51:23 And like you were saying, that you form bonds over time. Did that bond ever have a negative effect in how either they challenged or how you received the challenge?

Lawrence: 51:39 No. I wondered if you were asking me, "Was there any sense of favouritism?" So you've got I think it actually made it better because they could challenge me in a way that I wasn't threatened by because we had a good working relationship.

52:04 They could say things to me. I can vividly remember this when we were going through the process of federating one of my longest-standing governors who you know we got a really good I've got a really good relationship with just turned to me and said, "Oh, my teachers, they all play the Tim Peake garden." I said, "Well, I hate to disappoint." So what are you exactly talking about?

52:41 Whatever it was, and I can remember, but it then becomes banter and it becomes humorous. It doesn't become formal. Because I can remember at another time, we were talking about something or other, and we had a discussion. I had a very strong view on how we should proceed forwards for all the reasons I've outlined before, day-to-day involvement, professional expertise, training.

53:06 And one of them said, "Well, what would happen if we disagreed with you?" And I said, "Well, I'd just sit here expounding and developing my case until you agreed." And they said, "Well, it's fortunate we don't disagree with you then, isn't it?" And it takes the time to build up yeah the comfortableness in your own skin with each other to be able to have that sort of relationship.

53:46 Erm...Yeah, I think that answers that one, doesn't it?

Sarah Chung: 53:56 It does. Fantastic. Thank you. So I know we briefly touched on it earlier, but finances. How good were your governing body at overseeing the finances?

Lawrence: 54:13 It's very much like the SAT data.

54:16 Yeah And I want to contextualise this because I'm very numerate. Sorry, blowing my own trumpet. By inclination, I'm a natural scientist, so you know interviewing people and stuff like that.

54:37 I'll joke about it's not my forte, but I was always asked and I always volunteered with my colleagues. No, I volunteered. I offered them. When they're a new head, I said, "You look at your budget, and if you want someone to sit down and go through it with you line by line and explain to you how it works and contextualise the spending with you, then I will willingly do that for you because when I took over the budget, it was a gradual procedure.

55:18 I mean, I was ahead before we had local management or whatever it was called LMS. And to be dropped into it straight without ever having had responsibility for it in previous school is a big thing. And that service was called on many times, quite often by established teachers, because they knew I just understood money.

55:50 So when we ever put together, say, 100,000 bids for the DfE to run activities with children in, say, 8 or 10 schools, I forget how many. I was the fund holder. I was the person who managed it. I was the person who they actually gave me power to withdraw money from their school budgets yeah if necessary as per our agreed thing.

56:17 And I'm thinking that's an awful lot of trust there putting in one head teacher who actually can say, "I want £1,000 from each of these school budgets or whatever," because you could abuse it, couldn't you? Oh, yeah. You could hoover out a lot of money and put it in your own school budget and go, "Oh, redundancies never heard of them." And certainly, when had some problems, I can remember at least twice, they had concerns about their PTA accounts, and they thought they couldn't see how the PTA treasurer was presenting it.

56:57 They thought money was going missing.

Sarah Chung: 56:59 Right. Okay.

Lawrence: 57:01 So rather than them challenging it, they get someone who, by this time, was well-known in a much wider community. And when we get onto the training, you'll realise why. We need to have our PTA counts ordered. They'd ask me to do it, and I go through it for them. And on both occasions, there wasn't

anything missing. But what I want to say is I did audit a lot of other organisations' accounts as well.

57:30 And they are all presented in such different ways that quite often I'd look at them and go, "Oh, my goodness. This is just why is it presented in this way?" yeah It doesn't make sense. Why is income presented no, cash income presented as a negative expenditure down here?

58:03 Because I'd be saying to I remember saying to you, "This wasn't to do with school. It was an organisation. I can see your check income here, but I know that you've had cash income and it's not recorded with a check income. I can't immediately see where it is." And they go, "But it's down here." And I go, "But you've recorded the cash income as a negative expenditure. Why have you done that?" And they just had because they thought that made sense to them.

58:31 And I think understanding budgets should never be taken lightly. Yeah And everyone has their own foibles about how they should present them. Local authorities have their way of presenting a budget. We had our school way of presenting a budget, which was the fine-tuned way of presenting it yeah because we used to track it.

58:59 There is no use relying on the local authorities records because the reason why I say that is I knew several heads who got into trouble. You know what you've spent. You know what you've ordered and hasn't been invoiced. The local authority doesn't. They've just got their projected expenditures smoothed out over 12 months.

59:22 And I know of at least two schools who relied on their local management assistant who would say to them towards the end of the year, "You've got £15,000 or so more of a surplus than you were expecting." We will claw it back because the government now makes us claw it back unless you spend it. So they'd spend the £15,000 in a rush, then find out they had already spent it anyhow, but the authority hadn't had the invoices.

59:53 So then the authority was saying to them, "Well, actually, you've now got a £15,000 deficit. How are you going to claw back the money this year?" And if you've got your own spreadsheets and you track it minutely, you know exactly, a bit like with the children, where you are. You don't get into that sort of a pickle. Yeah So as with the fine sat data, I think we tried every conceivable way of presenting the financial data to them so they understood it.

01:00:28 But I think hand-on-heart, it's a very big ask. And I couldn't say that they really did understand. And certainly new governors for them to say, "We want to invest a lot of time and effort in saving money on cleaning materials, toilet rolls, and such like and thinking, saying, "Well, the best you're going to manage to save is 1,000 pounds," which is worthwhile in itself.

01:01:00	But how much time and effort on staff's part, myself and school business manager, will it take to assist you in your savings and expenditure? We'll probably find the costs yeah exceed the savings, in which case it's just not worth doing. Okay. Okay. That's great. So I would say we manfully endeavoured to ensure they understood it.
01:01:29	Some of them did. Some of them would but it took an awfully long time.
Sarah Chung: 01:01:35	Yeah. So is that experience and serving as a governor...
Lawrence: 01:01:41	That would be long-serving governors. And if they'd had the relevant experience, how do I put this without appearing to disparage people?
01:01:55	If let's say one of your governors was a county counsellor and used to setting county council budgets, I found they'd have a much firmer grasp of big picture, and they'd bring with them the knowledge of, "But the way the wind's blowing in the cancel next year, it's likely to be like this." So your forward planning would actually be enhanced by having that person as a governor.
01:02:22	But compared to somebody and this is going to sound disparaging, but I don't mean it, who, let's say, maybe is a midwife who I would rate immensely highly of immense value to society, but their working life isn't going to be in any way connected with managing budgets and resources yeah so they don't bring with them an additional layer of experience that complements what the school's already got.
01:02:53	And if they've never been a treasurer for any local organisation ever then oh, yeah. And then if you've got the governor, which is male, so we've got gender balance here, that's all right yeah who's running his own business that's basically heading for bankruptcy.
01:03:26	So the family rally round to dip into their pockets to bail him out so he can carry on playing at running a business. The whole governing body found it quite difficult listening to that governor pontificating about how to spend money because they all knew. I mean, the only reason I knew that his business was in trouble and failing was because the governors told me.
01:03:59	Because they knew because that's what governors do. They keep you informed of what's going on in the community. So if you've got a very hypothetically rural community, a very successful farmer running a very successful business, knows that one of his fairly local neighbours running his own not a farming business, but sort of associated business is failing.
01:04:25	Yeah Why would you give them much credence when they're trying to have a school budget be spent?
Sarah Chung: 01:04:37	Okay. That's fantastic. Thank you.

Lawrence: 01:04:40 So that's the interesting dynamics you get.

Sarah Chung: 01:04:44 Yeah.

Lawrence: 01:04:45 And if we're talking about dynamics, oh, I can remember lovely people as individuals, but there was something between them.

01:04:55 So you'd be sitting in a governing body meeting talking about something fairly neutral and anodyne. And it was like being at Wimbledon because you've got the two of them batting things across with each other. I'm thinking, "What is going on here?" Because it's nothing to do with governing the school. And none of the governors knew. None of the others knew. I only found out when the second one stopped being a governor.

01:05:28 And it's probably two or three years after the two governors who work with each other, their families had a dispute over the ownership of some land. So they had this long-running legal battle over who owned I forget that it was a field or access to a field or things like that. So they've been at loggerheads, and both families were quite miserable.

01:05:57 They explained quite a bit about the children as well once you knew after the event. But they've got their own agenda, scoring points against each other at every available opportunity. If I'd gone to the parish hall meeting and they were both on that, you probably would have had the same thing going on. But it wasn't widely known in the community, which was very unusual. So nobody else knew why there was a tension between these two people and why they were always being very short and snippy with each other.

Sarah Chung: 01:06:32 Gosh. That must have been a tricky one, actually.

Lawrence: 01:06:36 Well, with experience, you just know it's nothing to do with the school. It's nothing to do with governance. It's just what's going on. And that is life in a rural community. We had a mature mother who'd had a son very late in life, one of many mature mothers, but she was one. She came and helped in school.

01:06:59 She put an awful lot of time and effort into school, and she was absolutely fine until her husband was playing away. And then I would receive twice a week two or three pages of A4 complaints about the school. Which are me because I was the nearest available man she could have a go at.

01:07:34 And when her husband stopped yeah playing away and came home, I didn't get the letters. And I ended up thinking, "Actually, what I'm doing here is I'm providing a social service to the community because I'm allowing this woman to let off steam. But the first couple were extremely distressing. And I did talk to I think he was the chair of the governors at the time, and he said, "Well, what you got to realise is.

01:08:06 A husband who's a long-distance lorry driver is long-distancing and not coming home very often because she's got a wife in every port or whatever the phrase is. Well, thanks for telling me that because that is a governor supporting a head. So I used to give it to my extremely capable and trusted school business manager to say, "Another letters arrived from her. You read it.

01:08:36 If there's anything I need to know and do as a result of it, just tell me because personally, I don't want to read it because it's just upsetting. Because basically, it's just personal vitriol because she can't take it out on her husband.

Sarah Chung: 01:08:54 And she was a governor as well?

Lawrence: 01:08:56 No, no. She wasn't a governor.

Sarah Chung: 01:08:57 Oh, she wasn't. She was a parent. Right.

Lawrence: 01:08:59 But the reason I knew that was because I'm pretty sure he was chair of governors at the time, told me because I said I'd have the letters, "What is going on here?" And he knew.

01:09:09 So he told me what was going on in her personal life. So I was able to distance myself from them and say, "This is nothing to do with me in the school." So that is a governor looking after a head teacher's well-being. Because they have community knowing knowledge that the head didn't because we're talking rural community. Five, eight miles away from the school is where they lived.

01:09:40 It's a different world from being in a town.

Sarah Chung: 01:09:44 Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. Absolutely. Well, it sounds like at least you had the support of your chair of governance there.

Lawrence: 01:09:50 But they were all like that. Oh, that's good. If I tell you another story about how the governing body actually rallied round and worked together, we had a very difficult parent, mother, an absolutely lovely father.

01:10:13 He was an absolute pleasure to be with, and he stood out in many ways. And I'll tell you the whole story. She got mental health issues. He was a herd manager. So he'd managed to herd over in East Anglia. .

01:10:40 And she'd so fallen out with the school head to the west of the herd he was managing, that the children then had to go to the school as far as possible to the east of it. And she fell out so spectacularly with them you know as in banned from the school site. I mean, in the end. No, we didn't. No, we didn't. We found a way of coping with her, but it was tempting.

01:11:10 He was just unbelievable. So they moved from East Anglia to the West Midlands because they couldn't move to any other local school because basically, she had queered the pitch with

every school in the local authority because heads talk to each other.

Sarah Chung: 01:11:26 Yeah, of course.

Lawrence: 01:11:27 Oh, if they come and apply to your school, just lie and say you're full. I don't know what it was. But that's what you'd say jokingly to her head.

01:11:36 Just find some reason because she's just unmitigatingly unpleasant. I undeflectable, I would say, would be something I think my staff would say. He wanted to cheat and lie over all sorts of things. She was very, very difficult.

01:12:06 Parent governor elections. She wanted to have a vote for this was after she and her husband had split up. She'd found a new man in her life. She wanted him to have a vote. And I said, "That's fine. If you want him to have a vote, you just need to sign and say he's living at the house five days a week or spend five nights a week there because he needs to be his children's prime carer." Not a problem.

01:12:34 Yep, yep, I'll do that. Then she realised it would queer her benefits because he was only technically allowed to be there two nights a week and that she'd lose them. So she came back and told me that wouldn't that didn't apply, so she wouldn't be voting, but she'd still got the voting papers yeah because she always wanted to have her own way.

01:13:00 She then sticked into school when I wasn't there and tried to put them in the ballot box for the parent governor elections. But because we knew what she was like, all the ballot papers were numbered.

Sarah Chung: 01:13:15 Ah, okay.

Lawrence: 01:13:18 Unfortunately, she was in a bit of a tizzy about it and dropped them down by the back of the ballot. No, she didn't. No, that was a different story. She put them in the ballot box.

01:13:26 And I said, "When I got the governors and the candidates, the parent governor's election there, I said to them, as a returning officer, I'd withdrawn these two ballot papers and explained to them why this parent has put two in that I know she's only got a right to put one in. So basically, it's cheating. And that's a decision I've made.

01:13:57 And I run it past the chair of governors, obviously, and endorsed it. Once they split up, she wanted the children to be named after the dad, the new man in her life who may or may not have been living five days a week. Absolutely fine. You need to do it by deed poll. Children have unique pupil numbers, and then they need to match that. It all needs to be done properly.

01:14:27 It's no problem at all. Just do it by deed poll. Yeah God, she went ballistic. I was just being difficult and awkward and just

making her life miserable. But she was like that the whole time. What she would do is she'd drop the children off in school yeah and then harang the staff or the children, vile, abusive, and unpleasant. So I got my best TA and said, "We're just going to have to pay because I could have banned it with that.

01:14:58 We were an inclusive school. So my very best TA, I paid her extra to come in early so she would man mark her. We'd have TA on playground duty, seeing all the children into school. Quite often, I'd be out there as well. But I got one dedicated TA that man marked her. So she would follow around wherever she was. So this woman would come in, hang her children's coats up in the cloak. It's fine.

01:15:26 Absolutely. It's fine. Perhaps even talk to the teacher in a pleasant way because there was a witness there standing at the shoulder. You then walk out and we'd all go, "Oh." And then five minutes later, she'd be back in again. Having dropped the children off a quarter too. She'd be back in again at two minutes, too, and she'd have the TA following her around. And the parent, the mother, actually clocked what we were doing but didn't understand it.

01:15:59 She turned to the TA after we've been doing this for some time and said, "What's it like having the head watching you the whole time?" Because if I was about, I'd watch what she was doing, and she thought I was watching the TA was paid to man marker. How did this go? She split up with her husband.

01:16:27 She was carrying on with the farmer who I mentioned before who was running around with everyone. The story connects with that for a time before I think he saw through it. Then got in touch with another man. She ended up falling out with her neighbours in such a way the police were involved regularly having to stop them battling each other with bogs of wood.

01:16:59 Now, much as she would complain endlessly about me, not changing the child's name, just being difficult and awkward, and never doing what she wanted. Well, I won't. I'll do what's in the best children of interest. I'll listen to what you've got to say, but I won't agree with you. I've heard you, but I'm not going to be swayed by you. So the village police person turned up on more than one occasion to referee these fights and calm it down.

01:17:29 So she engineered a campaign of picking on the policewoman person's son. We had endless complaints that the son was bullying her yeah and her friend's children, which she patently wasn't. I mean, she used her friends more than herself, so I got an endless set of formal complaints.

01:17:57 In the end, which came to the child, the child said he'd be bullied endlessly all day by this child. And I said, "It can't have happened. It can't have happened. It can't have happened because I'd kept him in at lunchtime. He'd been helping me do something at playtime. It just didn't happen. Perhaps you've misremembered it.

01:18:24 And he said, "Oh, no, it was the day before." And I said, "You're absolutely sure that is both parents myself and another witness. You're absolutely sure this is when it happened. This is your final it happened today." Yeah. Absolutely. Picked up the class register and said, "I can show you the register. The child you're complaining about was absent that day.

01:18:50 And I can hold up the letter I cannot show you, but here's a letter from the mother saying she's had to take him into the hospital for a medical appointment. Yeah And unfortunately, it's the middle of the day. So by the time she's taken him in and brought it back, it was the whole day's school. Yeah. Yeah. So basically, all hell broke loose. The two of them were slugging the school got something rotten, and they took. Basically, she was engineering.

01:19:16 She's the mother with mental health issues, setting up the situation so she could move her children to the next villages school, but her friend would come with their children. It was all just manipulation. But the governors were better than brilliant. They went in the evening and talked to the friend's parents. Yeah They talked to her. They did it several times.

01:19:45 They tried to act as mediators between someone who got mental health issues, a family that had been manipulated into a position, and someone who basically wasn't going to back down. Sorry, your child is not being bullied. And they'd come in after a cup of tea and biscuits, and they go, "How do you cope with people like this?

01:20:17 How do you deal with that? How have you been doing this job so long?" They're just totally and utterly impossible, are they? And yeah, I think you just call them unreasonable and unreasoning. They just want to have their own way and think they can bully their way into getting it. And they moved to the next local school who had a much black and white way of managing them, I'm sure.

01:20:52 I think a teacher was physically assaulted by one of the children and then up off stick. I think a table was thrown and injured two children that ended up going to hospital. As a result, they were not easy children at the best of times, but we'd managed them.

01:21:12 We not only contained them, but educated them by a process of putting their needs first and just always being there and talking to parents and saying, "Sorry, it's just not acceptable. You need to take him home and have a really good word with him and bring him back to school when he's in the right mind to come here.

01:21:37 The parent's no, the governor's involvement in trying to mediate between that, there were three or four of them involved, maybe even five because that's what we agreed they would try and do because she'd fallen out with the police. She'd fallen out with the local boys football club for exactly the same reason. She'd fallen out with the school.

01:22:04 She was just impossible. Yet her husband was a totally different kettle of fish. We used to take children on residential trips like schools do. We needed parents to come to help make up the numbers. We couldn't afford the staff. We hadn't got enough staff. So we'd usually take a couple of parents. Parents were willing to go with their own children on their own trips.

01:22:33 I said them always slightly defeats the object because being away from their parents is part of it. So I will keep you as far apart from your own child as possible, which they did. But the dad was the only parent in the whole time I was there, 28 years of residential trips, who went on a residential trip where neither of his children went on it. He was the only one. I got a lot of time for him.

01:23:03 He moved away because he just couldn't cope with being with her. The marriage split up. She was just beyond. He moved down to Devon. He moved down to Devon. And it's not to do with governance, but it's about to do with being a sort of open, caring person who will put other people first. When [redacted] and I went down to Devon, we had a parents' evening with him yeah in a pub in Exeter.

01:23:37 And I think yeah, but he was a decent man, and he was very concerned about his children, heartbroken about how they were being coached into being like their mother. He was just in despair because he phoned me up on fairly regular intervals for a parent to even you know book one. 7 o'clock when he finished milking.

01:24:04 And I knew the day had died down, and then we left in school to demand my time and attention for any reason. But then I did that with several dads. Their marriage had fallen apart. They'd been excluded. They'd moved away. So they'd come in for a chat to me 7, 8 o'clock at night, sit and weep in the heads office about loss of contact with their children. And you think, "Yeah.

01:24:35 But if it was me, I'd want someone be doing that for me, not going, "Oh, it's 5 o'clock. I've got to go home and have something to eat now," which isn't the way the school ran. We had to meet the needs of the community and the children. Right. So that was off. Yeah That was off-task with governorship, wasn't it? But never mind.

Sarah Chung: 01:24:59 No, that's okay.

01:25:00 It's always nice to hear those Sort of...erm.

Lawrence: 01:25:02 But it sort of contextualizes a mindset of a rapport with a governing body yeah because I think my view was very much more welcoming than a lot of other heads I knew because I thought they did have a lot of advantages. They could bring a lot to the school that would enrich the work of the governing

body, but they didn't understand as often as not the minutia of education while running a school.

01:25:30 And why would they? I mean, crikey, if someone said to me, "Right, you've been put on a governing body of hospital, "Would you like to micromanage the ward system?" And I go, "Well, okay. Yeah. Once upon a time, I was a mental nurse and I did work in hospital, but it's 40 odd years ago now, and I would not have the conceit or the arrogance to think that I could do anything other than ask as an outsider.

01:26:02 It always intrigues me while you do things this way. I bet there's a perfectly rational reason. If not to, please could you explain them to me? Yeah We can do this, can't we? Yeah. That's my mindset, I suppose. Right. Next proper question, please.

Sarah Chung: 01:26:22 That's lovely time check. Are you okay for time? Do you just have to?

Lawrence: 01:26:26 Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 01:26:26 Okay. Yeah.

01:26:27 So well, the next question really is talking about strategic and operational.

01:26:33 So the line between strategic and operational can be seen as a very gray area for some. How confident are you that your governors know where governance ends and SLT, her teacher responsibility, began?

Lawrence: 01:26:51 If they didn't know, they were fairly soon appraised of where it was.

01:26:59 If I come back to the incident with the governor who wanted to spend a 10,000 grant, that's a quite clear example. There were times when I wanted to restructure the school and move the staff around because it was the best way of developing the staff. It was all about staff development. I would talk to my colleague heads about what I was thinking of doing. I would talk to the advisory service.

01:27:28 I would then discuss it with the governors, and I would say, "you know I want to know what you think. I want to know how the community will perceive this. I want to have this discussion. But ultimately, it is my decision. It's the head decision how to deploy to staff. But I really value your opinion and your observations. So I think they knew fairly clearly.

01:27:56 But it isn't to say that it won't stop new governors yeah until you've gone through that stage with them of realising it doesn't come naturally.

Sarah Chung: 01:28:09 Okay. Okay. That's great. Thank you. So that's COVID. We'll ignore that one. If you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be?

01:28:24 And why do you think it's essential?

Lawrence: 01:28:35 I think the biggest thing is almost what you've alluded to now. It's about what are the responsibilities of a governor.

01:28:45 When I, with the succession of other heads, ran the governor's training sessions for notionally new governors for the 8 to 10 schools that we did, it was focused on we actually phrased the questions, "What can you do?" We presented them with real-life problems. A parent comes up to you as a governor and raises a concern with you, for instance.

01:29:16 I can't remember. We gave you more concrete examples of that. What can you do? What can't you do? And what must you do? So we looked at things, and I think that covers governor's corporate responsibility.

01:29:38 The governor that well, it was the governor with the failing business whose family propped him up, who knew how to run the school budget better than anyone else since the history of time, yeah was elected as a parent governor and unilaterally booked the village hall to hold his parent governor constituency consultation sessions with any parents who wanted to drop in with no reference to anyone else whatsoever.

01:30:15 Attended a governor's meeting at that point. Because that's what he thought being a governor was. Though the fact the whole of his life, living in that community, no governor had ever conducted themselves in such a way. But it's the conceit of somebody. I did nothing about that because the governors rounded on him and battered him into submission.

01:30:48 And bearing in mind how a community works, they probably cancelled his booking because they would have been on the village or committee, and they would have just said, "You're not having the booking." yeah So it's that sort of thing because I think governors need the reassurance of there are things they can do, there are things they can't do, and there are things they must do.

01:31:17 If a parent came with a child safeguarding issue, to a governor, there's a set procedure how they've got to go about dealing with it. There's no wavering from it at all, is there? If a parent turns up to complain that another child in school is bullying their child, well, I suppose they could go round to the parents of the child that's been accused of bullying and have a nice little chat with them one evening or a stand-up row.

01:31:50 But it's probably not the best course of action. So I think it's actually knowing those boundaries and understanding that governors have a corporate responsibility, not an individual responsibility. They can obviously delegate responsibility for certain individual things, like you are the nominated SEN governor.

01:32:14 So in our case, when you have this school open afternoon for governors, that governor will go around, obviously, seeing how the SEN children do and what the provision actually looks like,

and the nominated mass governor may well go around with them because I always said you need to go in pairs because you get more from talking to each other about what you see, and you can do it by yourself. Anywhere you like, any cupboard, you know just go wherever you want.

01:32:46 That's a delegated responsibility to look at the master provision and talk to the children about what they're doing and how they're doing it, the rest of it. But you can't have governors unilaterally deciding that they're going to hold a surgery unless the governing body decides that's what they want to do.

Sarah Chung: 01:33:11 Yeah. Okay. That's great. Thank you. Very interesting approach from that governor then, I think, wasn't it?

Lawrence: 01:33:22 When I talk to my because you know everything about everyone in a community, or if you don't, your trusty governors will eventually bring you in.

01:33:34 The person involved had grown up in the community, gone to school with everyone else in the community, so they all knew what a technical term edited out, what a complete bozo he was. He had actually gone to and this is going to sound academically elitist, but he'd gone to a very third or fourth division university, failed, come back to the community, and he'd become a cowman.

01:34:12 Now, that obviously didn't fit with his notions of his own worth. So he then set up his own business that had failed. And you think when I was talking to my advisor about it and just say, "Well, you know this is proving quite difficult. This is our management.

01:34:38 You've got any suggestions because that's what you do." She said, "Well, what's interesting?" So basically, you've got the poorly educated cowman telling your Oxford graduate educated head teacher how to run the school and started chuckling. Well, yes, it's interesting in itself, but it doesn't actually move us anywhere any further forward, does it? The governor's dealt with him, and we just managed him in the governor's meetings.

01:35:11 [redacted]

01:35:43 [redacted]

01:36:12 [redacted]

01:36:40 

01:37:07 

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01:39:04 

Sarah Chung: 01:39:21 He sounds colourful as a character.

Lawrence: 01:39:27 I'll tell you why.

01:39:30 

01:39:57 

01:40:31 

[redacted]

01:41:03 [redacted]

01:41:31 [redacted]

01:42:06 Basically, we'd blown their cover story, but we didn't know that at the time. Yeah So basically, he was so angry, he just wanted to do anything to get back at the school where his children to which his children went. And this is the sort of what's the word I'm looking for?

01:42:36 The sort of dynamics you get in the community, isn't it? After the event, we knew exactly what his agenda was and why. But at the time, when he was just being difficult and awkward, we didn't.

01:42:50 And then we put it all together, probably a trusty set of governors myself, sitting in a pub, drinking a few drinks together, and it actually makes sense of why he was as he was and why she wanted the job and why she'd been canvassing for it at school because [redacted]

01:43:21 How can people be so amoral and unprincipled? Yeah. Yeah. That's both your staff and your governor. Right. I hope this is giving you quite an insight into.

Sarah Chung: 01:43:37 It is, actually, because most governors I've spoken to have been more city-based.

01:43:44 It's nice to get a smaller you know community viewpoint of governance as well. So yeah, definitely.

Lawrence: 01:43:54 But it's also a very stable rural community. So I hadn't been that long. This is a one-minute anecdote. There were two little girls who were best friends whose mums usually picked them up together, who were pretty Pally.

01:44:13 And one day, grannies came to pick them up. And I looked at the two grannies and had a little chat with them. They'd gone to the school together. They were best friends. Their daughters had gone to the school together, and they were best friends, and their granddaughters were going to school together, and they were best friends. And you go, "Ah." So what you do in a school in a rural community like this is setting probably a small

part of the agenda of the whole of that child's social life course and trajectory.

01:44:49 If they have issues with other children because of family feuds over land and you don't do something to ameliorate that, their relationships will be scarred for life because they will be there living there for their funeral, won't they? Because it is that stable and you think, "Gosh, this is not like working in a town school where the community comes and goes.

01:45:22 And in 20 years' time, there won't be any families that were here originally." I know that's a bit of an exaggeration, but there is a much higher turnover. And you go, "Wow. What a social responsibility we have as a school." If we don't help those children overcome the social friction between families, nobody will. It'll never happen.

01:45:49 You got another question?

Sarah Chung: 01:45:55 I do. I've got a couple more if that's okay.

Lawrence: 01:45:58 Absolutely fine. Yeah. So I hope this is proving useful to you.

Sarah Chung: 01:46:03 It is. It really is. So it's nice to see, like I said, the other side. So we've talked about a piece of training that you think would be valuable. And now I'd like you to think about the least valuable piece of training that a governor could undertake and why.

Lawrence: 01:46:34 In the abstract, it would be anything that had the potential to coerce I'll say heads, but heads and the existing governing body into doing something that is pushing them a step beyond that with which they are capable.

01:47:01 I think back to the governor's training, I did. And the concern I had for data tracking, for instance, and recommending something that I knew would be a step too far for young, inexperienced heads, inheriting schools with other issues that left a very sour taste.

01:47:27 They've got enough to cope with sorting out the mess of previews they had left behind without being pressured into doing something that they didn't have a natural affinity or an understanding for. I'm thinking of one. I went on and I'm trying to remember what it was about. I think it was to do with something to do with IT. And financial management.

01:47:57 And it was the authority promoting its system of how it did it. And it must have been late in the evening. I must have had a long day, and somewhat uncharacteristically, I'd call the spade a spade. Now, all of that is said with turtle tongue in cheek because they rattled on and this was the what do we have? We had a chief education officer with the deputy chief education officer. He was running it.

01:48:26 I just said, "Sorry, can I just say that that's a total waste of time?" And he said, "Lawrence, other people might have a different opinion from you." Yes, I'll accept that. But in our

experience, because it is two to three months out of date, when you come to signing off your end-of-year budget, you need to have something that is up to date.

01:48:55 Otherwise, you will make the sort of errors that I talked about. Now, maybe as a result of that, and him being very high up in the authority, he might have gone away and said, "The county system needs to have something needs to address this issue." Yeah. I know because people told me this is going to sound like me blowing my own trumpet, but I don't mean it to be.

01:49:34 I know how the authority regarded me. I'd go on teacher training courses, and I got quite pally with some of the people who were running and the advisors. And just as they were retiring, a couple of them, one of them no, a couple of them said, "We'd look at who was coming.

01:49:51 We'd see your name on the lid, and our list and our hearts would sink." And I say, "Oh, why?" And I say, "What on earth have we got that we can do that would teach him anything?" And I know when the national literacy scheme came in, the authority was obliged to send round its literacy advisors yeah to watch every teacher in every school.

01:50:20 And we had this very nice man, [redacted], got on well with him. Wouldn't have rated him that highly in terms of education. He came and watched me do a literacy session with the oldest children in the school for an hour. Yeah So we popped in the office with a cup of tea, and I said, "Okay. Do I get any feedback? What development points have you got to offer me?" And he said, "Look, we and I both know there is absolutely nothing I can teach you about teaching children." So we just drank up tea and had to chat about something else.

01:50:52 And often, I look at what I used to do in terms of educating children, what [redacted] and [redacted] talk about, what they see in schools these days. And it obviously upsets them. And what I saw in schools, I thought was extraordinary, how clone-like, how mechanistic it is, how didactic it is.

01:51:19 I'm thinking, "Oh, for goodness sake, you can run a school that gets the highest academic standards. Certainly keeps Ofsted off your back. It keeps your governors off your back. It keeps the community off your back because we did." Without being like that, but you've got to have the confidence to do it. I mean, there were days. There were weeks when the children just planned their curriculum. They organise it. Why do I need I know how to organise a curriculum.

01:51:47 I don't need to do it again. But they could learn how to do it. I find what they say to me quite soul destroying. And bearing in mind, I've seen the cream to the cream of the schools that interest me. And I've got reservations about what some of the things they do. A lot of them, I think, is absolutely brilliant. I take my hats off to them. And the sort of issues I've talked about, they've had those as well. Such a virtue.

01:52:16 I mean, obviously, didn't really talk about governors, but all the other sort of stuff, difficult parents, nightmare parents, things going on that they don't understand why they've talked about those. And I keep saying nobody left at the school who is just prepared to run a totally child-centred curriculum because they know how to make it work. Give children their own voice.

01:52:46 And they go, "No. I can't believe that." And he said, "Well, how many head teachers are...? Ex-Headteachers are there doing a PhD? You're not actually that usual." "Okay, fair enough." But I suppose it was my driving passion in life. And it is sort of connected with the governance thing.

01:53:13 My favourite time of the week with the school was Friday after lunch assembly. Yeah The staff didn't come. They could do what they wanted. It was extra PPA time. You can sit and chat. You can do some preparation. Quite often, they'd take individual children out to do individual support work with. And I'd say, "Yep, that's fine, but you don't do the same child every Friday. You have to have some sort of road to it." yeah So it would just be me and the children.

01:53:43 And I'd say to them, "Well, how long do you want it to be? Are we going for a 45-minute or going for an hour session?" And we didn't have a school council because we didn't need to. It was just me and them. They had direct access to me. And I mean, a lot of it was what you call a proper church assembly. I mean, I've still got the slides. We'd run nativity assemblies with Renaissance art. We've got it projected on the screen.

01:54:13 And they could tell the story from that. So you've got Angelico up there, and you've got the children going, "Look at the little dove up there. All the little ones at the front with the really keen eyesight who were closer to it." And you'd be going, "Okay. That's brilliant." And they'd see things that I hadn't spotted. It was just absolutely brilliant. And look, there's the god blowing the message down.

01:54:40 There's this little golden sort of line where the message comes down to Mary with the annunciation. And it goes, "Oh, wow, this is good." You get the older children explaining it, what the symbolism and the meaning of it. But at the same time, we'd have what you'd think a school council would do. We'd have those sort of conversations. So every child had a voice. So we had a long conversation about I think it came from me and the staff.

01:55:10 We thought we needed to upgrade the toilets. We looked at them and said, "We're getting a bit old and tired. What sort of toilets would you like?" yeah And yep. So they came up with a plan. Some of them presented to a following Friday Assembly, two or three weeks later, based on the discussion we've had. There were several plans. We might even voted on it. I really can't remember. But we hammered out between us a plan that they were all happy with.

01:55:42 That's good, great. So we then got our lovely school business manager to cost it out. And she did. And I went back to them and was able to say, "What you want to get the figures is going to cost us 20,000 if we just replaced as is with all new cubicles, toilet pans and the lot, that will cost us 10." One of them said, "Oh, so we could have £10,000 spent on laptops.

01:56:19 So we'd actually be learning more from them." And they all went, "Yeah, yeah, that's a good idea. Forget the toilet plan. We'll have it replaced as is." And it was just a consensus amongst them. And I'm thinking, in a sense, if that's how I ran a non-school council, which I wasn't having because it was a government idea, and it was about getting people to vote in elections.

01:56:49 Well, if you were worthy of being voting for, people would come and vote for you. You're trying to solve the problem with the wrong solution. Democracy in action, the governing body ran the same way. Obviously, there weren't children. But it would have the same mindset behind it. It's about consensus and planning and then going, "Well, actually, we could do that, but we'd be better off doing something else instead." Okay.

01:57:21 Next question.

Sarah Chung: 01:57:22 Great. Thank you. So the NGA have openly stated that they feel that induction training should be mandatory within the first year. And in Wales, it already is running that way. So in your own words, can you explain whether you agree and why?

Lawrence: 01:57:41 Governors need to be trained, full stop, sentence.

01:57:47 There's obviously a range of things you can do with new governors. Experience and living through the things counts a lot. We, as a group of heads, were immensely dissatisfied with the local authority training for governors.

01:58:16 I very rarely went to it. Why was it [inaudible] and actually said it was a total waste of time? I don't know why I'd gone to that. So we ran sessions, as I said, for governors from six or eight schools to 10 schools. I can't remember how many it was, and I think it tended to vary. We ran them annually, and I think we maybe ran two, maybe three sessions to cover everything.

01:58:46 They included understanding a budget and don't ask tricky questions because maybe we won't. We never made out we were experts at anything. We'd say, "Ask whatever you like, but don't expect us to know the answers because we're not certificated governor trainers. We're doing this because we think this is the best way of doing it." We ran it like a pub quiz. So the icebreaker was all the jargons, the acronym, SAC, all the other stuff.

01:59:18 We insisted the governors were not allowed to sit with the governor from their own school yeah because we were mindful that the future held schools federating, schools amalgamating, schools being closed, and being a rural community, probably

75 or 80 percent of our children all went to the same secondary school.

01:59:42 So we've got a real sense of cohesion that you probably wouldn't get in a town school where the children ones I've visited, the children leave and go to six, seven, or eight secondary schools, yeah which I'm not saying one's better than the other. It's just different. But we needed to have a plan, not about how our own little individual primary schools work, but how we provided education for children across a wide swathe of the county that was very sparsely populated.

02:00:20 And that was really a big part of our agenda. So when push comes to shove and we're fighting to keep the secondary school open yeah or fighting to keep the secondary school sixth form, which I think was a battle that was lost after I left, you've got to have all the primary schools and all the governing bodies singing from the same hymn sheet and used to being together and working together.

02:00:49 And certainly, at one point, we decided we ought to seriously investigate becoming a multi-academy trust. Yeah And we found the nearest multi-academy trust that was geographically similar to ours was down in Cornwall, down by Land's End. Yeah So governors and heads or staff from the eight or nine schools that were interested and the secondary school, we all went down to Cornwall to see how they ran theirs.

02:01:26 So we were informed when we made the decision, it wasn't the right way forward. We hadn't made it on the basis of ignorance.

02:01:34 But I don't think i think that would have been much harder to organise an engineer had we not had maybe five years plus of community governor training prior to that because we did have a sense of collective cohesion that we wouldn't have had before, but it was very much driven by one person who's sitting here now talking to you because I can remember talking to a previous advisor and saying I sometimes have real issues with some head's commitment to this local community.

02:02:21 They just see as long as their schools are like, that's all they're interested in. They sort of build a little fence around it. And got put in place quite properly. Not everyone thinks the same way as you do. Some heads see it immediately as a stepping stone moving on to a much bigger school. Okay. Fair enough. I've taken the point. I should just carry on promoting a cause that I think is worthwhile.

02:02:50 So I think yes. But there's only a limited amount. I think schools need to have their individuality. Governors don't need to be trained. Say our school needs to be the clone of every other school in the country because communities are different. Their needs are different. Their children's needs are different.

Sarah Chung: 02:03:20 So there's a personalisation element to it?

Lawrence: 02:03:25	Which is what we always went for. It's not black and white. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 02:03:34	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So we've reached the end now, but it's a little opportunity. If there's anything that I haven't asked or that you can think of, feel free to just mention it now.
Lawrence: 02:03:55	I think I probably explained or given convinced an ethos of running a school that was very child-centered, very collaborative. Everyone worked together. Yes, I had mega issues with governors at times.
02:04:14	I had mega issues with a parent when I refused to let his wife come into school because I just have two key stage one teachers in tears every day she came in. She wouldn't do what she was asked to. And you're thinking she was coming in Monday mornings. They dreaded coming to work on Monday, and I just said it wasn't working, and I've asked you to do things, and you've chosen to do other things, and I need to consider my staff's well-being and welfare. So I have to say that's an end to it.
02:04:43	Gosh, the fallout from that was just unbelievable. I had my union involved. After I'd retained my job, yeah the very senior union representative turned to me and said, "I'm surprised you're still here after putting up with that." And I said, "I'm undeflectable." It has taken a lot out of me as a person, but I will leave this job when I'm ready, not because I've got a hate campaign engineered by one person.
02:05:25	Again, a fairly unsuccessful person in their own right has taken exception to me saying, "I'm not having your wife in school." But I look back on it and go, "The funny side, the county had its own baseline assessment that predated EYFS.
02:05:50	Then EYFS came in, but it meant I tracked every individual child from their baseline to their key stage one to their key stage two, and we had our own internal moderated assessments of children's work throughout the school. So we knew exactly where the children were. So EYFS is fairly black and white, isn't it? We always did it by the book. I always supervised it because I wanted continuity.
02:06:21	Whatever the well, actually, we still used the old baseline thing. We did that as well. It was rude, sorry, crude, clunky, and mechanistic, but it gave you something you knew what it was. It wasn't slippery like the EYFS was. It tended to change with regular monotony. Anyhow, I always, with the staff, went through the EYFS and went with the key stage one teacher assessment and what we reported just so we got consistency for the tracking.
02:06:53	Our intake always was very poor. I used to lead the teaching of writing with the oldest children in the school and drove to writing because despite being a mathematically-based science graduate, I am reasonably literate, stroke highly literate. So

advisor comes in and says, "This school's a bit of a problem." And I went, "Oh, why?

02:07:23 I hadn't noticed." And he said, "The school's EYFS scores are the lowest in the county." And I said, "Well, you and I aren't surprised by that, are we?" And he said, "Yeah, but your year six writing teacher assessments are the highest in the county." And I said, "Well, you and I aren't surprised by that. Oh, we just felt about laughing." And he said, "You need to take this seriously." So I said, "Okay.

02:07:52 I can expect to have the EYFS fully moderated externally by the authority next year and the key stage two writing, fully moderated. So I've got no problem with that because that's how it was. Anyhow, so the following year, Poor [redacted], who was teaching at the time I mean, I told him, said, "You got to make sure all your evidence is there.

02:08:19 Absolutely squeaky clean." So they come in and they totally agree with their assessments. They're fine. That was one of them. For me, because of my reputation authority, there's two of them coming. Okay. So if you need moral backup, that's fine. So they've got the head one and the deputy head one.

02:08:45 So we go through all the children's writing, and we got one child who got straight level sixes, and I'll sign off with telling you a bit about him. And one girl who'd been moved to our school probably in the year five, year six because her parents realized she was way off the pace and they wanted her brought up to standard in her year, which happened with regular monotony.

02:09:17 Why did you do this when they were year three? Why wait until the year five well into it before you say, "Oh, we've woken up and smoked the coffee." Anyhow, I was saying, "This child's borderline three and four, and I might have to give her a level three." And they're looking at her again. She's nowhere near a level three. She's way into level four. Not to my mind, she is. Look at the criteria. They looked at this level six child's writing, and I said, "I'm minded to give him a level five.

02:09:50 There are aspects of level six, but I'm not convinced it's an absolute shooing for level six. What are you talking about?" So they said, "They're all level four, level five, and you've got your one level six cast uncertainty." And I said, "Okay. Thanks for your advice. I still think I might enter them as a three and a six." Sorry, a three and a five. And they left me there. I'm not having my judgments changed by you.

02:10:21 You don't actually teach children to write all day, every day. The child was a level three and sorry, a level four, a level six. That's what I recorded them. And the boy his mother worked at [redacted] University. Two and a half to three hours' drive from the school.

02:10:50 She'd grown up in the village. She knew the school's glowing reputation. She knew that I would teach them at the top end of school. So the family moved to the village to an hour's drive

	away. Dad became the carer. Mum continued working at [redacted] University.
02:11:16	Bottom line so he could be educated by me because he knew I would stretch him to his absolute limits. Oh, lovely. And he was a very capable boy. Anyway, he was fun to teach, but they all were. I got as much pleasure teaching SEN children to get their level two and a half and think, "We've done better for this child than we have any other." But I hadn't I mean, her agenda was she wanted him to excel academically.
02:11:51	And she'd moved into her school and disrupted her family life to the extent because she thought that's what I would deliver. She did check I wasn't planning to leave before. So I had my absolutely lovely TA, the one who was better than most of my teachers, who when I left, got so fed up with that school and had gone down the pan, she moved on to the secondary school one day, leading like TAs there.
02:12:28	So she saw him all through secondary school, and she sent me a lovely message saying them moving him to the school we both worked at that achieved everything they wanted. He's done his A-levels. He's got his place at Oxford, and he's going to read medicine. They achieved everything they wanted. And the family wanted her to tell me how grateful they were. And you think that's what you do the job for, isn't it?
02:12:57	Yeah it was. Yeah, occasionally. Occasionally, no, you need to remember the good bits, not just to ding bat governors you encountered during your time. But as a human race, we always remember the negative, don't we? Focus on it. We'd rather moan and praise. And we all know that you just praise, praise, praise children all the time. That's how you get the best out of them.
02:13:29	Yeah. Well, this has been....Hopefully, this has been immensely useful to you.
Sarah Chung: 02:13:36	It has. I'm just going to stop the recording.

Stella

Sarah Chung: 00:00	So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I'm currently researching the importance of governor training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance.
00:27	So during our interview, we will discuss whether the training your governors have received has helped them to achieve this. Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that your governors have received appropriate training to help them address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within their role. We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the role of a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training.
00:59	I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation that you've signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all the information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years. So should you wish a copy of the results, please feel free to email me at s.j.chung at pgr.bham.ac.uk.
01:31	Do you have any questions before we begin?
Stella: 01:36	No, that's fine.
Sarah Chung: 01:37	Brilliant. Okay. So should we start off with something that's fairly easy? How long were you in SLT? You were an assistant head teacher, were you, or?
Stella: 01:48	Deputy head. I was assistant head and a deputy head, and I guess 13 years as an SLT. And I've been a governor in two different schools.
02:03	So I was a teacher governor for about two years, quite a long time ago, to totally different school when I wasn't in SLT. And then, of course, I'm an associate governor. As the deputy, you're the associate governor, aren't you? And I was an associate governor at the school that I'm at now, effectively, but I'm not an associate governor anymore, and that was for six years.
Sarah Chung: 02:30	Okay.
02:31	And how did you find that? Did you find any differences between your time as a staff governor and when you were then an associate?
Stella: 02:39	Yes. I think as a staff governor, when you actually are a governor, obviously, your role is in a way to work with the

governors. And to be able to question the head teacher about you know the role and the direction the school is taking, as an associate governor, I was very much you know as a support to the head teacher.

03:00 And I would answer a lot of the questions as an associate governor to support the head teacher in how he answered the questions to the governors.

Sarah Chung: 03:08 Okay. Lovely. So what has been your most enjoyable time in governance?

Stella: 03:21 I don't know really. I can't really think that it was I mean, it wasn't enjoyable or not. It was just part of the job.

03:30 I suppose getting to know some of the parents a bit better who were governors. And then, yeah, getting to know them and having a relationship with them that meant that I think they trusted the school because they you know knew me. When we had a change of her teacher, it was very helpful that I didn't change. So I was there to sort of help and support the transition.

03:55 And I think that probably wouldn't have been as easy if I hadn't known them as well as I had done. So I'd say the relationship. I think the relationship with some of the governors was helpful at that time.

Sarah Chung: 04:11 Okay. That's lovely. Thank you. Can you think of any part of your governance journey that was probably less enjoyable?

Stella: 04:27 I think, oh, again, it's kind of just how it is, isn't it? It's difficult to say whether something is more or less enjoyable. No, I'd say not really. I'd have to say no, not really. Because I don't think it's in a way, it's not really about personal feelings.

04:46 It's just about, "This is what the situation is, really." You just kind of have to get on with it, I'd say. Sorry to not be.

Sarah Chung: 04:54 No, no, that's absolutely fine. Always nice to see those different opinions. Do you feel that it was more sort of just the way it was because you were working in education rather than, for example, coming in as an outsider?

Stella: 05:11 Yeah. I'm sure that's the case.

05:13 I mean, I think it's a lot easier for me to understand how a governing body works because I work in education. And it's my job. It was very much it was my job. So I'd say it was you know useful to kind of come at it. But I imagine from a governor's point of view, they must think it's really strange, I think. You know Schools are run very differently to other organizations. And I think they're very strange organisations, aren't they really schools in the way that they're run?

05:44 So yeah, I guess probably that's right.

Sarah Chung: 05:49 Okay. Lovely. So do you feel that the governing body that you were with understood the expectations around their role in the school's strategic direction, for example?

Stella: 06:00	I think it takes them a while to do that. I think they come on board very expectant of wanting to help. And sometimes they do have they don't quite get it.
06:12	They don't quite understand the role, which is why I think the training is really important. And then they tend to go on their training and go, "Oh, I see what I understand now, what my role is." And yes, so I think that's a big sort of important moment for governors. Is that sort of a light bulb moment once they've been? I think so. And I think before they've had that training, they can be a bit confused.
06:41	Not surprising you know unless they've worked in education and stuff, and they kind of know what it is. But I think you know there can be a moment of you know not quite sure how their role fits in and what they're supposed to do and all those sorts of things. That can cause issues, can't it?
Sarah Chung: 06:58	Definitely. So do you think have you experienced any difficulties with governing bodies with that lack of knowledge?
Stella: 07:07	Well, sometimes they do yes, they do sometimes take on a role that we don't think is appropriate. So for example, they might take on the role of kind of being the spokesperson for a group of parents and think, "Actually, that's not really your role." So that definitely sometimes happens. And that normally happens before the training happens and all those sorts of things.
07:34	I do think that the experienced governors also are quite important in sort of showing the inexperienced governors the ropes, really, as well. So I think you know difficulty is the wrong word. I think sometimes there's just some teething problems, and then they kind of go, "Oh, okay. I see how I'm supposed to be," and that kind of thing. That definitely helps sometimes. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 08:00	Okay. Lovely.
08:01	So can you tell me a little bit about the school's ethos and whether the governing body were involved in developing that?
Stella: 08:12	So our school's ethos is all about expectations and you know basically having really high expectations. So it would be all about exceeding your expectations and inspiring rooms. That's essentially the strap line.
08:31	But the governors weren't involved in that, but they would have kind of agreed with it. So I think that was decided, actually, by the previous current head teacher. And that was just before I arrived, I think. So yeah, it was one of those things where I think it was suggested I think it was all part of that head teacher's recruitment process. And so I think they kind of bought into that.
08:59	And so he arrived with that. And it's all about and I've helped develop this. It's all about kind of making sure we've got really

high academic standards, but we have a broad and balanced curriculum, not two difficult things, especially together. So yes. But I think they are on board. I think they are on board with it, and they do understand it, and they know where we're coming from.

09:25 And a lot of those parents have chosen the school that I'm at deliberately because that is the ethos. And that's very much something that's marketed to parents during open days and things like that. So they know and they understand all of that.

Sarah Chung: 09:40 Okay. That's great. Thank you. So what about sorry, let me just say this. A little bit now about pupil performance.

09:57 Can you explain a little bit about how your governing body oversee pupil performance?

Stella: 10:03 Yeah. I mean, I do think it's something that they find quite difficult to understand, actually, because there are headline numbers, and headline numbers are only part of the story. And our headline numbers are very good, and they can explain that. But you can then say, "Well, actually, there are these areas of concern." So you know I would crunch the numbers and try and explain it to them in a way that you think they're going to understand, but it is quite difficult for them to get their head around all of that.

10:33 But we have you know governors who are very educated. You know They come from professional backgrounds, and they do understand. And they will ask the right questions. But I do think you know certainly, some of the governors do, but I think others perhaps do find that a little bit hard because it's not necessarily about the fact you might have some really three kind of you know your reading, writing, and maths numbers might be really high. But actually, it's kind of what's going on underneath those numbers that's important, really.

11:03 And I think sometimes that's quite difficult. You know they trust you. You trust your expectation or your explanation, but sometimes you know I feel sometimes that we have to point they're not necessarily asking me the difficult questions. I have to normally say, "Actually, these are the issues that we're still a bit concerned about." And we sort of present them to them rather than them looking at the numbers going, "Well, what about this? What about ABC?" I would give them ABC kind of before we get to that stage.

11:29 And I'm not sure if I didn't do that, I'm not sure whether they'd pick up on what perhaps some of the issues were because you know it's a bit specialist, really. And you have to kind of really know what you're looking for, I think. And I think it's hard sometimes for them to hold us to account about that and to be that critical friend. It is so specialist. But we have educated parents, so they do know. They do know. But yeah, they need some support.

Sarah Chung: 11:59 So you mentioned there that you've got educated parents, people that have come from professional jobs, perhaps, that

	are bringing external skills in. Do you feel that helps somewhat?
Stella: 12:12	I think it does. Yeah. I mean, I think they understand about the pressures of working in a difficult environment, you know a pressured professional environment.
12:24	So you know we would have governors who might be in the NHS or solicitors or accountants, that kind of you know professional. Some of the parents are. Some of the governors. But we've had governors who've been teachers who were parents as well, and then they've become co-opted governors as well. You know We've often had a local authority governor, you know all of that kind of thing. I think it's important.
12:55	You know And it does help. But I think, on the other hand, we have had to have some quite frank conversations with governors as well about I think they can be a bit rose-tinted about the world, and they come onto the playground and they don't see actually what's going because why would they? We have to sometimes talk quite you know about some of the difficulties that some of our families have. So for example, at our school, we have a food bank.
13:25	And I know that some governors have been really upset that we have families that might need a food bank. Now, to me, of course, we've got families who need a food bank. We have some families who have some very deprived have a very deprived background. They have very little. But for them, it's a bit of a shock. And I think that's because you know the school that I work at is very unusual, I think, in that we have this big group of middle-class, essentially, middle-class professional families.
13:57	And then we have a big group of families who you know find life difficult, very difficult for various different reasons. And I don't think there's many primary schools where there is actually such a big mix. There's often more one than the other, isn't there? But there is actually a really big mix with us. And I think some of those more educated families, professional families, they do find it a bit of a shock when they kind of come over to the other side on the governing body, and we talk about what some of our family you know the circumstances that some of our families are facing.
14:33	So yeah, it is useful in that they can talk the talk and understand the numbers. But equally, it would be nice in a way to have a governor that really does understand some of the challenges that our families are facing. And I think it's sometimes quite hard to get those people onto the governing body.
Sarah Chung: 14:51	Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. So from what I can see then, it's helpful to have those skills, but they don't always translate into an educational setting.
Stella: 15:01	I think that's fair enough, yes.

Sarah Chung: 15:03 Okay. Lovely. Thank you. Have you ever been challenged on your data, effectively challenged, you feel?

Stella: 15:15 I don't think so because I think my approach has always been to tell them what the challenge is before they tell me what they think the challenge is. And I will say, "Well, actually, this is the issue here. You will have noticed that." And so I think that's always been my so I don't think I've ever had any difficult questions about you know what on earth happened with this year group.

15:37 And you know you know normally, I would head that off before it even became a question. But you know I would say there'd be a follow-up question. You know You know how effective is what you're doing? How effective is it? And we'd say, "Well, you know we're trying our hardest and we're hoping it is effective. We can't guarantee all those sorts of things.".

Sarah Chung: 16:01 Okay. So there's a level of challenge, but it's sort of precipitated by you defining.

Stella: 16:08 I would say, yes.

16:09 Yes. There is a level of challenge. Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 16:11 Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for the management of staff. How confident do you feel that your governing body were in that area?

Stella: 16:26 For the management of staff. Oh, yeah. I would say I wouldn't say there was an awful lot of challenge there. Yeah.

16:38 No, I probably wouldn't say there was an awful lot of challenge from our governors, but I would say that they were very supportive of the head teacher. The only challenge that we have occasionally had is by a governor who's challenged how much money we've been spending on staff.

17:00 So you get parameters from the local authority that might say, "you know This is what we think the norm is for staff spending." And then the governor would say, "Well, you're spending more than that." And then we would say, "Yes, but every school around here is spending more than that as well. You know It's like like a function of the local economy that actually, in our finances, that that is the nature of the situation.

17:27 And one of the reasons for that is that that number that they're giving you as a ratio for how much money to spend on staff might be kind of like a median number. When you have some significant elements of deprivation, which you know a lot of schools in Birmingham have, then at that point, you need to up your spending on staff because it's the staff that can make the difference because we are these days expected to provide early help in school.

17:56 So yeah. And that's kind of I'd say we have been challenged on how much we've been spending on staff, but not really on the day-to-day treatment of staff. And I'm pretty sure not on the

actual agreement of, for example, staff going up to another point on the pay scale. That's not really been challenged before.

Sarah Chung: 18:21 Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.

18:25 So that contextualising it helped them to understand more to say, "Well, this is the local environment, and this is what it would be.".

Stella: 18:37 Absolutely. Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 18:39 Lovely. Thank you. So as well as setting the ethos in the strategic direction of the school, whilst also ensuring there's a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing. Probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight.

18:57 How confident were you that your governors could achieve that?

Stella: 19:05 Well, I think some of them could. And I think that probably is what you need, isn't it? You don't need every governor yeah to be able to do that. But we have had governors who are accountants, for example. And once they understand the budgeting process and the budgeting process in schools is incomprehensible.

19:27 But once that they understand, actually, the key talents of the budgeting process in schools, then they can actually be very useful at you know asking that question about salaries, which it needs to be asked. Obviously, it needs to be asked. So I would say that, yes, they do ask those questions. They have asked those questions, and they have challenged.

19:49 I think the bigger point, myself, is the way that finances are managed within schools and certainly in [redacted] schools at the moment, where there is a tricky situation going on you know with the city council and the new you know the city council and the new financial situation. And that's really hard governors to kind of provide support in that when the council itself can't provide the support. You know And that's a difficult situation.

20:18 Do you know about that? Do you know what's happened?

Sarah Chung: 20:21 Somewhat. But if you want to explain, that would be.

Stella: 20:23 Yeah. So they've changed over the financial system to a new system. Yeah And it's created a massive mess. You know I think there's a formal inquiry going on now. And so school's financial systems are in we're very fortunate. My school is very fortunate.

20:47 We've got a bursar who's absolutely on top of it. And she knows she's probably one of the most qualified experienced bursas in the city. So we're really lucky in that she knows what the issues are. The question would be, if you've got a new

	person doing her role in a different school, don't know what the issues are. Actually, don't know where the problems are, whereas you know and then holding the council to account. That's actually really hard, I would say, for governors under this situation where we're in a bit of a crisis, actually. Birmingham schools are in a crisis, especially big secondary schools with massive budgets. I cannot imagine.
21:17	It's really hard for governors to provide support to schools under those circumstances, I think. And all they can do is sit and listen and be sympathetic. But you know I think there's a new management team in place now at the council to try and sort it out. And people who weren't involved in the original decision-making have gone. So yeah, there are no secret accounts, I don't think. Yeah. So it's been a hard I think that's a hard situation.
21:46	So in a moment of crisis, it's actually hard for governors to provide that support other than being sympathetic and supporting and just going, "Well, you know whatever you want to say will back you" type of thing. Yeah. Is that something that you feel could be addressed by training, or is that just a specific, unfortunate occurrence at that time? I don't think that could be addressed by training. No. I think it's a no.
Sarah Chung: 22:15	Okay. Lovely.
22:16	Thank you. So have you ever had questions asked you in a governing body meeting over financial?
Stella: 22:28	Yes. Yes. Yeah, we have. Yeah. Like, for example, yeah, they will challenge and they will challenge over, for example, you know there will be discussion about, for example, the head teacher's spend if the spend goes over a certain amount.
22:46	Yeah I'd say we're in a fortunate position as a school where we have to spend money you know because if we don't, you know the city council might want it back. Yeah So you know we're in that fortunate position. But yes, they do. And I'd say it's the accountant governor who's actually very good at that. And there will be questions. But I'd say a lot of the questions are actually about the budgeting process, which isn't anything to do with the school.
23:17	You know It's just the way that schools are budgeted for in Birmingham. Yeah. But yeah, no, we do. We do get those questions from them. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 23:24	Okay. Lovely. Can you think of a time where you were challenged on a financial decision? Do you think the challenge was appropriate?
Stella: 23:34	Well, I'll go back to the salaries one. And I do think it's the right thing to do to ask that question.
23:39	And we do say, "Well, this is why we have that salary structure." So yeah, I think, really, it's hard to do that unless you have some kind of accountant qualification, or you've got a

	sort of nose for numbers. Now, I'm not an accountant, but I have done in previous life, I have done sort of some kind of you know accountancy qualifications type things. And I do know about reading a balance sheet.
24:07	And obviously, schools don't have a profit and loss. They have income statements. But I think, really, if you didn't have that background, it would be hard for you to see your way through. So it's back to this whole dichotomy. You need somebody who is a professional, qualified person, versus the fact that they might be the people who don't really understand the issues of the school because they're from such a different background.
24:39	And I suppose, really, it's all about having a balance and a mix of governors, isn't it? So you've got you know people from different backgrounds.
Sarah Chung: 24:48	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So we're going to talk a little bit now about the eight elements of effective governance. They've been identified as essential to good governance. And what we're going to do is a little bit like a words association. So I'm going to tell you what it is. And if you just tell me what you think, what it means to you.
25:09	So we'll start with A, the right people around the table.
Stella: 25:15	So I think obviously, that's essential. I think kind of going back to what I've said before, I think it's really hard to get all the right people around the table. And it can be that you end up, unfortunately, with everybody who looks a bit similar to everybody else in the same background. And what you do want is you want a mix.
Sarah Chung: 25:38	Okay.
25:40	B, understanding the role and responsibilities.
Stella: 25:44	I think training is essential for that. And often governors come in and they think they know what the role is, and then they kind of go on some training, and then you know they learn. And I do think it takes time to be a governor before you kind of get your head around it. And I think it's like really, you need to go through the whole cycle for a year before they really start contributing, I think, unless they've done it before.
Sarah Chung: 26:09	Okay. Wonderful. C, good chairing.
Stella: 26:13	Yes. Yeah. I think that's really important to know when somebody to be able to give somebody some airspace to talk. And actually, you know including the governance, not just the head teacher and allowing people to challenge, but also being able to say, "Right, we just need to move this on now." Yeah. Very important.
Sarah Chung: 26:34	Okay. Professional clerking.

Stella: 26:37	Yeah. Very important because actually, I've had to do this where we've had to actually look back and think, "Well, what did we say about that?" Yeah. Absolutely. And it's essential.
Sarah Chung:	Good relationships based on trust.
Stella:	Really important again. But I think kind of you know a lot of that is two ways. So it depends on the governors giving up some of their time to come in and spend time with staff and the school.
27:08	You can't just turn up to the meetings. It's a bigger job than that, isn't it? So I think that trust happens when we have that two-way conversation. And I think on the other side of it, it also happens when you know the school is open and honest and says what you need to say when we need to say it.
Sarah Chung: 27:29	Okay. Knowing the school.
Stella: 27:33	Yeah, yes, very important.
27:35	And again, schools are very complex and complicated places. So it comes back to being able to have governors who you feel happy, that you know they're going to come into the school or they're not going to cause they're going to go to behave professionally about the whole thing. And yeah, that's important to know the school.
Sarah Chung: 27:53	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. G, asking challenging questions.
Stella: 27:59	Yeah. I think that's a lot harder for them. I do think that's a lot harder for them.
28:05	And I think you know it comes back to it's really hard when they've just started to do it to kind of you know I did meet a governor once who she only came to one meeting because she came, and she just thought, "I can't do this." She worked in a very she was a very successful person who worked in a different kind of an organisation.
28:27	And I just think she thought you know it's very hard because you're expecting governors to hold head teachers to account for very complicated situations. And I think she thought, "No, I can't do that." So she just stepped away from that? Yeah, she did. She just said that it's not for me. I think it's good on you.
Sarah Chung: 28:51	Yeah. Yeah. Do you think it's important then to give them the opportunity to attend an actual meeting before they fully decide, fully commit.
Stella: 28:59	I think it would. I think so. I think it would be good for them almost, yeah, to do that. It's really difficult, though, because the level of conversation that we have and confidentiality, I think it's a really difficult situation. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 29:14	Okay. Lovely. And having courageous conversations in the interests of children and young people?
Stella: 29:24	Yes.

29:25	I think i think if a governing body is having to do that with a head and the deputy, the head and the associated governors about, "Well, we go to have a courageous conversation." I kind of think that they've chosen the wrong head teacher, really. Yeah. Because it's the governing body who choose the head teacher. And yeah, I think if you're feeling the need to have that courageous conversation about, "Right, we want to be suddenly very ambitious with the school.
29:56	We don't think you are," or, "We don't think things are right," then something's seriously gone wrong, isn't it? I'm guessing that those kind of courageous conversations might have to happen after an Ofsted inspection, maybe.
Sarah Chung: 30:08	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So moving on, we'll talk a little bit now about the grey line between strategic and operational. So it can be quite a grey area for some, I think, can't it?
Stella: 30:22	Yes.
Sarah Chung: 30:22	I think you briefly touched on that at the start, having to have conversations.
30:27	How confident are you in knowing that the governing body, your governing body, knows where their responsibilities end and SLT responsibilities begin?
Stella: 30:38	So governing body well, I'm not there now, but last year. They absolutely knew. But I do think there are, as I've said, there are sometimes some teething problems. And I do think that a lot of governors, you know they've got so much going on in their lives. The last thing they want to do is become strategically involved in the day-to-day running of management school because it's a messy business, isn't it?
30:59	And it can go wrong very quickly. So I think most of them think, actually, I don't you know very happy to leave in my experiences, most governors are very happy to leave head teachers to get on with the day-to-day operation of the school.
Sarah Chung:	Okay. Wonderful. So were there any examples of governors that have crossed lines or?
Stella	Only the one that I was talking about where the governor didn't really, she was a new governor, didn't really understand I don't think the remit of a governor, she'd been.
31:34	Basically, she was putting forward the point of view of a group of parents in a way that was inappropriate. And that was dealt with quite you know swiftly, really. She's still a governor. It's just I think she kind of got it a bit wrong. You know And I think i think that's to be expected, really, in what is quite a bizarre setup because I think governing bodies are it's all a bit strange, isn't it? And I think those sort of missteps are to be expected.
Sarah Chung: 32:05	Am I correct? I think I recall you saying that she had some mentoring?
Stella: 32:10	She went on some training.

Sarah Chung	Training. Okay.
Stella	She went on governor training. And I think then I think there was probably a conversation like you can't really have this conversation. You know This isn't quite what the governing body is, and you've only just been on it, and we'll send him some training, and then, "Oh, I know. I will see. Right. Okay. I get it now." Yeah. Yeah. And that sort of thing happens quite often.
32:36	I imagine that people yeah, possibly. I don't know. But I wasn't particularly surprised. It's only happened once, but equally, I'm not surprised it's happened sort of thing.
Sarah Chung: 32:46	Yeah. And who had that conversation with her? Was it the head teacher of the chair?
Stella: 32:51	No, the chair of governors. Okay. Wonderful. Which I think was appropriate. It was absolutely appropriate for the chair of because she was a governor, so it should have been the chair of governors rather than the head teacher. If it'd been a teacher saying something, it should have been the head teacher's job, but it was the chair's responsibility, I think, to do that.
Sarah Chung: 33:07	There's quite a clear line, then, between who's managing, who's running the governing body, and okay. Lovely.
Stella: 33:14	Absolutely.
Sarah Chung: 33:15	Okay. So the impact of COVID-19 pandemic has been absolutely immense, hasn't it? Can you describe governance during that time for you?
Stella: 33:29	To be honest, it was very, "Are you doing okay?" type of questions.
33:35	From our governors, rather than they didn't really get involved at all in the operational side of things, quite rightly so. It was more a sort of a well-being conversation and a check. And then we would have online meetings, Zoom meetings for our governor meetings. And that was the nature of the sport. You know Is there anything else that we you know would ask very open questions? Can we do anything? Can we do anything to help?
34:04	And that kind of thing. There's nothing they can do to help. All we could do is sort of say, "Well, you know thank you for listening." Because you know I think we used it as a bit of a time to offload because you say, it was a very difficult time. And you know we were having to make some really big decisions very quickly about the way that we were managing the school. So it was tough.
34:30	But I think on the whole, our governors were very hands-off operationally, but they were regularly checking in to see whether we were okay or not.
Sarah Chung: 34:42	Okay. Good. So was that via email, phones?

Stella: 34:47	So a combination. So some of the governors, their children were at school kind of coming in and it wasn't all the governors. I'd say it was two or three of them. The chair included.
34:57	Obviously, it was kind of very much her job, but you know it would be if their children at school, they would be talking to us, kind of drop off and pick up. And I think the head had the odd phone call from them. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 35:09	Okay. Wonderful. And that was quite effective then?
Stella: 35:14	I think it was I don't know what else they could do, really. Yeah. I think it was just saying, "We're still here and thank you for everything you're doing, really." I think you know it was supportive.
35:26	I don't know how. I don't really know what else they could have done because I think if they tried to get too much involved, more involved, it would have been a bit like well you know, you crossing over the line there. And you know they know where you know our chair of governors very much knows where that line is, and she wouldn't have wanted to have done that.
Sarah Chung: 35:48	Okay. How did the monitoring work during that time? Did it effectively stop?
35:57	Was it sort of a more relaxed approach?
Stella: 36:02	I wouldn't say it didn't stop because we had online meetings. And that happened quite quickly, actually, because we got very used to very quickly using Zoom. Yeah So it didn't stop. Whether it was quite as rigorous when they're not coming into the school, it might be that actually is monitoring as effective you know remotely?
36:27	It probably isn't, is it? And also, at that time, there wasn't any data to share. We had this funny period of time where we had really 18 months, two years where there wasn't proper data. So you know that had an implication for their monitoring role. Yeah And then there was a lot more conversations that had to have around data when we did get any data. Yeah. So I'd say it didn't stop.
36:58	Whether it was quite as rigorous, probably not, because actually, it's quite difficult to monitor things remotely. And also, they didn't have the data to do the monitoring, really. So I would say it was more touchy-feely rather than using numbers to back up their judgments.
Sarah Chung: 37:16	Okay. Lovely. Do you think that how they approached their roles during COVID times, was that appropriate?
37:27	Or do you think there should have been a different way that governors approached it?
Stella: 37:31	I don't really know what they could have done, really. I just don't know because if they'd done anything more, they would

	have had our governors would have crossed the operational line, definitely. So I don't really know what else they could have done.
Sarah Chung: 37:47	So it was a little bit harder to keep that well, maybe not harder, but it was more obvious where the operational line?
Stella: 37:55	I think so.
37:56	Yeah, possibly. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 37:58	Okay. Do you think that governing during the pandemic highlighted any areas that you felt your governors were underqualified for or undertrained for?
Stella: 38:17	I think some of them had problems with Zoom. No. I don't think so. No.
38:25	Because it's still the same things, isn't it? No, no. I don't think so. Not that I can recall, really.
Sarah Chung: 38:33	Okay. That's lovely. Thank you. I think Zoom, it was a bit of a quite a short, sharp, shock introduction to it, wasn't it?
Stella: 38:43	It was.
Sarah Chung: 38:44	Okay. So thinking now more widely about training, if you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be, and why do you think it's essential?
Stella: 39:04	I think it would be well, I mean, it would just really be on what your roles and responsibilities and also what the expectations are. For example, you do need to come to the governing body meetings, those sorts of things. And this isn't something that you do just to put on your CV, you know there would be an expert.
39:27	So I think it's the key messages of what your role and responsibilities is, really. And you would be expected to come into school. You would be expected to have a relationship with the senior leadership team and then kind of get to know them. You are expected to, as much as you can, try and get your head around your responsibility, your specific responsibility, whether it's training governors because we have our governors have a responsibility for training governors, or they have a responsibility for finance, or they have a responsibility for safeguarding, or they have a responsibility of special needs.
40:02	You know You would be expected to put in some work to all of that. So I suppose, really I mean, the usual thing is that that training happens after they've been elected. But I suppose, really, I wonder whether it would be better if you know maybe there is. I don't know. Never knew about this, but maybe some short videos about, actually, this is what it's like to be a governor, and this is what the expectation is, is when you're a governor, you know like sort of short cartoon type videos and that sort of thing.
40:36	This is what your job is likely to be, but it won't be an operational situation. You know And this would be a crossing

	over the line if you started talking to head teacher that they should be doing this, this, this, and this. That wouldn't be quite right. So yeah, bigger focus on roles and responsibilities.
Sarah Chung: 40:54	Wonderful. So conversely, what, in your opinion, is the least valuable piece of training for governors and why?
Stella: 41:02	I suppose I don't really know what different training that they have had, to be honest.
41:08	So I wouldn't know I'm sorry. I don't really know what I'd say what wasn't useful. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 41:17	That's okay.
Stella: 41:18	I think everything is useful for them.
Sarah Chung: 41:22	That's wonderful. Thank you. All right. So I'd like you to think back now over your time as an associate governor.
41:36	So when you were the deputy head teacher, did you feel supported by your governing body? Yes. Can you think of a time or an example that they supported you?
Stella: 41:51	Well, not me personally, but I know that, for example, if we've had complaints about members of staff, they've been very supportive. And you know they've very much understood the school's position.
42:05	They've been impartial, but they have understood the school's position. And I think that's why it's important for the governors to know the school and to have the relationships with the senior staff because I think it can help them form judgments of situations. So I'd say that's a very specific example. I'm trying to think if there's another one.
42:29	I mean, I mean, over the pandemic, I would say they were supportive and that you know they'd regularly come up and say, "You all right on the playground, and how are you doing?" And I bought you some chocolates thinking about you, you know those sorts of things. What else? When else have they been supportive? I suppose, you know as we were talking about earlier, they've been supportive in that they know where the operational line and they know where that strategic line is.
43:00	And that is helpful because if you haven't got that, you know where. And the only other one that I can think of is that actually, this is about me personally. I worked with one of the governors who was actually a teacher. She was a parent and a teacher. She was an assistant head somewhere. And we developed and it must have been about six, seven years ago now. We developed the sex ed policy. And it's always a tricky thing to do. And she was very she was great, actually, because you know she really understood kind of what we needed to do.
43:33	And it was great to be able to say to the parents, you know we've put this to the governors, and they're happy with it. And she really understood that. So you know, on a personal level,

	that was quite helpful for me to work with somebody like that. She could bring her expertise from another school.
Sarah Chung: 43:48	So she actually helped develop the policy?
Stella: 43:55	She rubberstamped it. So what we did, I worked with a coordinator at the time in the olden days when we had coordinators rather than subject leaders.
44:03	I worked with a coordinator and we said, "This is what we want to do in the different year group." And it is a change from what we're doing now. Yeah, And we put it to her. She said, "Yeah, I agree with that." And then I think we might have made one or two changes, sort of having talked it through to her, and "What about this?" And she would say, "What about this and what about that?" And you know I would say she rubberstamped it and asked a few questions, and we probably made a couple of changes based I can't remember what the changes were, but sort of changes based on her challenge.
44:38	But yeah, so it was useful to have somebody who really knew what she was talking about and kind of didn't have to kind of get up to speed. She kind of was at the same level as we were straight away. That was useful.
Sarah Chung: 44:52	So that educational background sort of.
Stella: 44:55	That was helpful. Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely.
Sarah Chung: 44:58	Okay. Lovely. Can you think of a time there may not have been, by the way, but has there ever been a time when they weren't supportive?
Stella: 45:06	A time when governors haven't been supportive? I can't think of one, actually. No. No, I can't think of one.
Sarah Chung: 45:23	Okay. That's great. So now we're going to chat a little bit about the NGA who have openly stated that they feel induction training should be mandatory within the first year.
45:36	And in fact, in Wales, it already is. So in your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this and why?
Stella: 45:44	I would, and I'm surprised that I didn't realise it wasn't, actually. So it just shows, doesn't it? So absolutely. And that kind of comes back to what I said. People need to go on that training straight away so they can do their job properly. Yeah. Absolutely agree with that.
Sarah Chung: 45:58	Okay. And do you think as soon as they become a governor, then...
Stella: 46:02	Yes.
Sarah Chung: 46:02	...They should sign up for that training because there are some areas that actually make you sit as a governor for a term before you do the introductory training.

Stella: 46:14	Okay. Yeah. That's not what well, I imagine, to be fair, it probably takes a while to kind of get it all organised. And it's probably been a term before they managed to go on the training. But I can't see the value of that. I just think you just want to get you know you need to have your training as soon as you possibly can, don't you, really?
Sarah Chung: 46:33	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So if mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following? So content?
Stella: 46:45	I think it would come back to roles and responsibilities again. You know Kind of and some of the basic stuff. What is a governing body and why do we have them? And I'm guessing as well, there needs to be something on safeguarding, although I always think safeguarding is a bit confusing because you know they're not going to be making a referral about children because they're not working directly with children or they shouldn't be in their role, although they might be spending time with children.
47:18	So I suppose it's that possibility. I think it's more that they need it's about them understanding the issues of safeguarding in a school, really. So I think that needs to be important, especially for [redacted] Schools because obviously, safeguarding is so important in [redacted] schools. They would need also training on the finance side of things, as we've said. But I imagine that to some governors, that is just going to be completely incomprehensible.
47:46	And you know I think it would be good if the finance part was not generic to British schools. But for example, if you're being trained to be a governor in Birmingham, it's kind of linked to actually financial management schools in Birmingham would be useful. So making it local-specific would be good.
Sarah Chung: 48:06	So it's that contextualisation again, isn't it?
Stella: 48:10	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 48:10	Okay. Lovely. Wonderful.
48:14	So how do you feel the training should take place? So for example, we have a lot of training through the LEAs or we have it in-house within schools. Do you feel online might be beneficial?
Stella: 48:30	I personally think it needs to be face-to-face because I think you can easily drift off when it's online. Having done online courses and online training, I mean, it's a way of getting a tick in the box. It doesn't necessarily really mean that you understand what's going on.
Sarah Chung: 48:44	Yeah. Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So what are your thoughts on a modulated course delivered either online or in person or a bit

	of hybrid, which resulted in a certificate confirming a successful completion of that induction year?
Stella: 49:02	I think it would be good. Yeah. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 49:07	That's wonderful. Thank you. So we've actually reached the end of my questions. But I'd just like to give you an opportunity.
49:14	Is there anything else that you'd like to share about governance from your perspective?
Stella: 49:27	I don't think so. I mean, I think we've talked I think we've talked about it. I think you know you've hit the nail on the head in that the key is getting people trained properly so they understand what their job is because nothing like this exists anywhere else, does it really?
49:46	Even in the NHS, it's not the same. You know Trustee boards and those sorts of things. It's just not the same. So I think it's important to get the training right. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 49:56	Okay. That's absolutely wonderful. Thank you ever so much.

Ava

Sarah Chung: 00:00	So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I am currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body.
01:32	As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. And during our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this. Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role.
01:59	We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training. I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation that you've kindly signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I'd just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymised data destroyed after a period of 10 years.
02:35	Should you wish to have a copy of the results, please email me at s.j.chung@PGR.ac.uk. So do you have any questions before we begin?
Ava: 02:49	Not at the moment. When you start, maybe I have questions. Not now. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 02:53	That's brilliant. Okay. So why don't we begin with how long you oh, sorry. No, I have pressed record there. That's okay. How long you've been a governor?
Ava: 03:04	Actually, I started in January 2019. So you can say three years.
Sarah Chung: 03:11	Okay. And what has been the most enjoyable part of your governance? Most enjoyable part.
Ava: 03:21	The feeling, actually. The feeling that I am contributing something for the betterment of the school in which my children have been learned. And one of my son is still there.
03:32	So it's a kind of a satisfaction that I am trying to give my input in that process to improve the whole scenario for my children. For the other children, obviously, but you can see I'm a mother. So for me, my children are most important in the world. I'm not saying I have some high ambitious with that role, but it's a kind of satisfaction.
Sarah Chung: 03:58	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. Such a lovely explanation.

04:03	Out of interest now, what would you say the least enjoyable part of your governance has been?
Ava: 04:12	It's a kind of a meeting once in a month. But after that, a feeling of detachment from the whole board. If you are a person who wants to meet who want to meet or see the other board members, it will be okay for you.
04:30	But it's a kind of detachment. I'm not easy with that. For the whole month, you remain detached from the other members. After one month, you meet for one hour or two hours. So that's the least interesting part for me. There must be some more than one point between that one month. Any kind of combined assignment or a combined project, which you can interact with other people.
Sarah Chung: 04:57	Okay.
04:58	So that sense of detachment, it's almost like an isolation, would you say?
Ava: 05:03	Yeah. You can say isolation. I won't say isolation. It's a kind of [inaudible]. I'm able to see those people. Most of them are parents. I'm able to see them in the school going around, but still not talking to them, not discussing anything which we have common interest as a board member.
Sarah Chung: 05:22	Ah, okay. Right. So it's almost that professional side of it where you'd like to collaborate a little bit more.
Ava: 05:31	It's a professional role. This role is asking from you, the professional input from you.
Sarah Chung: 05:37	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So the NGA describes governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction. The following questions will explore your understanding of vision ethos and strategic direction. So in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?
Ava: 06:01	What I understand from the strategic direction is that it's a bigger picture. It's a main target, you can say, of a school or the higher hierarchy of the management of the school, that where they want to steer their school towards it can be achievement of the children in the form of behavior, in form of results. It can be anything.
Sarah Chung: 06:26	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.
06:29	And so using your own experience as a governor, can you explain how you shape your school's strategic direction?
Ava: 06:40	To be very honest, I don't think so that we as a governor, as far as my experience is concerned, that I'm putting too much informing their strategies, actually. It's the kind of whatever strategies they are.

06:56	We are supposed to be part of that strategic planning, but in essence, we're exactly not.
Sarah Chung: 07:05	Okay. Okay. So what's caused that do you feel?
Ava: 07:11	You know It's a kind of kind of a confirmatory role if I can say that. So these are our strategies. This is the way we want to run our school. This is the way we want to teach our children, or this is the way we want to have achievements from the children, okay?
07:27	This is our planning. So we are sitting in the board. We are just over there to read those strategies or to confirm, are they really doing that or not?
Sarah Chung: 07:36	Right. Okay. So you see it more as your role just to make sure that the strategy is taking place rather than taking part in developing that strategy.
Ava: 07:48	From the last three years, I didn't get a chance, any chance, I must say, to be the part of forming those strategies.
07:58	Just a control material. Are you doing that? Just a monitoring role, you can say. I didn't get that chance, actually. I don't know why, but I didn't get that chance. And do you feel that it should be something that you have the opportunity to do? Yes. It should be there because when you're just sitting over there to rubber stamps, the scene of the other people, your role is not that effective. I am very outspoken person.
08:30	So I'm kind of a pushy person, you can say. Most of the people don't like me because of that, but I know that I am there for some purpose. Not to say yes to them, not to confirm each and every decision. They are very good people. They are very professional people, and I do respect them. But still, we are there not to accept and absorb everything. We are there to give an input, to add some new vision, which maybe they didn't get the chance to think about that.
09:00	So it depends on the person. I'm not that kind of a person. If they're not giving me the chance, I will sit in the corner and just looking at them. I'm not that kind of person. I have been given my input. But the result is that I am not feeling that I have given any input informing their strategies. I'm still not satisfied with them.
Sarah Chung: 09:22	Is there a way that you feel you can tackle that dissatisfaction?
Ava: 09:30	What do you mean by tackle that?
Sarah Chung: 09:33	Well, you were saying you don't feel satisfied in how it is at the moment. Do you feel that you are able to approach anybody to say that, or is it something that's just not talked about?
Ava: 09:48	No, no, no. I'm not that kind of person who can sit silently. Whenever I feel that I should speak up, I speak up.

09:59	I'm not that kind of person. So it's not a matter of me, actually. Seven or eight people are sitting around me. All of these are board members. If I'm doing something because of my personality, you know kind of a person that I will do that. It doesn't mean that the role is aligned with that. This role is not giving me that opportunity or giving me too much room for that. It's me because of my personality, because I'm doing it.
10:28	Other people are not doing that because this opportunity haven't been extended to them actually.
Sarah Chung: 10:35	Okay. Okay. Thank you. And do you think with some of that, do you think there's any specific training that might help?
Ava: 10:48	I have been to various you know from the last three years, like about 20 trainings. More than 20 trainings.
10:56	I have been trying myself more and more and more how to give maximum professional input into that role. I've been to numerous training. But believe me, every training was just like that. I've been taking that training from NGAs, mostly from NGA, the online training courses. These trainings are brilliant. I must say these trainings are brilliant.
11:25	But what will you get at the end will last in your mind for one or two days? Maximum. I'm a short memory person. I don't know. Most people are like that or not. What I'm doing right now, it will stay in my mind for a couple of days, maybe a week. After that, if I won't be able to put that learning into practical situation, I will forget it.
Sarah Chung: 11:50	Right. Okay.
11:52	So just to confirm, it's the NGA training, did you say?
Ava: 11:56	Yeah, yeah. I have been to that development of Chair program last year. Yeah. I've also attended that there was a marvellous program. That was the program. I can say that that program gave me the opportunity to think about my role, to think the other board member, to think how I am doing, how I can improve myself, and how do I improve from the initial start, from the start of the training, and after eight months, how do they feel that how much I improved?
12:30	And yeah, I've given the chance to plan practically for my book.
Sarah Chung: 12:35	Okay. So it sounds like you've really enjoyed the training. With the whole concept of it being short-term in your memory, do you think that having the training contextualised at the time might help?
Ava: 12:55	Contextualized by time. Can you please elaborate a little more?
Sarah Chung: 12:58	Sorry.
12:59	Could you repeat that?

Ava: 13:00	What do you mean by contextualise?
Sarah Chung: 13:02	So if the training gave you real-life examples that you could put the training into, almost role play or examples of situations that have occurred. Do you think that would help with your memory in terms of keeping that training there? Or is it a case of it just has to be you contextualising it yourself?
Ava: 13:29	Yeah. Most of these trainings have that exemplary part in it. The trainings have already have that exemplary part. They have tried to put that into context, a different lifetime scenario, But that's very good. From the angle of the designing of those trainings, these are the best.
13:51	The problem is that if the person who is getting the training, who is getting the training, and spending one hour, two hours on that training, okay, if he won't get the chance, these trainings, actually, these trainings should be very person-specific, would be a kind of a suggestion for different people. You need this training. You need this training. This training would be, "You are a part of this committee. You should think about this training. You should think about this training.
14:18	This will help because if you are a part of a finance committee and you are getting the training for how to improve your syllabus, I'm not saying that that will be useless, but it's not very targeted one.
Sarah Chung: 14:32	Okay. So it's a personalized approach to a governor's training?
Ava: 14:36	Yeah. There must be some person in the board who will be able to suggest different governors, different member of the board, that if you are a part of this committee, you have given this assignment, this project, you are part of a pay committee. You are part of your appraisal committee.
14:49	So you must go for these trainings.
Sarah Chung: 14:52	Okay. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Thank you, Ava. So now let's have a look at school ethos. So in your own words, can you describe what is meant by school's ethos?
Ava: 15:07	Not exactly. I can't explain that. I can only understand that, but how to explain the ethos. Yeah. Yeah. No.
Sarah Chung: 15:19	I mean, there's no right or wrong answer, by the way, to any of these. If it helps, you know consider it in the context of your school at the moment.
Ava: 15:28	The school is saying high achievement for every child is a target. Maybe that can be but it should be the part of strategy, not the ecosystem. I'm not able to say anything. Maybe I'm not clear on that.
Sarah Chung: 15:46	No, that's okay. That's fine.

15:49	Again, as with the other question, do you feel there's any training that could be provided that would help support a better understanding of what the ethos might be?
Ava: 16:02	I think there are trainings available. They are already trainings available.
Sarah Chung: 16:07	Okay. Okay.
Ava: 16:08	That's what I'm telling you that when you are not putting these things into action, you forget these things very easily.
16:17	I'm the only one in the board who is trying to update myself on the monthly basis, if not weekly basis. But still, when I'm suggesting other people to go for training, they're asking for what? We have been to various trainings, so what? These trainings are not adding to our understanding. We are understanding we're getting only from the things we are facing in our real life in the school scenario.
Sarah Chung: 16:44	Ah right. Okay.
16:44	So I can see then that you're very committed to development as a governor through training. It seems a little bit like the other governors are learning almost on the job rather than.
Ava: 16:59	Yeah. They think that learning from the practical scenario is much better than getting from training. They have been to various training. They are more senior than me, actually. And they told me that when I tell them, "Okay, I've been to this training, this training, you should also go for that training." So for what?
17:17	Do you think these trainings add to our understanding? No. Whatever you will have you know you'll have the space to the actual situation in the school. From there, you will learn. From there, you'll get the experience.
Sarah Chung: 17:30	Okay. Okay. Right. So let's move on a little bit from ethos and now look at the vision.
17:42	So you remember we talked at the start about the three-point strategic direction, ethos, and vision. Can you tell me how you shape. Your sorry, where are we? Sorry. In your own words, can you describe what is meant by vision?
Ava: 18:00	Vision is exactly where the school wants to go, wants to reach, actually. For example, if the school requires improvement that's the least example I can say.
18:12	If the school requires improvements on the scale, its vision should be to improve to a good scale.
Sarah Chung: 18:20	Okay. Are you happy with your school's vision?

Ava: 18:27	Yes. Because from the last year, I have seen those people working hard because we were also a required improvement school. Now we are offset at the end of last year, and we've been approved to the good.
18:43	So we are satisfied with that.
Sarah Chung: 18:45	Oh, congratulations.
Ava: 18:47	Thank you. You feeling are a part of a team who is continuously showing the improvement.
Sarah Chung: 18:56	Yeah. It sounds like it's a strong team feeling there.
Ava: 19:01	Yes, it is. It was not, but it is now.
Sarah Chung: 19:04	Ah, okay.
Ava: 19:06	It has developed a lot.
Sarah Chung: 19:08	Has that developed fairly recently, or has it taken some time?
Ava: 19:13	It has taken some time.
19:14	There was a change of head teacher was changed about five years back. After that, he has continuously trying to improve and improve, try to get best people on board in the form of the staff or in form of best members in the governing board. And if we had any governor who were not contributing or who were not interested just sitting in that, we just said thank you to them and try to replace them with someone who can give input.
19:43	They're very willing. They had teacher and all the senior management team is very willing to listen to us. Whatever input we are giving to them, they are giving respect to that and try to incorporate those suggestions into their practical day-to-day activities in the school. That's a very good thing. We are very open to their suggestions.
Sarah Chung: 20:07	Okay. That sounds fantastic. It does sound like you've had a couple of difficult conversations with governors there as well.
Ava: 20:16	Yes. That's the life. Actually, if you want to say difficult conversation. Yeah. I'm at the part of finance committee, actually. And when they are finance, we have very hard things to discuss. Yeah I'm also chairing the finance committee. So when it comes to the valuation, what value you are putting in, not it's about the cost of the thing, what value you are getting there.
20:49	So it's a very difficult one. And sometimes it's become very tough for me to stop them not to do that because it doesn't have any value or to think again about that.

Sarah Chung: 21:01	Yeah. Okay. With the governors that you mentioned briefly a moment ago, the conversation that "thank you, but you know we need somebody else". Was it simply they weren't active enough on the governing body, or did they not understand their role, or?
Ava: 21:23	My apprehension was that they were not understanding them. It wasn't my decision, obviously. I was very new at that time, and there was a couple of members in the board who were just coming to the meetings, and that's it. And some of them were missing the meeting very continuously. So always have that quorum issue with us. So maybe that's the reason they said to them that if you don't have time, you don't have the obligation.
21:55	You can leave that. We can replace you with the other person. So it's a kind of a polite suggestion to them.
Sarah Chung: 22:03	Yeah. Yeah. And was that with the chair of governors?
Ava: 22:09	Yeah. During those three years, now I have second year of governor.
Sarah Chung: 22:15	Sorry. Could you repeat that?
Ava: 22:17	During the three years when I joined the board, now I have the second new chair, you can say.
22:25	And there was another person. Now a lady is sitting as a chair. I am the vice chair, by the way.
Sarah Chung: 22:30	Okay. Okay. Thank you for letting me know. And how do you feel about being a vice chair three years in?
Ava: 22:40	Yeah. It's a good experience. It's a good experience. Although I'm not satisfied with the way there is a role for vice chair, but that role is not as effective as it should be.
22:58	It should be a kind of succession plan, yeah. When you have the vice chair with you, that vice chair should be equivalent with all that information and all the things which is going on, which you are currently comforting as a chair, you should discuss with these things, the vice chair because you are actually preparing them for the future leadership, aren't you?
Sarah Chung: 23:20	Yeah. Exactly. Yeah.
Ava: 23:22	If I'm not getting that done, I'm continuously losing in the issue.
23:28	Sometimes I feel that I'm nosing too much. But I want to learn. I want to learn. That's why I asked so many questions. Automatically, the system is not allowing me to get that information.
Sarah Chung: 23:42	Okay. That's interesting the way you phrase that. The system's not allowing you to. Is that the system internally within your school?
Ava: 23:53	Yes.

23:54	System internally in the school because they are not getting the importance of that role because that vice-chair role is quite new. It's as young as me in the board. Two and a half years. Before that, we didn't have that tool. When I started that, after six months, they offered me that rule.
Sarah Chung: 24:16	Ah, okay. So before the two and a half years ago, it was just the chair of governors. There was no?
Ava: 24:24	No vice chair.
Sarah Chung: 24:25	No vice chair at all?
Ava: 24:26	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 24:27	Okay. And did they have a co-chair at all, or was it just one single?
Ava: 24:31	Just one chair.
Sarah Chung: 24:33	Wow. Okay. Okay.
Ava: 24:36	As new as me.
Sarah Chung: 24:38	So what led to that discussion on creating a vice chair?
Ava: 24:44	I don't have any idea because I was just six months being in that board. And one day, I've been told that we are after one, as I told you that I've been to that board meeting once in a month.
24:57	So in a full board meeting, it was clear to me that we have decided to create a role for that. And if someone can suggest anyone's name. So one member suggested my name. And I was just looking at me. How can I do that? It's been just six months. And they said, "No, we have confidence in you." And after you came into this board, this board was quite passive, and now everyone is speaking.
25:27	Everyone is talking. Everyone is raising questions. So it's not a silent board anymore. So we have the confidence. So that's the day I started from there.
Sarah Chung: 25:37	It sounds like even though you were only six months into the role, and I'm assuming this is your first governor's role.
Ava: 25:46	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 25:46	So it sounds like you've had quite a positive impact.
Ava: 25:52	On those six months, I'm not sure. I was really very learning at that point.
25:57	I'm not sure that I did anything important for that board. I was just learning at that time.

Sarah Chung: 26:03	Wow. Okay.
Ava: 26:05	But I think as the governor hub, the governor hub was very passive. I used to use that governing hub, not for the conversation, but giving my input for any training I had. Look into that training. It was that good. A kind of a review of that training, a kind of a probing.
26:25	If I had any question after reading the document, I put straight away that question is a governor hub. Everyone can read that. So the person which I'm asking the question, can get his or herself ready before the meeting so we can discuss it. So it was a kind of encouragement that pose your question before the meeting because sometimes asking the question right in the meeting will not provide you the satisfactory answer to that because the person may not be able to answer you right away.
26:57	That's not possible, actually. That's very difficult for expecting someone to give you straightaway answers.
Sarah Chung: 27:04	Of course. So do you feel, Ava, can I ask what your job role is outside of governance?
27:15	What are you doing? I told you that I was a full-time student. Now I'm teaching online. I teach online law students and A-level students, you can say.
27:27	And apart from that, I'm also an OCR examiner for law papers.
Sarah Chung: 27:33	So my question here is looking at your occupation outside of governance and your role as a governor. Do you think you've brought skills from your external role? So I know we've discussed that you're a PhD you were a PhD student, sorry, and you've successfully gone through that.
27:56	And now these other roles that you were talking about, the OCR examiner, do you think those are skills that you bring to the table?
Ava: 28:04	Yes. Everything added up. Everything added up because I told you that my basis of my research was corporate governance. Governing the board or governing the cooperation is different but not entirely different. Some things will remain the same. The essence will be there. If you need to monitor, you need to monitor the board scenarios.
28:26	If you must see the effectiveness of the board, it should be there for the board board. So it's not that entirely different. And sometime I had the chance to add up that how can we improve the membership of our group? How can we improve the quality or the effectiveness of our working? So I was able if we are not too much attached with our parents or we are not taking their input so regularly, how can we do that?
28:54	How can we create a committee for the parents who can take the inputs from the parents and can bring it into the board? So how to be more and more linked with your community with the parents?

	Because without the parents, it's just a useless to even think about that the performance of your children will improve. It's not possible without taking the parents on board.
Sarah Chung: 29:20	Okay.
29:21	So it's still important for you then to have that stakeholder model where it's a selection of people from.
Ava: 29:28	Yes, it is important for me because if you want to improve, you'll have to take every stakeholder on the board. It's a community members from any aspect. We are living in the community where 90% are Muslims. So you can't just, for example, what was that? Sex education?
29:51	Religious sex education? I think so. So it wasn't an easy task for us to include that into our syllabus without asking the community because we were getting continuous complaints or objections on that. So it was very necessary for our school because it depends where your school is actually. So it depends.
30:18	So we'll have to take continuous inputs from the mosque people, from the people, from the community to make them satisfied that what we are going to do.
Sarah Chung: 30:28	Okay. Perfect. That's a really wonderful, detailed answer. Thank you so much, Ava. Okay. So I think we briefly touched on some of this, but can you explain a little bit about how your governing body oversees pupil performance? I think it's quite apt given the week that we've just started, isn't it, really?
30:50	So think of it in terms maybe of how do you know your pupils are performing as expected?
Ava: 30:58	There are actually a couple of ways to monitor that. One way is to see the reports that the school is producing, that these are our targets. These are the achievements of our children. And the other and most effective way is to go to your school, meet with the children, meet with the staff, and see whatever they are saying, are they actually putting it into the action?
31:23	Do every children have the opportunity to get that level of education? Or if someone is not getting that opportunity, why? So that can only be achieved by going regularly not regularly, but quite often you know in the school and meet with the children and see the people actually in the classroom.
Sarah Chung: 31:48	Okay. And you briefly touched on a report.
31:54	So seeing the report helps you as one of the stages. How comfortable are you personally with understanding the data that's presented to you?
Ava: 32:04	Sometimes it's very difficult. Sometimes it's quite lengthy, quite understandable from their point of view, but not as easy to

	understand from our point of view. So we can easily say that we are not understanding that. If you can put your data like this, it will be much understandable for me.
32:22	For example, most of the gain, I said to them that, "Okay, you are saying that these are the achievement." If you can put your data in year-wise, okay, take out yourself from if you have four or five sections in year one, for example, just take one year one, one year two, one year three, one year. Take a graph. And it will be quite understandable for us that how this data is what this data is representing actually.
32:50	So it depends that if you will make this output or this data easier for us, we can give you input. Otherwise, we'll spend more and more time understanding all these things.
Sarah Chung: 33:04	So an element of that is then that it needs to be presented in a manner that is accessible to anybody, any layperson.
Ava: 33:15	Yeah. Accessible. It should be presented well before the meeting, well before the meeting so that people can have the chance to see the data.
33:22	If you are presenting the data one or two days, you shouldn't be expecting that they will have the chance to skim all the data or to read all the data and provide you some input as a user's activity. But if you are providing those documents, those reports, those numbers, whatever the data you have, which you want them to give you input, you'll have to give them at least seven or eight days, eight to ten days, I must say.
Sarah Chung: 33:46	Okay. Okay.
Ava: 33:48	Not that easy, but now our clerk is doing that.
33:51	She's very wonderful. She's doing that. At least for the finance committee, she is doing that because she knows that I will have objection on that. So she is doing that.
Sarah Chung: 34:02	So that's something developed quite positively there then that there's now more time to access the data.
Ava: 34:10	Yeah. We are human beings. We have other commitments. This is a voluntary role. You know We are not getting anything paid for that role. Let's say we are spending time on that because of our own personal interest.
34:21	It can be various. For me, it's a personal satisfaction. Maybe for some other person, it can be a chance to develop them professionally or anything else. Anything else. So these are various seasons, but this is the unpaid job. So it should be kept in mind that whatever time you are asking for months, you know it should be very justified.

Sarah Chung: 34:44	Okay. Thank you. That's wonderful. So now we're going to talk a little bit about challenge and raising questions.
34:51	So do you feel able to challenge or raise questions when necessary?
Ava: 34:57	Yeah, whenever it is necessary. I'm a very straightforward person. I don't know how to be political, how to give political statements. So I know that it's not a good mind. Sometimes it's very embarrassing. I must say. Sometimes it's very embarrassing. If you don't know to give political statements, sometimes it's very embarrassing.
35:19	But I don't know the other way to ask questions. Whatever is coming to my mind, I'll ask about that instead of going round and round and then come to the point. And we are there to ask. And I didn't feel it challenging because the reason I told you that I know the people sitting in front of me, they are open to any discussion. They will accept any discussion.
35:46	They will not make it any issue that someone is asking, but rather they will happy that someone is raising that thing.
Sarah Chung: 35:54	Okay. So they're quite receptive to that challenge then?
Ava: 35:57	Yeah. I must say they are. Okay. That's wonderful. And I mean, you mentioned there, just occasionally, you feel a little bit embarrassed.
Ava: 36:07	Yes, occasionally. Only the reason is I don't know how to manipulate the words.
Sarah Chung: 36:12	Ah, right. Okay. Okay.
Ava: 36:14	But with that, I always say that I know that I'm asking a very straightforward question. I don't know how to ask any other way. That's what I'm asking. That's fine. You can ask.
Sarah Chung: 36:25	And they're quite supportive, though, [inaudible].
Ava: 36:29	They are. They are very supportive.
Sarah Chung: 36:31	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. Can you describe a time when you actually have challenged?
Ava: 36:40	Yes.
36:42	When I started working as a vice chair, I told you that it was after six months. And after a couple of months, we had an appraisal meeting. Yeah And we need to appraise the head teacher. So he was expecting a two-point race. And my chair called me because he didn't get the chance to meet me personally, so he called me at the telephone. I didn't have any idea about that, how these things work, actually, that how much important my input is into that process.
37:15	I wasn't clear at that time. So he was very willing to give him straightaway two-point race. And at that time, we didn't have an Ofsted. So he was working good. I had confidence on the head

	teacher, but still, I wanted to see some output. Yeah And at that time, we didn't have an output. So I was stressing him to accept only one-point race and wait for the results to come out.
37:47	Wait for the officer to visit our school. And then we can see whether what we are seeing or we have the belief, whether they are thinking the same way or not. And when I ask him, "Do we have any document? Do we have any milestones in which I can at least compare that what he have done is actually making him you know what should I say?
38:16	Whether he should be given the two-point raise or not. Whether his performance was so much outstanding that we should go for that. So I really insisted not to do that. And at the end, he was convinced that if I'm not comfortable, so we will not do that. So we went only for one-point race. But after next year, when the time came up, the head teacher provided me the document for the head teacher appraisal.
38:49	There is an official document available on the website, which I found. But the share at that time didn't know that we have any such kind of documentary information available in which we can compare the performance of our Headteacher. But we had that. He didn't know that, but we had that. It was available. So I found that by the next year, the head teacher straightaway come to us four or five days back before the meeting and provided us a document. And when we were at that meeting, we knew what to compare and how to compare his performance.
Sarah Chung: 39:24	Okay. So that sounds just to briefly recap there. So the chair at the time wanted immediately to go to a two-point race for the head teacher, but you felt that you hadn't seen enough evidence to do that, and you had suggested a one-point raise. And then you weren't given any documents to support the two-point raise, were you?
Ava: 39:53	I didn't have the information. Do we have any document where we can see that performance, how he should perform, and how he is performing. No way to compare.
Sarah Chung: 40:04	Okay. And you got that the next year, though, didn't you?
Ava: 40:07	Yeah. I got that next year. But the next day, I found it on the internet. It was available. It wasn't that difficult. But I didn't know that. I don't know why. But he said, "No, we don't have any such kind of document. We can tell us that how should we perform?".
Sarah Chung: 40:23	Right.
40:23	Okay. And as you said, the chair of governors didn't know that was available either.
Ava: 40:29	No, he didn't know that.

Sarah Chung: 40:30	Okay. And do you feel that some training on head teacher appraisal would have helped support you both through that process?
Ava: 40:39	Yes. But now he's not the chair because after six or eight months, he left the board because of his personal reasons. So now we have a new chair in our board.
40:53	She don't have that training. I'm insisting you know I have been suggesting her too many times to go for that training. I did that training. and I found it very you know I did that training a week before that appraisal activity because I told you I have a very short memory. So I didn't get that training months before. I got that training a week before that. So it helped me a lot. It helped me a lot.
41:17	And whatever suggestions I gave to my chair after that meeting, you know after that meeting, I must say. And though she was not convinced with me, she was very excited to give him two-point raise again straight away without waiting for that. But this time, my answer was not I'm not convinced. My answer was that we were expecting these points. Some of these points have been achieved, but these two points, we are still not clear.
41:49	So keep that one-point raise as a reward for a good performance. Yeah, If you keep on giving them two points every time, it will lose its effectiveness. Yeah, It's a kind of a you know toffee or the chewing gum you are giving for every [inaudible] of your child. And after that, if you start thinking as a right, then now it's my right. I should be given that. So it's a useless. But she wasn't convinced.
42:19	And when she sent that email to the council, [redacted], and the advisor gave her the same suggestion which I gave her, the same suggestion. Wait for the wait for the Ofsted.
Sarah Chung: 42:38	Yeah. And this is the new chair of governance that we're talking about now, isn't it?
Ava: 42:43	She is a new chair, but she is not a new board member. She is there from the last six years.
Sarah Chung: 42:50	Okay. So she's got substantial governance experience in terms of length of time.
Ava: 42:56	Yes. She got very extensive experience. She was a teacher. She's got brilliant experience with her. But it's kind of a personal attachment issues. I don't have these issues. I don't recognize these issues while working professionally, you can say. But some people, you know you have that attachment issue.
43:16	When you are comfortable working with someone, you want to give every kind of good thing to that person. Just to assume that we care for you. I don't think like that. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe they are right, but I don't think so.
Sarah Chung: 43:32	I know you mentioned your new chair is actually a teacher. Is she a teacher in your school or is she a teacher externally?

Ava: 43:39	No, she's not teaching. She was a teacher. She has quite good experience in teaching.
Sarah Chung: 43:47	Okay. But is she a little reticent to do any training or?
Ava: 43:53	Yes. She is very reluctant to do any training. This NGA training for the development of chair, this was available for two of the two board members. This was available for two members. It was a funded training, if you know that. So it was available for at least two members can [inaudible]. And I asked her to go with me to start that training.
44:17	Previously, it was impossible for us because they were not offering that for our area. I'm in [redacted] So in our area, they were not offering that. But this was a remote training, so it was a good opportunity for us to get on board. So why not? But she wasn't interested.
Sarah Chung: 44:35	Do you know why she wasn't interested?
Ava: 44:37	She has been to quite a lot when I told you that in the initial years, she has been to quite the trainings.
44:45	But she didn't see any positive output for those trainings. She always says that I've been to 10 or 12 trainings. But what's the use of those trainings? Why we should waste the time? Now she's thinking after experience she's thinking, then why would we should waste the time? Learn from the experience.
Sarah Chung: 45:09	Okay. Okay. Thank you. Thank you for sharing that.
45:13	So have you ever felt when you've challenged, have you ever felt uncomfortable challenging?
Ava: 45:22	Not uncomfortable. Not uncomfortable or rather confident, I would say. Not uncomfortable. Yeah. Not uncomfortable.
Sarah Chung: 45:30	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for the management of staff. How confident are you in this area?
Ava: 45:44	I was not that confident in that area because but during 2020, 2021, we had the proposal for staff restructuring. So because of that proposal, we've been through different discussions on that. So it was a good learning experience for me, actually, to learn how to think from that angle.
46:08	When you have a staff instructing, when you don't want to just say to your staff that we don't need to do anymore, they have the families, they have the homes to feed. But at the same time, your budget is not allowing you. At the same time, you don't want to compromise the performance of your children. So which can be the aspects of this restructuring?

46:36 So I've been to different discussions during that time. We didn't go for that. We didn't go for that because during the pandemic, we got different kinds of funding from the government. So our budget got improved we can see. So we had funded in that time. So we dropped the idea. But at that time, it was a good learning experience for me to learn that when you have thinking about the staff restructuring, what angle should be considered.

Sarah Chung: 47:11 Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So as well then as setting the ethos and strategic direction of the score and also ensuring there is a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing. Financial probity must be clearly displayed in any financial oversight of your school. I know you said you're chair of the finance committee. How comfortable are you within this situation?

Ava: 47:46 Can you please rephrase your question?

Sarah Chung: 47:48 Yeah. Absolutely. So basically, probity must be clearly displayed in any financial oversight of your school. So can you explain how you as a governor ensure that the school budget is managed well, for example?

Sarah Chung: 48:11 Okay. The example which I gave you before, that it's not always when you're talking about the management of the school budget, it's not always about the cost of any aspect, anything. It's about the value. Sometimes it have a great cost, but at the same time, it has a great value for that. But sometimes it has very cheap cost, but it doesn't have any value. So cost and value should go together.

48:39 Value should prevail on the [inaudible]. It's true that most of the schools and our school having that budget constraints, we don't have money to spend on everything we want to. So we'll have to prioritize which thing is important. So our priority remains not to compromise on the learning of the students. Okay?

49:04 If we can compromise other things, we can go for that, or to think about the more avenues to generate more income for your school, for example. Rather to cut off your from different aspects which can impact your students' learning, improve your income. Try to consume the things in a way more efficiently, you can say.

49:32 Just like consume less papers. Budget for your electricity. Try to use it effectively, efficiently. You can compromise in those situations, but you can't compromise on the learning. If you want to, for example, we don't have these what do you say? These electronic boards, touch boards, smart boards. Yeah Everything is smart. They're smart.

49:59 So if you want to have that new technology into a school and your children will learn from that, not to compromise on that. Go for that. But you can compromise on other things without putting their learning into any compromising situation. If you want to go outside, if you want to provide them outside learning, the learning outside the school, give them the maximum opportunity. Give them the maximum opportunity. Try to arrange those trips, which are cost-

	effective, but at the same time, they are learning opportunity for the children.
Sarah Chung: 50:33	Okay. Okay. Thank you. And can you think of a time where you or another governor, for example, challenged a financial decision?
Ava: 50:48	Challenge the financial decision. We can only suggest them, actually. It's not a challenging them. We can only suggest them.
51:03	If I say that if you want more clearance or more explanation from them, yeah from any number you are seeing in the budget or in the financial reports. If you ask more and more bifurcation or more explanation on that number, it can be hard for them. It can be challenging for them.
51:25	But I don't think so that we can say them not to do that. We're not in that position to say them not to do that. We can say them think about that again. I don't seem that it can be beneficial. But at the same time, when the things come to the management perspective, we don't have anything much to say in that.
Sarah Chung: 51:49	Okay. Okay.
51:51	And when you say you don't really have much to say on that, is that because, as you said, as a governing body, you feel that all you can do is make a suggestion rather than a challenge.
Ava: 52:08	When you say challenge, it can be challenging. Okay. If I ask them, "Can you please explain me a little bit more?" Can you give me the bifurcation of this number? They can do that.
52:20	Can you explain me why this number is there? It shouldn't be there. Why is there? Why we are spending more? We have been spending less. Now we are spending more. What's the reason for that? So they can explain. If you are saying that it's challenging for them, yes, it can be challenging for them. But for me, it's just a question. The more elaboration of that number you can see.
52:41	Okay. Thank you, Ava. You've given so much detail. Thank you. So let's move on now to sort of the eight elements of effective governance.
52:51	These have been identified as essential to good governance. So in your own words, I'm going to run through a list now, but in your own words, can you explain what these mean to you? The right people around the table.
Ava: 53:05	The right people, the people with right skill. And it depends on the need of that specific board. There's no generic formula for that. For example, in our board, we are really struggling with the financial people in our board.
53:20	We have just two members in our board. I'm just giving the example. I want more and more people in the finance committee, so we are struggling with that. So right people, in my case, in my board, should be having more financial people. The people with more

	financial understanding, I can say. Not the professional, but some have some financial understanding or the desire to sit in that committee. I'm not seeing the other eight people sitting in the other committee and two people sitting in one committee.
53:46	Other people are not able to oversee that financial information. They are, but they're not willing.
Sarah Chung: 53:53	Okay. Okay.
Ava: 53:55	So the right people depend on the type of the board.
Sarah Chung: 53:59	Thank you. Thank you. So B, understanding the role and responsibilities.
Ava: 54:06	Yes, it is crucial. It is crucial because there's a fine line because I was a parent governor, and there's a fine line. You are not representing the parents.
54:16	You are a parent governor, but you're not representing them. So everything has a very thin line. You can't take your personal issues into the board. So understanding our role is much more crucial. And it should be done in the initial months with specific training. You know When the people join the board, they should be suggested that go for these training. Try to understand your role. You specifically if you are in a MAT, if you are in a state funded school, you are in a primary school, in high school, you should know what your role is demanding from.
Sarah Chung: 54:51	Okay. Thank you. Good chairing.
Ava: 54:55	Good chairing is as crucial because that good chairing is not only it shouldn't be just a rubber stamp tool for the management. It should be a good communication bridge between the members and between the management, okay? And all the information which they are having.
55:19	Apart from those administrative aspects, sharing the meetings, timely meetings, information, everything, it's a crucial part, but it's more like a clerical function. It's not a function which is only done by the chair and get someone ready for your succession.
Sarah Chung: 55:37	Okay. Thank you. Professional clerking.
Ava: 55:41	Very, very important. Professional. I have seen this contrast.
55:45	Working with professional clerk and working without professional ad hoc basis. When we were working with professional clerk, we were getting information on time, specific from every issue resolved in a second, every information you got in a second because she had the full-time job for that. But after the ad hoc clerical responsibilities, you know we have been struggling with that. We are struggling with that, actually.

56:14	So I know the contrast that that's very crucial that professional clerk is absolutely the soul for a board.
Sarah Chung: 56:24	Okay. Thank you. Good relationships based on trust?
Ava: 56:29	Yes. It's also very important. Everything you are saying is important. You can't ignore the importance of that because if you have that trust-based relationship with your chair, with your management, with the other board members, you will feel that you are sitting in an environment where you can easily express yourself.
56:52	And your words wouldn't be taken for granted or as a means to tease you. It will be taken at [inaudible] as a discussion. Nothing really personal. You are not there for personal for the personal reasons. We are there for personal reasons, but not to present your personal issues over there. That trust is very important as like any other job, any other profession. It's important.
Sarah Chung: 57:18	Okay. Thank you. Thank you.
57:20	Knowing the school.
Ava: 57:24	Yeah. Knowing the school is also important. If you know your school, if you know the community from where the children are coming, that will help you to provide any suggestion, to raise potential risk, which you can have if you know the community, if you know the children. So that's crucial. That's also important to know that where your school is situated.
57:50	As I told you that our school is situated, where? Yeah. Okay. Thanks. Asking challenging questions. Is something you know in the personality of the person. You can encourage people to ask questions, but you cannot make everyone to ask questions challenging questions. It's not just about asking the question. If the question doesn't matter how difficult the situation is, how difficult the question is, you should have the courage to ask this question.
58:22	No question is right or wrong. It's in your mind, just express it.
Sarah Chung: 58:28	Okay. Thank you. And then having courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people.
Ava: 58:36	Yes. If you have some passion in you, and if you are there to improve your school or the children in the schools and the lives of the children in the school, you will be able to do that. But it also depends on the personal trait. Most of the people want to do that.
58:53	Believe me, most of the people sitting in that board wants to do that, but they're not doing that. Not because they don't believe that. They can't do it. They don't want to do it. They can't do it.
Sarah Chung: 59:06	Thank you. That's wonderful. Wonderful. Okay. So moving on now, we're going to look at the line between strategic and operational. It can be quite a gray area for some. How confident are you in

	knowing where governance ends and head teacher SLT responsibility begins?
Ava: 59:26	I was not sure at the beginning of my role. I've learned through the process that what is the fine line between that strategic and management role, there is a side where we cannot give our input. And there is a side where we are supposed to give input. And there are grey areas.
59:47	Where you are not sure, what I do, the areas where I'm not sure, whether it's a strategic, purely strategic or purely management, rather to keep quiet or not to ask, or not to ask for more explanation. I just ask the question, "Can you please clarify that versus that?" And from the answer, I try to perceive that, "Should I intervene more into it or not?" Because the answer provides me with an opportunity to understand that this is a grey area.
01:00:20	Sometimes it's a grey area for me. Otherwise, it's not. It's very clear, but I'm not understanding. And sometimes it's better to say. Better to say. If you are not pushing someone, it's better to say that.
Sarah Chung: 01:00:34	Okay. Okay. Thank you. Wonderful. So thinking about the policies in your school, what role do governors play in policy, implementation or development?
Ava: 01:00:48	With the development, they have the written policies.
01:00:51	They're getting from most of the council, from the education department. They are just adapting the policies for the schools. Most of the policies they are just adopting. And while adopting that policies where they are putting something new in that, just bring that policy into the board for us to see and give our input, which we are doing that. Sometimes in a meeting, we have 10 to 12 policies to review. That's insane, I think.
01:01:22	Sometimes it's ineffective. I've always been asking that question. Why are you putting too much policies in one meeting? But they're required to. They can't do anything because that's the process. They'll have to update their policies. They'll have to take our consent. Sometimes it's just, I must say, useless exercise. Because if you're not giving any input, just one is of what we say. Proposing that and other. That's a process.
01:01:52	But sometimes there are some policies which they highlight that we have been doing the changes. Actually, we had very long discussions on that.
Sarah Chung: 01:02:02	Okay. Okay. Thank you. That's a great explanation. So now let's look at the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on your ability to govern effectively. So you know for example, did the lack of governor visits impact your ability to monitor?
Ava: 01:02:23	Yes. There was zero monitoring visits in the school because it wasn't allowed. So it was a barrier, I must say. But at the same time, children were not at children at their home. So where to visit? Because they were not in the classroom. So this was a useless

exercise at that time. But when the school gets open, still there were some restrictions for the outsiders to go into the school.

01:02:48 So there was a kind of disconnection feeling from what we are seeing as a document, we're not able to see it in practice. So that's the kind of hesitation we had. Everyone had actually. But we didn't have any choice for that. But the good thing was that when there was an initial part of that COVID and all the meetings cancelled, school closed. And it was more required to meet at that time to plan the strategy for the children from onward at that time.

01:03:22 So I was the first person on board, actually, who gave them the idea. Why not to meet on Skype? Why not to meet? I didn't have any idea about Zoom. So why not to meet on WhatsApp even? If we can call other people in WhatsApp, why can't we meet on WhatsApp? Now we have different platforms available. At that time, it was just a discussion. If our children can play online, why can't they learn online?

Sarah Chung: 01:03:50 Okay.

01:03:52 You've answered my next question really well there, actually. So you moved everything online pretty quickly.

Ava: 01:04:00 Yes. Quick in that. And after one month, all the children were getting their homework through their online. The Google classroom was set up. And we as a parent was sitting with our children in school. Everyone was doing that.

Sarah Chung: 01:04:20 So as a governing body, you communicated online as well?

Ava: 01:04:25 Yes.

Sarah Chung: 01:04:27 Which platform did you use?

Ava: 01:04:29 Governor Hub.

Sarah Chung: 01:04:30 Oh, Governor Hub. Okay.

Ava: 01:04:32 We did use Governor. Initially, when we didn't have any other way, apart from email, we communicated through the governor hub. And after that, we switched ourselves to Teams meeting and Zoom.

Sarah Chung: 01:04:44 Okay. Wonderful. And were they effective?

Ava: 01:04:50 Initially, it was quite hard you know when we are used to discuss face-to-face, personally having discussion. But most of the Zoom or in team meeting, most of the videos as today, I didn't switch on my video. So it's sometimes very difficult to understand other people without seeing them. So these were the issues, but no, it's next to our habit now.

01:05:18	You can see the people. If you can't see the people, it doesn't make any difference.
Sarah Chung: 01:05:21	Yeah. Yeah. Wonderful. So you used both Teams and Zoom. Was there a preference, or was there a restriction on which one you could use, or?
Ava: 01:05:32	Initially, it was a preference. Yeah, Now it's a policy.
Sarah Chung: 01:05:37	Okay. Okay. And do you feel that you were kept up to date by SLT during the pandemic?
Ava: 01:05:44	Yes, we were.
01:05:45	We were getting the updates continuously without an interval and very clear.
Sarah Chung: 01:05:52	Okay. Wonderful. And did governing in a pandemic highlight any areas that you felt underqualified or under-trained for?
Ava: 01:06:01	Yes. We were not overseeing that aspect, actually, before that. But after that, it became crucial that our school was focusing more on literacy and math and less on the computers.
01:06:21	Yeah. They were focusing less on ICT classes. But after that, when it becomes crucial, that children should have the understanding how to use computers, how to do their homework online, how to submit, how to open the document, how to copy, how to pay a different aspect. They were not quite good at that time, but now they are working very because after that, it becomes that we have to focus on this aspect, too, as we are focusing on math and literacy.
Sarah Chung: 01:06:51	Okay. Okay. So it's almost that balance.
Ava: 01:06:55	Yeah. It's a balance. Now we have quite a vast syllabus, just like science, geography, history, computers, and everything.
Sarah Chung: 01:07:08	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So I want you to think now about governor training. If you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be?
01:07:22	And why do you think this is essential?
Ava: 01:07:27	One training.
Sarah Chung: 01:07:29	Yeah. If you had to pick one training that you thought was the most important training for governors, what would it be and why?
Ava: 01:07:42	Yes. I think so. There's a training on the resources, how to utilize your resources or to get the maximum output from the resources. It can be your human resource.
01:07:51	It can be your any resource available in the school. So I think that that was a very good feeling.
Sarah Chung: 01:07:58	Okay. So that's how to get the most out of your resources?

Ava: 01:08:02	Yes.
Sarah Chung: 01:08:04	Okay.
Ava: 01:08:04	That was very good training, I think. So because it deals with different aspects.
Sarah Chung: 01:08:09	Okay.
Ava: 01:08:13	I hope I'm not going into too much detail.
Sarah Chung: 01:08:16	No, no. This is wonderful. Thank you. It's really helpful.
Ava:	Tell me if I talk too much [laughter]
Sarah Chung: 01:08:24	So conversely, what is, in your opinion, the least valuable piece of training for governors and why?
Ava: 01:08:31	Induction trainings.
Sarah Chung: 01:08:34	Sorry?
Ava: 01:08:34	Induction training. Induction trainings for new governors.
Sarah Chung: 01:08:37	Oh, induction trainings?
Ava: 01:08:40	That's only be done when you are joining the board. It should be communicated to you in five minutes sitting in front of you.
01:08:48	Rather to spend one hour on that. You're doing induction in your school. Your head teacher or your clerk should be able to explain about your school, specifically your role in 5 or 10 minutes. Are you wasting time on that?
Sarah Chung: 01:09:06	Okay. Okay. So for your perspective, induction training should be very school-specific.
Ava: 01:09:12	It should be very school-specific. Otherwise, it's not useful for everyone, I must say.
01:09:19	Maybe it's my opinion. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:09:21	Okay. No, it's wonderful. Thank you for sharing your opinions.
Ava: 01:09:26	Because I took that training very anxiously that I will get maximum out of it because I have joined that board. I'm a new governor in that. And after that training, I will have all the information I want, but I didn't.
Sarah Chung: 01:09:39	Yeah. Okay. Thank you. So now I'd like you to think back to your initial year of governance. Did you feel supported?
Ava: 01:09:51	Supported. Supported in terms of...

Sarah Chung: 01:09:55	So for example, did you have a mentor or a governing buddy who you could ask questions from?
Ava: 01:10:02	Unfortunately, no. I asked for that, but no.
Sarah Chung: 01:10:06	Okay.
Ava: 01:10:07	And the lady who is chair at that time, I asked at the clerk at that time that I need some mentor who can mentor me, who can explain a little bit for me, and from whom I can ask questions.
01:10:18	And she assigned me that lady, which is chair now and she asked me, "Okay, you can have my number, and you can call me anytime." But most of the time, she wasn't available. Most of the time, she wasn't willing. So yes, I got the mentor, but no, I didn't get any support from the mentor.
Sarah Chung: 01:10:40	Right. Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.
01:10:49	Okay. And what are your thoughts on mentors for governors, chairs of governors, and clerks? Are they helpful? Should the mentor be from another governing body, for example, or your own?
Ava: 01:11:04	Can you say it again? Sorry, I missed something in there.
Sarah Chung: 01:11:07	Okay. So what are your thoughts on governors for chairs sorry, what are your thoughts on mentors for governors, chairs of governors, or clerks?
01:11:18	So one, do you feel they're helpful?
Ava: 01:11:22	Yes. They can be very helpful, especially the mentors. Because mentors are the people who are sitting with you in the room. They are not sitting at the seat of chair. They don't have as much responsibility as the chairs have. They're not much administrator like the clerks, but the mentors should be the person who is sitting with you, who like you. Okay? There's too many things to ask, which you don't ask because these are very trivial questions.
01:11:50	Sometimes these are trivial, but this can be very challenging when the time is gone. Yeah, of course. Different abbreviations they use, we become familiar with those, but initially, we don't. People are discussing or just looking at them. What do you mean? What are they trying to say? So it's a kind of disconnection, but when you have a mentor, who is sitting right in front of beside you, you can say, or you are just going anywhere.
01:12:22	You can just meet, "Okay. I didn't ask that, but can you please explain it a little more? What is the procedure? What should I do? How can I contribute? What are the preferences of these people and how they have been doing?" This is a different question in your mind.
Sarah Chung: 01:12:40	Yeah. That's really wonderful, Ava. Thank you for that. Do you think do you think the mentor should come from within your governing

	body, then, or from an external governing body, somebody that you can approach outside of governor meetings?
Ava: 01:12:59	No, I think so it should be from within your board.
Sarah Chung: 01:13:02	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So the NGA have openly stated that they feel induction training should be mandatory within the first year and in Wales, it already is. In your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this and why? As I told you, I'm not in a 100% commitment or agreement with that.
Ava: 01:13:25	Yeah If it should be compulsory, it should be effective.
01:13:29	If it's not effective, believe me, it's just a training. Attractiveness is much more important than the quality. Quality is more important than quantity.
Sarah Chung: 01:13:41	Okay. Brilliant.
Ava: 01:13:44	And I don't know how they will improve that, but they know how to improve that. I know these people, they have the continuous research, and they can do it.
Sarah Chung: 01:13:53	Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Thank you. That's great.
01:13:58	So if mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following? Content. What should be included?
Ava: 01:14:10	Content. It should be the school. But you know if I'm asking that, it should be school-specific. It should be this person-specific. I have different professional skills. Other people have different professional skills. They have different set of experience with them. I have different set of experience with them.
01:14:27	We are working in the same school, and the training is telling you generic information for 100 schools, for MAT schools, for any kind of school. And you can be any type of that school, not that school-specific. So it can be very hard. I know that this is not possible to provide specific training to certain people. But I think abroad groups can be created. Broader aspect, if the people are coming from this profession, how we can get more input from those people.
01:15:01	If these people are coming from law, accounting, you know finance, anything, their music people, their teachers. How can we get more and more input on the basis of their experience? So at least a broader groups can be created. Okay. So maybe personalised again to the group that you're within? Yes.
Sarah Chung: 01:15:26	Okay. Fantastic. Thank you. And how should the training take place?
01:15:30	So for example, currently, most training is conducted within LEAs and in-house, within schools. Do you feel online training would be beneficial?

Ava: 01:15:41	These trainings are online.
Sarah Chung: 01:15:45	Okay. Yeah. We have got a lot now online, I think, haven't we?
Ava: 01:15:50	I think they are. Most of them, the induction training, which I saw is online. Either the Borough Council is providing that or NGA is providing that.
01:16:00	Councils do have their face-to-face training in different avenues, but most of them are now doing online.
Sarah Chung: 01:16:09	Okay. Do you think that will stay after the pandemic has gone down?
Ava: 01:16:15	Not the induction training. It should be face-to-face.
Sarah Chung: 01:16:17	It should be face-to-face?
Ava:	Mmhmm
Sarah Chung: 01:16:18	Okay. Thank you. What are your thoughts on a modulated course delivered online and resulting in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year?
Ava: 01:16:32	If I can think about the course which I recently did, the development of care certificate program. And it was quite a collaborative kind of thing in which we had the chance to discuss with the other class members, discuss with our moderator of the course, to come up with some solutions for our specific school problems. So it was quite an interactive one.
01:17:00	That was the best I think. So what I did so far, that was the best course from NGA.
Sarah Chung: 01:17:07	So that collaborative, that interactive nature of it really sold the course to you?
Ava: 01:17:13	Also provide the platform to network with other people. And you don't think so that you are sitting somewhere in isolation. There are the people who are working in a different way, but still you're doing the same thing. Networking, understanding the other boards.
Sarah Chung: 01:17:30	Okay. Okay. That's fantastic. Thank you. So we've reached the end, and I'd just like to take this opportunity to thank you once again for your participation and just ask you now if there's anything else that you'd like to say that you feel would be beneficial to the study?
Ava: 01:17:51	No. I don't think I have any input for that.

Andrew

Sarah Chung: 00:00	Okay. So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. During our interview, we will discuss whether your training that you've received has helped you achieve this.
00:25	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training. I would like to remind you that it's stressed in the letter of participation that you have signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date.
00:59	Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years. Should you wish a copy of the results, please do feel free to email me. Do you have any questions before we begin?
Andrew: 01:21	Nope.
Sarah Chung: 01:22	Wonderful. Okay. So shall we jump in? And how long have you been a governor?
Andrew: 01:28	So I'm on my second school, in total, about 15 years.
Sarah Chung: 01:33	Wonderful. Okay. And what has been the most enjoyable part of being a governor?
Andrew: 01:46	I think seeing schools from a different side because I have a background in education.
01:52	So seeing stuff that I wouldn't have otherwise known about, almost the lifting up the bonnet of how schools work that doesn't always get shared with teachers.
Sarah Chung: 02:05	Okay. That's lovely. Thank you. So you said you've got an education background. Are you teacher or?
Andrew: 02:14	So primary school teacher moved into special ed. And now I do a bit of a mix, but special needs support.
02:24	So a bit of turning around special schools when they go into categories. I still do some mainstream teaching on supply, and I also do some disability work for HMCTS as well.
Sarah Chung: 02:35	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So looking now then, what was the least enjoyable part of your governance to date?

Andrew: 02:55	Managing a very dynamic situation when the previous school I was at was going had some leadership difficulties.
03:13	A new head came in and they had a very abrasive style and trying to challenge and support someone who's very headstrong, is very difficult.
Sarah Chung: 03:30	Okay. Did it solve itself in the end, or?
Andrew: 03:36	It solved itself because I called it a day.
Sarah Chung: 03:39	Oh, okay.
Andrew: 03:40	And finished. So it solved itself for me.
03:43	Did it solve itself for the school? Well, if school leaders take an abrasive style and there's a high staff turnover, then they are very forceful. They can force a school better. Yeah And so the school did end up getting a good grading at the next officer.
04:15	Okay. And were there a number of governors that felt there was an issue with that leadership style? Yes.
Sarah Chung: 04:23	Okay. And very similar to you, did they leave or?
Andrew: 04:29	Yeah. It's fair to say there was a high turn of it. Not all.
Sarah Chung: 04:37	Thinking about the head teacher, do you feel there was a lack of understanding on their part as to what a governing body was for?
Andrew: 04:52	No. I think they understood whether or not they applied that understanding is a different thing.
Sarah Chung: 04:56	Okay. Thank you. Well, out of interest, what made you become a governor?
Andrew: 05:06	Giving some community.
Sarah Chung: 05:08	Okay. So moving on now, the NGA described governance as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction.
05:21	The following questions will explore your understanding of all three. So in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?
Andrew: 05:37	Long-term vision of the school, focusing on the big overarching issues rather than the detail.
Sarah Chung: 05:53	Okay. Thank you. So using your experience now as a governor, can you explain how you shaped your school's strategic direction?
Andrew: 06:20	Yes.
06:28	So I'm not sure if you're asking about so there's stuff that I've done, but then there's also stuff, I suppose, collectives. So I

think because you asked about me, I'll do the stuff I've done. So special needs.

06:52 I've done a lot of challenge and support over so, for example, the accessibility plan. So accessibility plans are something that every school is supposed to have. They're supposed to have them since about 2003 and review them every three years. And therefore, if you had getting on for 20 years' worth of accessibility plans, you'd kind of assume that most of it would have been done by now.

07:17 And a lot of the make sure you've got accessible toilet stuff was done in the noughties. But we still have accessibility plans. And my school, like many schools, went on to the key for school leaders, looked at their accessibility plan, put our name in, made a few tweaks, and then published it. But then no one ever checked on it, and no one ever actually did anything about it because accessibility plan doesn't quite fall under the SEND governance.

07:48 It doesn't quite fall under the safeguarding governance. No one's quite got responsibility for it. And also, in school, in the actual leadership thing, does accessibility plan sit with the kind of school business manager because it's often about buildings stuff, or does it sit with the SendCo because it's about inclusion stuff, or does it sit with the head or deputy? And so it doesn't sit neatly at operational level. It doesn't sit neatly at strategic level. And so what happens is it just gets published and ignored.

08:19 And I think that's fair to say in thousands of schools up and down the country. And so when it came so first of all, I'd asked about it because I think we were probably out of date or something. And it came and I asked it to be knocked back.

08:45 I had a meeting with the head about what it should look like. And the head, to his credit, was honest. And while still of the well, I thought the accessibility plan was about accessible toilets and ramps rather than it being more about inclusion, wholesale. And then from there, I've continued to provide challenge and support that an accessibility plan, in a way, is what would we like our school to look like in three or five years' time in terms of inclusion that's different to now?

09:24 And that bit was how I've affected the strategic direction because before the people were like, "It's just some people thinking it's just something you do. It's about ramps and toilets." And now it's something that you do. It's going to get asked about. So we can't just write a plan and ignore it. And it's about what will be better in three or five years' time than it is today and how we're going to get there.

09:55 So I think that I'd say strategic direction there is affected the long-term development of inclusion.

Sarah Chung: 10:03 Okay. That sounds wonderful. I mean, it sounds something that's very close to your own heart. How do you feel that challenge came across?

Andrew: 10:12	Well, I've been with the school a little while, so I think they know me well enough to be okay with that. I think the business manager had thought they'd done the right thing when they brought the original accessibility plan.
10:29	And so they didn't understand what my beef was. So I think that came across maybe being awkward. But I've had post-meeting conversations, and the business manager's seen what we've now gotten now, understands the difference. So understands why they weren't yet right when they did it. How did it come across? Well, maybe it came across me being awkward. I generally try not to be awkward.
10:58	And I think there's only a handful of times that people might have perceived me that way. But that's challenge. Maybe challenge is better than awkward as a word.
Sarah Chung: 11:10	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So in your own words, now, can you describe what is meant by a school's ethos?
Andrew: 11:32	The, the things that drive and underpin everything we do.
Sarah Chung: 11:39	Okay. And can you tell me a little bit how you helped shape the ethos?
Andrew: 11:48	Nah, because I kind of like sat back for that bit.
11:51	I let other people do that. And that's because I do have an education hat on and I've got a fair bit of expertise in some other stuff. I don't want to just dominate all the meetings, so I didn't really. I let other people flow with that and kept quiet.
Sarah Chung: 12:11	Okay. And are you happy with the ethos that developed?
Andrew: 12:18	Yeah.
12:18	Because in a way, I'm not sure ethos matters too much because it's often a statement that's not actually used very often. It gets written in policies. It sometimes gets written on signs or letterheads. But the drivers of what we do in school are often far more tangible than the ethos. So it's things like SATS results. Yeah It's things like reputation and parent feedback. And it's things like finances.
12:50	And in some ways, the ethos is irrelevant if your budget doesn't balance.
Sarah Chung: 12:55	Okay. So in a way, then, do you feel it's more of a tick box exercise than some of the other things that you do? So for example, your policy on inclusion and well, SATs and parents.
Andrew: 13:17	I wouldn't say tick box.
13:19	I would say it matters most if you're a school where you're having to make rapid change because you need something that's tangible to focus on. Yeah We're a school that got I mean, I suppose we were cursed by having an offset in 2014 that gave us outstanding. And that means you're not inspected again for ages, which has its upsides but downsides as well.

13:46	And if you are producing good results, then you don't really need to keep thinking about ethos because what you're doing is working.
Sarah Chung: 13:57	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So do you feel that there's any training that might help for governors with ethos?
Andrew: 14:19	No, because I think the problems with governance aren't so much about ethos, and you've got a limited pool of time to pull on. And I wouldn't spend any on ethos.
Sarah Chung: 14:30	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So again, now the vision. In your own words, can you describe what is meant by vision?
Andrew: 14:40	Where do we want to be in 5 or 10 years' time? What will be different?
Sarah Chung: 14:44	Okay. And do you feel happy with your school's vision?
Andrew: 14:50	Yeah. Broadly speaking, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 14:52	Okay. How did the governors or did the governors get involved in developing that vision?
Andrew: 15:02	Yeah. Similar to Ethos. I sat quietly. I let them do it.
Sarah Chung: 15:08	Okay.
Andrew: 15:09	And I would just say on vision. I think my vision is slightly different. It's a primary school I'm governor. And so they tend to look at vision as impact how will we impact kids differently by the end of year six.
15:32	But I'm also curious as to how many of those kids have learned good self-regulation that stops them driving the car into a wall at age 17. But primary schools aren't so good at seeing that. But sometimes you choose your battles. And I know that drug use of 15-year-old boys and riding off cars of 17-year-old boys and mental health of 16-year-old girls, it's hard to get on the agenda of a primary school DSL and for it to stick.
16:06	So I'll leave that one being.
Sarah Chung: 16:08	Okay. Okay. Thank you. So now then, let's have a think about pupil performance. Can you explain a little bit about how your governing body oversees that?
Andrew: 16:20	Yep. So we have reports on we have regular reports on phonics and then all the assessments. So that's the phonics one, the tables one, and the year four times tables one, and the year six sats.
16:37	We scrutinize the scores and the three-year trends, and we look at where things are stronger. And then we provide challenge on the so what, so what are school going to do next to resolve all these?

Sarah Chung: 16:56	Okay. So I think given your background, you seem to be quite comfortable with the data. What about your fellow governors?
Andrew: 17:09	I think they are quite all right with it because of the way it's presented. So we do have a bit of a culture of calling each other out on a jargon. And if the head teacher slips into jargon, the head teacher can expect to get interrupted and say with someone saying, "Oh, I just want to check that everyone understands what such and such means because that is a little bit jargon speak." And so the head teacher self-checks now.
17:39	So sometimes he'll realize he's done it and then explains it. Or sometimes he'll then at the end say, "I realize I may have slipped in some jargon. I'm not sure if I did call me out on it." And so the understanding's all right, I think. And a lot of the data present quite well visually as well, which I think helps rather than just lots and lots of tables of numbers.
Sarah Chung: 18:01	Okay. And how would you or do you as a governing body triangulate that?
Andrew: 18:08	So you're given the reports, but is there any other way that you look at these? Yeah. So we've visited to see Phonics teaching in school because phonics at year two was an issue for us. I guess, in a way, your PhD is being done at the wrong time to ask that question because a lot of it stopped for COVID. So in terms of triangulation, yes, we'd want to be in the school more, but that just wasn't appropriate.
18:43	It's not that we haven't done any. It's just that it's been far, far more limited than it was because we got to a point where there was a terminal focus for governor visits, but then the pandemic hit. So I suppose we're just wobbling back to a standing position on that.
Sarah Chung: 19:03	Okay. Thank you. So do you then feel able to challenge or raise questions when necessary, not just in pupil performance, but in any area?
Andrew: 19:17	Yes.
Sarah Chung: 19:18	Okay. Can you describe a time in your own words that you have challenged?
Andrew: 19:24	Yeah. There's loads. I mean, the accessibility plan would be one. So I'll keep that example. But do you need another one?
Sarah Chung: 19:45	No, no.
19:45	Whatever you're comfortable sharing with, really.
Andrew: 19:49	Yeah. I'll go with that one.
Sarah Chung: 19:51	Okay. Thank you. And I think you said, didn't you that you felt it was adequately received?
Andrew: 20:01	Yeah. Yeah. I think the business manager was a little bit perturbed by it. But challenge isn't just a one thing.

20:17	Your relationship on a particular issue is you think about it on a kind of a 6 or 12-week basis, and there was a little bump in the road, but everything else went really well. So, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 20:27	Okay. Wonderful. So can you describe in your own words a time that you felt uncomfortable challenging? And can you explain why?
Andrew: 20:40	Yeah.
20:42	So in previous school, the local authority brought in that new head teacher and also brought in a new governor who had been an experienced head teacher in other parts of the city. The other governor became chair of governors. And so we had a head teacher who had an abrasive style.
21:09	Because you work in education, you might read between the lines that embrace your style might be a synonym for bully and someone who plays outside the rules in terms of HR procedures. And if you thought that, you wouldn't be too far wrong. And so the school did need to turn around.
21:39	And so it did need some decisive actions. But that doesn't mean you can just break laws. And so I was challenging but getting nowhere because the chair would back the head because the chair's view was these things need to be done. And the chair never said it, but the chair took an approach of means justify the ends or ends justify the means.
22:08	Yeah. That approach of it doesn't really matter how you do it. It's what the outcomes are that matter, that kind of approach.
Sarah Chung: 22:18	Okay. And you mentioned that there was sort of the not caring too much if laws were broken. What type of thing were we thinking that?
Andrew: 22:34	Yeah. I should probably rephrase.
22:36	Talk about I should talk in more general terms with rules because I'm not quite sure where rules become laws and laws become rules. So for example, instructing people to resign. So going in at the start of the day, saying unless I have your resignation by then I want your resignation by the end of the day.
23:07	You don't have to resign, but the alternative might not be very nice. You decide. And doing that at 8:40 just before the kids come in and leaving the teacher just in shock that I would say that's against the rules, but kind of pinned down a particular HR or all this again. It's probably not. But I reckon an employment tribunal would look very unfavourably after that.
Sarah Chung: 23:34	Right. Okay. And is that something that the governing body were they made aware of?
Andrew: 23:44	Yeah. There was an investigation. But the investigation was taken out of our hands, and we just got told everything that needs to be done has been done in response to it.

Sarah Chung: 23:58	Okay. Who took it out of your hands?
Andrew: 24:01	So the local authority dealt with it because it became a whistleblowing case. Right.
Sarah Chung: 24:09	Okay. So in that sense, a member of staff approached the governing body, and then the LA took over once it was?
Andrew: 24:21	A member of staff approached both the LA and the governing body.
Sarah Chung: 24:24	Right. Okay. I've got you. And how was that as a governing body then?
24:30	Once that had sort of been taken out of your hands, how did you feel in your roles, whether you could support or?
Andrew: 24:45	So I'm not sure the investigation being taken out of hands was particularly pertinent to that. I think it was the general thing of New head came in, brought some governors from the previous school they'd been at.
25:01	So had people on her side. I think we can sometimes slip into us via them very easily. Yeah But it was that the head came and brought people who were loyal to her with her.
25:27	And it swung the balance of how much we could challenge because for some governors, she was right, and that was it. And you'd be criticised for criticising the head.
Sarah Chung: 25:42	Right. Okay.
Andrew: 25:44	And ultimately, sorry. And ultimately, you're a volunteer. And there comes a point when you think to yourself, "Hang on. I'm giving up my time for this. This isn't right.
25:58	I've tried this, this, and this, and this. At what point do I say that it's not for me, which is ultimately what I did do. But I gave it a good shot before. Sorry, big point I interrupted. carry on, what you say?
Sarah Chung: 26:12	No, no, no. That's absolutely interesting to hear. I'm just thinking then. Did you feel that you had any support in that situation?
Andrew: 26:22	No. Maybe from one of the other governors, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 26:27	Okay. So I think you mentioned that it was was it more than the chair of governor that came with the head teacher? Were there a number of governors that came?
Andrew: 26:36	There was three, and then there was one new appointee as well, who was a grandparent governor.
Sarah Chung: 26:44	Right. Okay. And at the time, did you have to remove were any governors removed to make way for the new governors, or?
Andrew: 26:54	No, we served in an area with a fair amount of deprivation, and we've not been very effective at recruiting the vacancies. So

	there were some spaces. But even if they'd not been, I think the LA at the time were allowed to appoint additional governess. So it wouldn't have been a problem because the LA would have just appointed extra governors. So no one got shifted out. The chair of governors did resign with some integrity on the basis that I suppose they felt that things that had gone wrong had happened on their watch.
Sarah Chung: 27:31	Right. Okay. So they felt a personal responsibility almost?
Andrew: 27:35	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 27:36	Okay. And did that chair do you know if they had any support in place?
Andrew: 27:42	The old chair or the new chair?
Sarah Chung: 27:44	Yeah. The one that resigned.
Andrew: 27:54	Only from within the GB. Right.
Sarah Chung: 27:56	Okay. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you.
28:00	So I think this kind of brings us quite well onto the next question. Another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for the management of staff. And it does ask you know sort of how confident you are in this area.
Andrew: 28:28	Yeah.
28:28	I'd say my current school fairly confident. But I suppose my experience teaches me that there are some things that even with confidence and skill, you'll not overcome. If someone comes in and chooses to bully, and that's their very abrasive style, and that's been their abrasive style for a good 10 years, then how much difference as a volunteer are you going to make?
29:02	You might be able to round off some of the edges, but the call will still be the same. So I'm very confident, I suppose, but also very realistic.
Sarah Chung: 29:17	Okay. So as you said, you're more confident in this aspect now at your new school. What methods would you use to help examine how they manage this?
Andrew: 29:35	I suppose I just talked to them and I'd question and probe. And I think so when I first started, I really didn't get this idea of people who were in charge at the very top that use questions to make progress because I was kind of like, "That doesn't make sense. Why aren't they making decisions rather than just asking questions?" But now I understand that the purpose of questions isn't necessarily for you to make the decision.
30:03	It's for you to help somebody else to come to the decision. Maybe the decision you want, or maybe just a decision. And so

	by probing, you can explore the downsides of whatever it is they're doing whilst also recognising what's working as well.
Sarah Chung: 30:25	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So as a governing body, how do you ensure that you have the right staff?
Andrew: 30:42	Just ask me that question again, please.
Sarah Chung: 30:44	So as a governing body, how would you ensure that you have the right staff?
Andrew: 30:53	So maybe you've been around an education too long when a simple question flummoxes you. I think maybe you know when you've probably just done it and you're kind of like, "Oh, well, we're just going to do it." I'm not sure.
31:05	So I suppose we make sure that school leaders got safe recruitment training, and there's someone on the government board who's got safe recruitment training. We advertise within the local community for support staff. We advertise very widely for leadership positions. But for temporary ones, we're in a trust. So we advertise within the trust, the temporary leadership positions, which allows us to, I suppose, retain skills but also get people faster because it's all very well having the right person.
31:40	But if they're not starting until next January, then that's not as good as we've got a temp position. Someone's going to be going off of Mat leave. We want them on the 6th of June, and then them starting actually on the 6th of June. And I throw then stuff over, making sure that the information you put out to candidates is right as well. Did I actually answer that question? What answer were you expecting?
Sarah Chung: 32:10	Oh, I haven't got a fixed answer in mind. So no, what you said is absolutely brilliant. Thank you. It really helps. Thinking now about the staff that you do have, what developmental or reward arrangements do you have in place?
Andrew: 32:29	There's performance management and appraisal systems in place that are just fairly standard ones. Meet your targets for a teacher, and you can go on the pay scale. Don't meet your targets.
32:40	You stay where you are. So yeah, the usual stuff in maintained schools.
Sarah Chung: 32:47	Okay. Thank you. So as well as setting ethos in strategic direction of the score and also ensuring there is a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight. How comfortable are you within that situation?
Andrew: 33:10	Yeah. I'm happy.
Sarah Chung: 33:12	Okay. So can you explain how you as a governor ensure that the school budget is managed well?

33:23	So an example is complaining that we don't get up-to-date financial advice and pushing back against the paucity of financial information we had, and it's now got a lot better.
33:42	And then also providing feedback to the head teacher and BRSA of what information we would find useful as governors so that we can summarise that on two pages of A4 rather than provide us with the Excel spreadsheet that's got maybe 400, 500 rows, which, yeah, that's great. That gives us every bit of detail.
34:07	But what are the headlines to these 500 rows because I don't want 10 people all having to read through all of those rows. That's just not a good use of our time.
Sarah Chung: 34:19	Okay. Okay. Can you think of any examples of questions that have been raised during financial meetings?
Andrew: 34:31	Yeah. So one of our governors is very good at probing variance.
34:35	So where things are under or overspent against the budget, but also where things are over or underspent based on where we are in the time of year. So for example, if you're halfway through the year, you might reasonably be expected to spend about half your salary money. Whereas, for example, for gas, it won't be the same because you've got two halves of the year. But where things are different, he'll probe them.
35:07	Gas isn't a very good example because that's fairly obvious, isn't it? You spend more in the winter. But you get the idea that that's where program gets done.
Sarah Chung: 35:16	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So can you think of a time when either yourself or another governor has challenged a financial decision?
Andrew: 35:26	Yep. So one of the governors challenged on the asset register. So he had pages and pages of assets that were more than 250 pounds.
35:36	And he was like, "Well, when did we set the £250 limit?" And it turned out it was at some point when Noah was kind of getting off the arc with all the animals back in those days.
35:49	And then the question came, "Well, when do we update it?" And then it's like, "Well, it must have come from the LA, so that's what we've been going." And he was like, "Well, what would be the impact if we changed it to, say, 500?" And ultimately, it got changed to a number that was much higher than 250, but still allowed us to make sure our valuable things were kept that didn't require us to have pages and pages of assets.
Sarah Chung: 36:23	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Was that challenge well-received by their teacher at the time?
Andrew: 36:33	Neither here nor there. Sometimes when heads don't know the answer, they go into defensive mode of, "Well, this will be the

	advice from the LA." yeah And this is the advice from the LA is not an answer unless it's, "This is the advice from the LA I've had this week, and this is the reason why because I want this is the reason why," rather than just someone said this, "That's not good enough." So sometimes heads fall back on that.
37:02	But then, as a head teacher, you've got loads of stuff to know. And you can't be expected to know everything. So I understand sometimes why heads fall back to their defensive LA say position.
Sarah Chung: 37:16	Okay. Thank you. So the eight elements of effective governance have been identified as essential to good governance. So what I'd like you to do now is, in your own words, I'd like you to explain what each of those means. So it's almost a bit like a words association.
37:32	I'm going to read you the element of effective governance, and if you tell me what that means. Does that sound okay?
Andrew: 37:39	Yep.
Sarah Chung: 37:40	Okay. Wonderful. So A, the right people around the table.
Andrew: 37:45	A good skills mix and not monocultural. Okay. Is that something thinking of the monocultural.
Sarah Chung: 38:02	Is that something that's arisen within your own governing body, so?
Andrew: 38:07	Yeah. We are monocultural. We're management-class, white, middle-class. That's not a strong, diverse board. Sorry. Diversity is not a strength on our board.
Sarah Chung: 38:26	Okay. Thank you. So B, understanding the role and responsibilities.
Andrew: 38:37	Has done induction training.
Sarah Chung: 38:42	Good chairing.
Andrew: 38:47	Brings people out at the right time, shuts people down at the right time.
Sarah Chung: 38:51	Okay. Professional clerking.
Andrew: 39:09	Gives good advice when good legal advice when needed. Sorry, procedural. Gives good procedural advice when needed. Administers well.
Sarah Chung: 39:25	Okay.
39:28	E, good relationships based on trust.
Andrew: 39:31	Friends who can row but can still be friends.
Sarah Chung: 39:34	Okay. F, knowing the school.

Andrew: 39:48	Listens to staff, kids, parents, and understands the performance.
Sarah Chung: 40:01	Okay. G, asking challenging questions.
Andrew: 40:17	Turns over stones.
Sarah Chung: 40:19	Okay. And, H, having courageous conversations in the interests of children and young people.
Andrew: 40:45	Not afraid to go all in.
Sarah Chung: 40:47	Okay. Okay. So the line between strategic and operational now this is question 10, sorry.
41:02	The line between strategic and operational can be seen as a grey area for some. How confident are you in knowing where governance ends and SLT head teacher responsibility begins?
Andrew: 41:18	So I'm going to push back against the question because I think there's some overlap. I don't think there's I don't think there's a cliff edge where it ends for governance and starts for SLT. I think more it's a gradation.
41:33	And therefore, there is no beginning and no end. There is simply a team who the governors are definitely one end. The SLT is definitely the other side. And then in the middle, there's teamwork. But the more strategic you go, the more governance responsible for that teamwork, and the more operational you go, the more SLT are responsible for that teamwork.
Sarah Chung: 42:04	Okay. Okay. Thank you. So moving on now to COVID, looking at COVID and the impact. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been immense. Can you describe your experience of governance during this time?
Andrew: 42:33	Well, the fundamentals are still the same. So the what is still the same fundamentally, but some of the other bits changed. So we presented with 85-page risk assessments.
42:51	The local authority don't sent out to schools, which is great. Some local authorities weren't very good. Ours was all right, but they wouldn't track changes. And so you'd be on risk assessment three, and you'd be going, "Right, well, there are 85 pages to read which of the changes?" And it wasn't marked.
43:08	So there's some frustrations for that because that's an example of when schools were asked to turn on a six-pence and were provided with just masses of information on how to do it and how to make that happen for Monday.
43:34	So I guess there was some pressures that were different, but the fundamentals were still the same. Challenge and support the finances, although it's harder to do finances because you know how much did COVID cost? Well, some schools saved money from COVID because they were no longer forking out money on supply.

44:00	But it's really difficult to assess your financial position mid-pandemic. Sorry, I'll stop talking.
Sarah Chung: 44:07	No, that's wonderful. That's wonderful. Thank you. So obviously, COVID impacted your visits. You weren't able to go in as often or if at all. How did you as a governing body communicate?
Andrew: 44:25	We switched to online meetings, and we've all got school email addresses.
Sarah Chung: 44:31	Okay. Which platform did you use just out of interest?
Andrew: 44:35	Google Teams.
Sarah Chung: 44:36	Okay.
Andrew: 44:40	Google Meet. Sorry.
Sarah Chung: 44:41	Google Meet. Google Meet.
Andrew: 44:42	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 44:46	Right. Do you feel that during the time of the pandemic that you were kept up to date by the SLT?
Andrew: 44:54	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 44:56	Okay.
44:59	And whilst you were governing during the pandemic, did you find any areas were highlighted that you felt underqualified for or undertrained for?
Andrew: 45:16	No.
Sarah Chung: 45:18	Okay. So if you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be?
45:27	And why do you think it's essential?
Andrew: 45:41	It would be on diffusion of responsibility if you know that concept.
Sarah Chung: 45:46	Okay. Yeah. Do you want to just explain a bit more?
Andrew: 45:49	Cool. I'm happy to explain a bit more. But first, if I said diffusion responsibility, you're familiar with that concept.
Sarah Chung: 45:58	Yeah, vaguely, but yes.
Andrew: 45:59	Cool. Okay. That's fine. So if I take an example of we've got a vacancy on the board. We want to fill the vacancy. Now, this is one of the things that I find myself almost gritting my teeth at because it happens loads. And the governing body is very flimsy actually filling that.

46:20	So they go, "Oh, well, we'll put a letter out to parents because the parent government vacancy." And everyone goes, "Oh, that's good." And what they don't think is they don't think, "Well, that's going out to 800 parents." And each of those 800 parents will think, "Oh, there's 799 other parents. Therefore, someone else will do it." And so when that one comes forward, everyone expects someone else to do it. And then we get to the next meeting, and we've had no reply from the response. Now, if we did effectively diffusion responsibility training, then what people would realise is they realize, "Well, we do have to write out to all 800.
46:53	That's absolutely right because any parent could do it. But actually, what we should be doing is should be asking people as well because you actually speak to people and talk to them about what the benefits are. And then you can have that dialogue, which I mean, we've got parent governors on the board, so they can do that on the playground. We've also got staff governors on the board. So they can do that on gate duty or at the door, or even they can just cold call parents who they think might be suitable.
47:22	If we did that, then we wouldn't be at the next governor's meeting saying, "We've got no response to the next governor's meeting saying, "Yeah, we've got three people. We've had an election. This person won." And so there is plenty of diffusion responsibility where people kind of expect somebody else to do it. And the governors will go, "Oh, well, the clerk is going to do that process. Therefore, that's done." So then I don't have that responsibility.
47:50	They see the action, and then they don't then take the extra steps that would make it effective. So yeah, how to not be a bystander, how to be proactive within a corporate framework, and how to avoid diffusion responsibility. I'm not sure if you'll get the answer again, but if you do, put in your PhD because you can affect the change.
Sarah Chung: 48:14	Well, that's a wonderful answer. And I've not received an answer like that yet.
48:18	So that's really, really interesting and a unique way to look at it, actually, I think. So, yeah. Thank you. So excuse me. Conversely, then, what, in your opinion, is the least valuable piece of training for governance and why?
Andrew: 48:56	Healthy schools. The nation's health is important.
49:05	But if I'm going to take a 45-minute slot out of people's evenings, then I've got to make it as valuable and as pertinent as possible. Our schools aren't being judged on how healthy our kids are. They're being judged on reading right arithmetic. And now, offset have gone with this curriculum stuff. But none of that's really about healthy lifestyles.
49:35	So why was it in the good? Because it didn't actually help governors get any better at their job.

Sarah Chung: 49:48	Okay. So I'd like you to think back now to your initial year of governance. I think that was 15 years ago, yes?
Andrew: 50:02	2004.
Sarah Chung: 50:03	2004.
50:04	Okay. Did you feel supported in that yet?
Andrew: 50:10	Yeah. Can I change my answer to my last question, please?
Sarah Chung: 50:12	Oh, yeah. Absolutely.
Andrew: 50:14	Cool. Safeguarding.
Sarah Chung: 50:16	Safeguarding.
Sarah Chung: 50:19	And I am still on the least useful training. Yeah And I think the reason is is because we're asked to go on safeguarding training that's for frontline staff so that theoretically, we know what they know.
50:34	We never have to go on, say, teaching maths training so we know what they know or English training so we know what they know. Why do we need to know what they know? Why, as a governor, do I need to know what marks look like? And the answer is I don't. I need to be strategic to make sure that I know those things happen. And unfortunately, I think with safeguarding, what's happened is that people are afraid to get it to have gaps and get criticized.
51:03	No one wants to fail on safeguarding. And so these broad brush approaches that don't actually look at the needs of the learner and the needs of the role, they look at they just apply this broad brush. And so you're there as a governor. I mean, I admit I work in schools as well. So I do other safeguard training.
51:31	You're there on your umpteenth stint of safeguarding training. And you've never used it because the actual mark stuff as a governor, when are you going to come into contact with that? If a kid's got marks, do you need to know that's from a hand or whatnot? No, because anything like that, you would always tell the DSL. So I think well, actually, it links to the Healthy Schools thing, and both of them are where training is applied to the wrong audience.
52:06	It's the right training for the wrong audience. So there we go. Big plan. So now I'll go back to first year. So what was the question about my first year of governance? Sorry.
Sarah Chung: 52:15	In your first year of governance, did you feel supported?
Andrew: 52:18	Yes.

Sarah Chung: 52:19	Okay. Wonderful. Did you have a mentor or a governing buddy?
Andrew: 52:24	No.
Sarah Chung: 52:25	Okay. And what are your thoughts on mentors for governors, chairs of governors, and clerks?
Andrew: 52:33	I think it's a great idea, but no one ever tells the mentor what they should do or how they should do it.
52:37	They could do with like a six-page booklet saying, "Here's some tips. Here's what good looks like. You just copy this, then you're probably doing fairly good." And so as a result, it just doesn't work very well.
Sarah Chung: 52:51	Okay. Do you think then that a mentor training should be available for people that are in that role?
Andrew: 53:02	No, I think you can do it in a pamphlet. You don't need to do a training course.
Sarah Chung: 53:05	So maybe just a handbook for them one day?
Andrew: 53:08	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 53:09	Okay. Okay. Thank you.
Andrew: 53:10	Because it's not that complex. Tell you what, put in three dates throughout the year, one a term, make those dates now, put them in your calendar, invite the other person, and choose three themes because otherwise, what you'll do is you'll sit there and you'll go, "Is everything all right?" And they'll go, "Yeah, everything's okay," kind of thing. And it's not good use of your time. So put in three themes.
53:37	Even if it's strategic stuff, finance stuff, a critical friend, they could read three things like that and make about four to five minutes. And the person will feel more bored and they'll be up to speed faster. Okay. Sorry. I went on a little less soapbox.
Sarah Chung: 53:56	No, that's wonderful. Thank you. So in that case, do you think if you are going to have a mentor, do you think it should be from within your own governing body or external to your own governing body, another governing body, for example?
Andrew: 54:09	That's a great question. I think it should be internal. However, I wonder if after four years or if you do a second term, if it should be something external. But the external thing probably won't get off the ground because there won't be enough people to do it. Now, you can probably motivate some people to do it by calling them the national leader of government mentors or something like that. And some people will go with that.
54:37	But the supply would be really hard to establish, and there'd be a massive cost to that. And I just don't think the government are going to be committed to the volunteers of governing

	bodies enough to make that happen. It's a lovely idea. And if you can make it happen, you rock.
Sarah Chung: 54:59	It would be wonderful. Yeah. Okay.
55:02	So if mandatory training was introduced, so for example, Wales already has mandatory governor training, what would you like to see in relation to the following? So content. What do you think should be included?
Andrew: 55:25	The three key areas, three key responsibilities.
55:36	How to ask the right how to ask good questions, how to choose your battles, how to play the long game, which in a nutshell is using that 250 thing again.
55:58	So I ask the question of, "Why is it 250?" She goes, "That's my guidance." I go, "When did the guidance get done?" She goes, "Well, it obfuscates again." Then I go, "Please, can we have an update at the next meeting of what the current LA guidances of whether we can vary that?" So that's me playing a long game. So I've got a decision now, but I will get the information that we can then make the decision in the future.
56:30	And also, that saves any red faces for the head teachers because being a critical friend doesn't mean embarrassing and humiliating people. It is a tool for getting good results for the kids. And then diffusion responsibility would be in there as well.
Sarah Chung: 56:46	Okay. Wonderful.
Andrew: 56:48	And probably difference between being a representative and being a governor. And what's operational and what's strategic?
57:03	Sorry. I'm planning session one, as I speak.
Sarah Chung: 57:06	No, that's absolutely great. Thank you. I think it does make you think, doesn't it, when you start, so. How do you think the training should take place? So for example, currently most training is conducted within the LEAs and in-house within schools. Do you feel online might be beneficial?
Andrew: 57:26	No. I feel people will be more passive online.
Sarah Chung: 57:30	Okay.
Andrew: 57:31	And there's some interesting research from one of the South Southern universities, which is about the police forces. And there is some research on what frontline police officers found was most useful for training. And a lot of the police don't like training. And the reason is because of something to do with. They have to work overtime or something to do with. They have to do it in their holiday days and leave time. So they're annoyed already.
57:58	And so the research said that the least effective one was online courses. The second one was the second least effective

	was face-to-face and then the most effective one. What do you think it was?
Sarah Chung: 58:12	No idea.
Andrew: 58:14	It was practical, hands-on training. So if you're going to train me about riot management, don't make me click through lots of slides about riot management.
58:24	Get some squaddies who are all dressed up and get us for a day to manage riots in an old army base or something like that. And so that's the best quality. And I think that what does that then lead us to? It leads us to the idea that if we're going to be training governors, face-to-face is better than online stuff, but even better would be actual hands-on stuff, which actually means setting up governing body meetings with themes and whatnot.
58:57	But that's all a bit beyond the budgets we've got. So we're not going to be bringing in actors to train governors.
Sarah Chung: 59:04	Okay. That's really, really helpful. Thank you. Off the top of your head, do you know which study that is?
Andrew: 59:12	No. I think the University of Portsmouth rings a bell. It was a couple of years when I looked at it. I will see if I can find it as we're talking. I think it's in a folder in the other room.
Sarah Chung: 59:24	Not a problem. Thank you.
59:28	Okay. So actually, jumping back a question, I think. Do you feel that induction training should be mandatory?
Andrew: 59:39	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 59:41	Okay. Why do you feel that?
Andrew: 59:50	To improve retention and to get people up to speed faster.
59:56	I think if someone's been in an organisation for 13, 14 months and they still don't really know what they're doing, they're likely just to walk. And so you're setting people up for failure.
Sarah Chung: 01:00:08	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So given that, then, what are your thoughts on a modulated course? Perhaps not online given our previous conversation, but a modulated course that resulted in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year.
Andrew: 01:00:27	Sorry. What does modulated mean?
Sarah Chung: 01:00:30	So for example, it could be once a month. I think very similar to what we were talking about earlier. Once a month, you'd have a theme and you would either attend an online thing, sorry, an in-person thing, or you'd answer some questions or have a set

of reading. So something that is broken down over the year. So perhaps 12 themes over a year.

Andrew: 01:00:56 Cool. I think the amount of time that 12 would take is a high bar for people who are probably busy volunteers already because a lot of the people who are in school governance do other stuff in the community as well. It's not their only hat. And therefore, that would be a disincentive to doing it.

01:01:21 Or alternatively, you'd end up with lots of governors who've not done it, and you'd end up with this headache of the chair of governors trying to get people to do it, but I'm just not sure that would work. I think if I was to say if I was to look at that, I would say you need to do it in five or less and then do it on consecutive weeks or four in a row and then miss a week and then a fifth.

01:01:54 So six weeks with one in the middle to give you extra reflection time. Wonderful.

Sarah Chung: 01:02:04 Okay. That's brilliant. That's fantastic. Thank you. So we've reached the end of the official questions, but if there's anything else you'd like to mention that you think would help or.

Andrew: 01:02:28 Yeah. I think there's a missing piece of the jigsaw. And that's what should we expect from people who are highly paid members of staff? And at what point do we back down and say, "Oh, they're busy. They're so busy." Well, I'm busy as well.

01:02:46 I'm not just the governor who does an hour a week. I have other things as well. And I think it comes to what we should expect from school leaders in terms of planning, monitoring, or providing ideas for monitoring. And my two experiences within schools have been that school leaders have left it up to the governing body.

01:03:15 The governing body has expected school leaders to do it or just not knowing what to monitor because school governors aren't the frontline experts. We're the strategic ball. You guys are doing it. So from social managing safeguarding, give us a clue. And I think there's something missing, which is essentially if you're a school leader and you write an action plan, planning at that point what it is that you want monitoring because if you don't expect it to be monitored because the governor doesn't know.

01:03:54 And taking that then back to the governor, I think there's a message of governors should expect that school improvement plans have within them suggested methods of governor monitoring and time scales so that governors can more effectively do their jobs.

01:04:22 Because if I work in the pharmacy in the hospital, my experience with school is when I went to school, my experience at school is my kid's schooling. That's it. So I don't know how much to challenge you because you, as a person working in school, you know more than I do. I don't know how

	much I can challenge because I don't have as much knowledge as you.
01:04:51	And that bit's missing. No one tells you that. And I'm not sure if it's just not been spotted. But why don't people and sorry, the other thing about that is it makes it strategic. I have been invited to the school nativity, and I've never gone because Mary and Joseph aren't strategic. That's very operational.
01:05:16	And it's nice to see the nice things, and I'm sure I'll be like, "But smiling away." But I'm not bothered. That's not strategic. And some governors can get pulled into going and giving out prizes and stuff like that, which, yeah, sure. That's all right. I have no problem with that. But what it can do is it can make the governing body as a whole think, "Oh, where we're going into school." [redacted] was there only last week, kind of thing. He was there giving out attendance awards. How is that monitoring?
01:05:48	That's just being some top brass, who they roll out every so often. So yeah. So I'd make that comment as well. And then other than that, I've got nothing else I want to be on my setbacks about right now, so.
Sarah Chung: 01:06:02	Oh, Andrew, that was brilliant. Thank you ever so much. It's been really helpful.

Ava:

Sarah Chung: 00:00	So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I am currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body.
01:32	As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. And during our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this. Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role.
01:59	We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training. I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation that you've kindly signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I'd just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymised data destroyed after a period of 10 years.
02:35	Should you wish to have a copy of the results, please email me at [redacted]. So do you have any questions before we begin?
Ava: 02:49	Not at the moment. When you start, maybe I have questions. Not now. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 02:53	That's brilliant. Okay. So why don't we begin with how long you oh, sorry. No, I have pressed record there. That's okay. How long you've been a governor?
Ava: 03:04	Actually, I started in January 2019. So you can say three years.
Sarah Chung: 03:11	Okay. And what has been the most enjoyable part of your governance? Most enjoyable part.
Ava: 03:21	The feeling, actually. The feeling that I am contributing something for the betterment of the school in which my children have been learned. And one of my son is still there.
03:32	So it's a kind of a satisfaction that I am trying to give my input in that process to improve the whole scenario for my children. For the other children, obviously, but you can see I'm a mother. So for me, my children are most important in the world. I'm not saying I have some high ambitious with that role, but it's a kind of satisfaction.
Sarah Chung: 03:58	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. Such a lovely explanation.

04:03	Out of interest now, what would you say the least enjoyable part of your governance has been?
Ava: 04:12	It's a kind of a meeting once in a month. But after that, a feeling of detachment from the whole board. If you are a person who wants to meet who want to meet or see the other board members, it will be okay for you.
04:30	But it's a kind of detachment. I'm not easy with that. For the whole month, you remain detached from the other members. After one month, you meet for one hour or two hours. So that's the least interesting part for me. There must be some more than one point between that one month. Any kind of combined assignment or a combined project, which you can interact with other people.
Sarah Chung: 04:57	Okay.
04:58	So that sense of detachment, it's almost like an isolation, would you say?
Ava: 05:03	Yeah. You can say isolation. I won't say isolation. It's a kind of [inaudible]. I'm able to see those people. Most of them are parents. I'm able to see them in the school going around, but still not talking to them, not discussing anything which we have common interest as a board member.
Sarah Chung: 05:22	Ah, okay. Right. So it's almost that professional side of it where you'd like to collaborate a little bit more.
Ava: 05:31	It's a professional role. This role is asking from you, the professional input from you.
Sarah Chung: 05:37	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So the NGA describes governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction. The following questions will explore your understanding of vision ethos and strategic direction. So in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?
Ava: 06:01	What I understand from the strategic direction is that it's a bigger picture. It's a main target, you can say, of a school or the higher hierarchy of the management of the school, that where they want to steer their school towards it can be achievement of the children in the form of behavior, in form of results. It can be anything.
Sarah Chung: 06:26	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.
06:29	And so using your own experience as a governor, can you explain how you shape your school's strategic direction?
Ava: 06:40	To be very honest, I don't think so that we as a governor, as far as my experience is concerned, that I'm putting too much informing their strategies, actually. It's the kind of whatever strategies they are.

06:56	We are supposed to be part of that strategic planning, but in essence, we're exactly not.
Sarah Chung: 07:05	Okay. Okay. So what's caused that do you feel?
Ava: 07:11	You know It's a kind of kind of a confirmatory role if I can say that. So these are our strategies. This is the way we want to run our school. This is the way we want to teach our children, or this is the way we want to have achievements from the children, okay?
07:27	This is our planning. So we are sitting in the board. We are just over there to read those strategies or to confirm, are they really doing that or not?
Sarah Chung: 07:36	Right. Okay. So you see it more as your role just to make sure that the strategy is taking place rather than taking part in developing that strategy.
Ava: 07:48	From the last three years, I didn't get a chance, any chance, I must say, to be the part of forming those strategies.
07:58	Just a control material. Are you doing that? Just a monitoring role, you can say. I didn't get that chance, actually. I don't know why, but I didn't get that chance. And do you feel that it should be something that you have the opportunity to do? Yes. It should be there because when you're just sitting over there to rubber stamps, the scene of the other people, your role is not that effective. I am very outspoken person.
08:30	So I'm kind of a pushy person, you can say. Most of the people don't like me because of that, but I know that I am there for some purpose. Not to say yes to them, not to confirm each and every decision. They are very good people. They are very professional people, and I do respect them. But still, we are there not to accept and absorb everything. We are there to give an input, to add some new vision, which maybe they didn't get the chance to think about that.
09:00	So it depends on the person. I'm not that kind of a person. If they're not giving me the chance, I will sit in the corner and just looking at them. I'm not that kind of person. I have been given my input. But the result is that I am not feeling that I have given any input informing their strategies. I'm still not satisfied with them.
Sarah Chung: 09:22	Is there a way that you feel you can tackle that dissatisfaction?
Ava: 09:30	What do you mean by tackle that?
Sarah Chung: 09:33	Well, you were saying you don't feel satisfied in how it is at the moment. Do you feel that you are able to approach anybody to say that, or is it something that's just not talked about?
Ava: 09:48	No, no, no. I'm not that kind of person who can sit silently. Whenever I feel that I should speak up, I speak up.

09:59	I'm not that kind of person. So it's not a matter of me, actually. Seven or eight people are sitting around me. All of these are board members. If I'm doing something because of my personality, you know kind of a person that I will do that. It doesn't mean that the role is aligned with that. This role is not giving me that opportunity or giving me too much room for that. It's me because of my personality, because I'm doing it.
10:28	Other people are not doing that because this opportunity haven't been extended to them actually.
Sarah Chung: 10:35	Okay. Okay. Thank you. And do you think with some of that, do you think there's any specific training that might help?
Ava: 10:48	I have been to various you know from the last three years, like about 20 trainings. More than 20 trainings.
10:56	I have been trying myself more and more and more how to give maximum professional input into that role. I've been to numerous training. But believe me, every training was just like that. I've been taking that training from NGAs, mostly from NGA, the online training courses. These trainings are brilliant. I must say these trainings are brilliant.
11:25	But what will you get at the end will last in your mind for one or two days? Maximum. I'm a short memory person. I don't know. Most people are like that or not. What I'm doing right now, it will stay in my mind for a couple of days, maybe a week. After that, if I won't be able to put that learning into practical situation, I will forget it.
Sarah Chung: 11:50	Right. Okay.
11:52	So just to confirm, it's the NGA training, did you say?
Ava: 11:56	Yeah, yeah. I have been to that development of Chair program last year. Yeah. I've also attended that there was a marvellous program. That was the program. I can say that that program gave me the opportunity to think about my role, to think the other board member, to think how I am doing, how I can improve myself, and how do I improve from the initial start, from the start of the training, and after eight months, how do they feel that how much I improved?
12:30	And yeah, I've given the chance to plan practically for my book.
Sarah Chung: 12:35	Okay. So it sounds like you've really enjoyed the training. With the whole concept of it being short-term in your memory, do you think that having the training contextualised at the time might help?
Ava: 12:55	Contextualized by time. Can you please elaborate a little more?
Sarah Chung: 12:58	Sorry.

12:59	Could you repeat that?
Ava: 13:00	What do you mean by contextualise?
Sarah Chung: 13:02	So if the training gave you real-life examples that you could put the training into, almost role play or examples of situations that have occurred. Do you think that would help with your memory in terms of keeping that training there? Or is it a case of it just has to be you contextualising it yourself?
Ava: 13:29	Yeah. Most of these trainings have that exemplary part in it. The trainings have already have that exemplary part. They have tried to put that into context, a different lifetime scenario, But that's very good. From the angle of the designing of those trainings, these are the best.
13:51	The problem is that if the person who is getting the training, who is getting the training, and spending one hour, two hours on that training, okay, if he won't get the chance, these trainings, actually, these trainings should be very person-specific, would be a kind of a suggestion for different people. You need this training. You need this training. This training would be, "You are a part of this committee. You should think about this training. You should think about this training.
14:18	This will help because if you are a part of a finance committee and you are getting the training for how to improve your syllabus, I'm not saying that that will be useless, but it's not very targeted one.
Sarah Chung: 14:32	Okay. So it's a personalized approach to a governor's training?
Ava: 14:36	Yeah. There must be some person in the board who will be able to suggest different governors, different member of the board, that if you are a part of this committee, you have given this assignment, this project, you are part of a pay committee. You are part of your appraisal committee.
14:49	So you must go for these trainings.
Sarah Chung: 14:52	Okay. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Thank you, Ava. So now let's have a look at school ethos. So in your own words, can you describe what is meant by school's ethos?
Ava: 15:07	Not exactly. I can't explain that. I can only understand that, but how to explain the ethos. Yeah. Yeah. No.
Sarah Chung: 15:19	I mean, there's no right or wrong answer, by the way, to any of these. If it helps, you know consider it in the context of your school at the moment.
Ava: 15:28	The school is saying high achievement for every child is a target. Maybe that can be but it should be the part of strategy, not the ecosystem. I'm not able to say anything. Maybe I'm not clear on that.
Sarah Chung: 15:46	No, that's okay. That's fine.

15:49	Again, as with the other question, do you feel there's any training that could be provided that would help support a better understanding of what the ethos might be?
Ava: 16:02	I think there are trainings available. They are already trainings available.
Sarah Chung: 16:07	Okay. Okay.
Ava: 16:08	That's what I'm telling you that when you are not putting these things into action, you forget these things very easily.
16:17	I'm the only one in the board who is trying to update myself on the monthly basis, if not weekly basis. But still, when I'm suggesting other people to go for training, they're asking for what? We have been to various trainings, so what? These trainings are not adding to our understanding. We are understanding we're getting only from the things we are facing in our real life in the school scenario.
Sarah Chung: 16:44	Ah right. Okay.
16:44	So I can see then that you're very committed to development as a governor through training. It seems a little bit like the other governors are learning almost on the job rather than.
Ava: 16:59	Yeah. They think that learning from the practical scenario is much better than getting from training. They have been to various training. They are more senior than me, actually. And they told me that when I tell them, "Okay, I've been to this training, this training, you should also go for that training." So for what?
17:17	Do you think these trainings add to our understanding? No. Whatever you will have you know you'll have the space to the actual situation in the school. From there, you will learn. From there, you'll get the experience.
Sarah Chung: 17:30	Okay. Okay. Right. So let's move on a little bit from ethos and now look at the vision.
17:42	So you remember we talked at the start about the three-point strategic direction, ethos, and vision. Can you tell me how you shape. Your sorry, where are we? Sorry. In your own words, can you describe what is meant by vision?
Ava: 18:00	Vision is exactly where the school wants to go, wants to reach, actually. For example, if the school requires improvement that's the least example I can say.
18:12	If the school requires improvements on the scale, its vision should be to improve to a good scale.
Sarah Chung: 18:20	Okay. Are you happy with your school's vision?
Ava: 18:27	Yes. Because from the last year, I have seen those people working hard because we were also a required improvement

	school. Now we are offset at the end of last year, and we've been approved to the good.
18:43	So we are satisfied with that.
Sarah Chung: 18:45	Oh, congratulations.
Ava: 18:47	Thank you. You feeling are a part of a team who is continuously showing the improvement.
Sarah Chung: 18:56	Yeah. It sounds like it's a strong team feeling there.
Ava: 19:01	Yes, it is. It was not, but it is now.
Sarah Chung: 19:04	Ah, okay.
Ava: 19:06	It has developed a lot.
Sarah Chung: 19:08	Has that developed fairly recently, or has it taken some time?
Ava: 19:13	It has taken some time.
19:14	There was a change of head teacher was changed about five years back. After that, he has continuously trying to improve and improve, try to get best people on board in the form of the staff or in form of best members in the governing board. And if we had any governor who were not contributing or who were not interested just sitting in that, we just said thank you to them and try to replace them with someone who can give input.
19:43	They're very willing. They had teacher and all the senior management team is very willing to listen to us. Whatever input we are giving to them, they are giving respect to that and try to incorporate those suggestions into their practical day-to-day activities in the school. That's a very good thing. We are very open to their suggestions.
Sarah Chung: 20:07	Okay. That sounds fantastic. It does sound like you've had a couple of difficult conversations with governors there as well.
Ava: 20:16	Yes. That's the life. Actually, if you want to say difficult conversation. Yeah. I'm at the part of finance committee, actually. And when they are finance, we have very hard things to discuss. Yeah I'm also chairing the finance committee. So when it comes to the valuation, what value you are putting in, not it's about the cost of the thing, what value you are getting there.
20:49	So it's a very difficult one. And sometimes it's become very tough for me to stop them not to do that because it doesn't have any value or to think again about that.
Sarah Chung: 21:01	Yeah. Okay. With the governors that you mentioned briefly a moment ago, the conversation that "thank you, but you know we need somebody else". Was it simply they weren't active

	enough on the governing body, or did they not understand their role, or?
Ava: 21:23	My apprehension was that they were not understanding them. It wasn't my decision, obviously. I was very new at that time, and there was a couple of members in the board who were just coming to the meetings, and that's it. And some of them were missing the meeting very continuously. So always have that quorum issue with us. So maybe that's the reason they said to them that if you don't have time, you don't have the obligation.
21:55	You can leave that. We can replace you with the other person. So it's a kind of a polite suggestion to them.
Sarah Chung: 22:03	Yeah. Yeah. And was that with the chair of governors?
Ava: 22:09	Yeah. During those three years, now I have second year of governor.
Sarah Chung: 22:15	Sorry. Could you repeat that?
Ava: 22:17	During the three years when I joined the board, now I have the second new chair, you can say.
22:25	And there was another person. Now a lady is sitting as a chair. I am the vice chair, by the way.
Sarah Chung: 22:30	Okay. Okay. Thank you for letting me know. And how do you feel about being a vice chair three years in?
Ava: 22:40	Yeah. It's a good experience. It's a good experience. Although I'm not satisfied with the way there is a role for vice chair, but that role is not as effective as it should be.
22:58	It should be a kind of succession plan, yeah. When you have the vice chair with you, that vice chair should be equivalent with all that information and all the things which is going on, which you are currently comforting as a chair, you should discuss with these things, the vice chair because you are actually preparing them for the future leadership, aren't you?
Sarah Chung: 23:20	Yeah. Exactly. Yeah.
Ava: 23:22	If I'm not getting that done, I'm continuously losing in the issue.
23:28	Sometimes I feel that I'm nosing too much. But I want to learn. I want to learn. That's why I asked so many questions. Automatically, the system is not allowing me to get that information.
Sarah Chung: 23:42	Okay. That's interesting the way you phrase that. The system's not allowing you to. Is that the system internally within your school?
Ava: 23:53	Yes.
23:54	System internally in the school because they are not getting the importance of that role because that vice-chair role is quite

	new. It's as young as me in the board. Two and a half years. Before that, we didn't have that tool. When I started that, after six months, they offered me that rule.
Sarah Chung: 24:16	Ah, okay. So before the two and a half years ago, it was just the chair of governors. There was no?
Ava: 24:24	No vice chair.
Sarah Chung: 24:25	No vice chair at all?
Ava: 24:26	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 24:27	Okay. And did they have a co-chair at all, or was it just one single?
Ava: 24:31	Just one chair.
Sarah Chung: 24:33	Wow. Okay. Okay.
Ava: 24:36	As new as me.
Sarah Chung: 24:38	So what led to that discussion on creating a vice chair?
Ava: 24:44	I don't have any idea because I was just six months being in that board. And one day, I've been told that we are after one, as I told you that I've been to that board meeting once in a month.
24:57	So in a full board meeting, it was clear to me that we have decided to create a role for that. And if someone can suggest anyone's name. So one member suggested my name. And I was just looking at me. How can I do that? It's been just six months. And they said, "No, we have confidence in you." And after you came into this board, this board was quite passive, and now everyone is speaking.
25:27	Everyone is talking. Everyone is raising questions. So it's not a silent board anymore. So we have the confidence. So that's the day I started from there.
Sarah Chung: 25:37	It sounds like even though you were only six months into the role, and I'm assuming this is your first governor's role.
Ava: 25:46	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 25:46	So it sounds like you've had quite a positive impact.
Ava: 25:52	On those six months, I'm not sure. I was really very learning at that point.
25:57	I'm not sure that I did anything important for that board. I was just learning at that time.
Sarah Chung: 26:03	Wow. Okay.

Ava: 26:05	But I think as the governor hub, the governor hub was very passive. I used to use that governing hub, not for the conversation, but giving my input for any training I had. Look into that training. It was that good. A kind of a review of that training, a kind of a probing.
26:25	If I had any question after reading the document, I put straight away that question is a governor hub. Everyone can read that. So the person which I'm asking the question, can get his or herself ready before the meeting so we can discuss it. So it was a kind of encouragement that pose your question before the meeting because sometimes asking the question right in the meeting will not provide you the satisfactory answer to that because the person may not be able to answer you right away.
26:57	That's not possible, actually. That's very difficult for expecting someone to give you straightaway answers.
Sarah Chung: 27:04	Of course. So do you feel, Ava, can I ask what your job role is outside of governance?
27:15	What are you doing? I told you that I was a full-time student. Now I'm teaching online. I teach online law students and A-level students, you can say.
27:27	And apart from that, I'm also an OCR examiner for law papers.
Sarah Chung: 27:33	So my question here is looking at your occupation outside of governance and your role as a governor. Do you think you've brought skills from your external role? So I know we've discussed that you're a PhD you were a PhD student, sorry, and you've successfully gone through that.
27:56	And now these other roles that you were talking about, the OCR examiner, do you think those are skills that you bring to the table?
Ava: 28:04	Yes. Everything added up. Everything added up because I told you that my basis of my research was corporate governance. Governing the board or governing the cooperation is different but not entirely different. Some things will remain the same. The essence will be there. If you need to monitor, you need to monitor the board scenarios.
28:26	If you must see the effectiveness of the board, it should be there for the board board. So it's not that entirely different. And sometime I had the chance to add up that how can we improve the membership of our group? How can we improve the quality or the effectiveness of our working? So I was able if we are not too much attached with our parents or we are not taking their input so regularly, how can we do that?
28:54	How can we create a committee for the parents who can take the inputs from the parents and can bring it into the board? So how to be more and more linked with your community with the parents? Because without the parents, it's just a useless to even think about that the performance of your children will improve. It's not possible without taking the parents on board.

Sarah Chung: 29:20	Okay.
29:21	So it's still important for you then to have that stakeholder model where it's a selection of people from.
Ava: 29:28	Yes, it is important for me because if you want to improve, you'll have to take every stakeholder on the board. It's a community members from any aspect. We are living in the community where 90% are Muslims. So you can't just, for example, what was that? Sex education?
29:51	Religious sex education? I think so. So it wasn't an easy task for us to include that into our syllabus without asking the community because we were getting continuous complaints or objections on that. So it was very necessary for our school because it depends where your school is actually. So it depends.
30:18	So we'll have to take continuous inputs from the mosque people, from the people, from the community to make them satisfied that what we are going to do.
Sarah Chung: 30:28	Okay. Perfect. That's a really wonderful, detailed answer. Thank you so much, Ava. Okay. So I think we briefly touched on some of this, but can you explain a little bit about how your governing body oversees pupil performance? I think it's quite apt given the week that we've just started, isn't it, really?
30:50	So think of it in terms maybe of how do you know your pupils are performing as expected?
Ava: 30:58	There are actually a couple of ways to monitor that. One way is to see the reports that the school is producing, that these are our targets. These are the achievements of our children. And the other and most effective way is to go to your school, meet with the children, meet with the staff, and see whatever they are saying, are they actually putting it into the action?
31:23	Do every children have the opportunity to get that level of education? Or if someone is not getting that opportunity, why? So that can only be achieved by going regularly not regularly, but quite often you know in the school and meet with the children and see the people actually in the classroom.
Sarah Chung: 31:48	Okay. And you briefly touched on a report.
31:54	So seeing the report helps you as one of the stages. How comfortable are you personally with understanding the data that's presented to you?
Ava: 32:04	Sometimes it's very difficult. Sometimes it's quite lengthy, quite understandable from their point of view, but not as easy to understand from our point of view. So we can easily say that we are not understanding that. If you can put your data like this, it will be much understandable for me.

32:22	For example, most of the gain, I said to them that, "Okay, you are saying that these are the achievement." If you can put your data in year-wise, okay, take out yourself from if you have four or five sections in year one, for example, just take one year one, one year two, one year three, one year. Take a graph. And it will be quite understandable for us that how this data is what this data is representing actually.
32:50	So it depends that if you will make this output or this data easier for us, we can give you input. Otherwise, we'll spend more and more time understanding all these things.
Sarah Chung: 33:04	So an element of that is then that it needs to be presented in a manner that is accessible to anybody, any layperson.
Ava: 33:15	Yeah. Accessible. It should be presented well before the meeting, well before the meeting so that people can have the chance to see the data.
33:22	If you are presenting the data one or two days, you shouldn't be expecting that they will have the chance to skim all the data or to read all the data and provide you some input as a user's activity. But if you are providing those documents, those reports, those numbers, whatever the data you have, which you want them to give you input, you'll have to give them at least seven or eight days, eight to ten days, I must say.
Sarah Chung: 33:46	Okay. Okay.
Ava: 33:48	Not that easy, but now our clerk is doing that.
33:51	She's very wonderful. She's doing that. At least for the finance committee, she is doing that because she knows that I will have objection on that. So she is doing that.
Sarah Chung: 34:02	So that's something developed quite positively there then that there's now more time to access the data.
Ava: 34:10	Yeah. We are human beings. We have other commitments. This is a voluntary role. You know We are not getting anything paid for that role. Let's say we are spending time on that because of our own personal interest.
34:21	It can be various. For me, it's a personal satisfaction. Maybe for some other person, it can be a chance to develop them professionally or anything else. Anything else. So these are various seasons, but this is the unpaid job. So it should be kept in mind that whatever time you are asking for months, you know it should be very justified.
Sarah Chung: 34:44	Okay. Thank you. That's wonderful. So now we're going to talk a little bit about challenge and raising questions.
34:51	So do you feel able to challenge or raise questions when necessary?
Ava: 34:57	Yeah, whenever it is necessary. I'm a very straightforward person. I don't know how to be political, how to give political statements. So I know that it's not a good mind. Sometimes it's

	very embarrassing. I must say. Sometimes it's very embarrassing. If you don't know to give political statements, sometimes it's very embarrassing.
35:19	But I don't know the other way to ask questions. Whatever is coming to my mind, I'll ask about that instead of going round and round and then come to the point. And we are there to ask. And I didn't feel it challenging because the reason I told you that I know the people sitting in front of me, they are open to any discussion. They will accept any discussion.
35:46	They will not make it any issue that someone is asking, but rather they will happy that someone is raising that thing.
Sarah Chung: 35:54	Okay. So they're quite receptive to that challenge then?
Ava: 35:57	Yeah. I must say they are. Okay. That's wonderful. And I mean, you mentioned there, just occasionally, you feel a little bit embarrassed.
Ava: 36:07	Yes, occasionally. Only the reason is I don't know how to manipulate the words.
Sarah Chung: 36:12	Ah, right. Okay. Okay.
Ava: 36:14	But with that, I always say that I know that I'm asking a very straightforward question. I don't know how to ask any other way. That's what I'm asking. That's fine. You can ask.
Sarah Chung: 36:25	And they're quite supportive, though, [inaudible].
Ava: 36:29	They are. They are very supportive.
Sarah Chung: 36:31	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. Can you describe a time when you actually have challenged?
Ava: 36:40	Yes.
36:42	When I started working as a vice chair, I told you that it was after six months. And after a couple of months, we had an appraisal meeting. Yeah And we need to appraise the head teacher. So he was expecting a two-point race. And my chair called me because he didn't get the chance to meet me personally, so he called me at the telephone. I didn't have any idea about that, how these things work, actually, that how much important my input is into that process.
37:15	I wasn't clear at that time. So he was very willing to give him straightaway two-point race. And at that time, we didn't have an Ofsted. So he was working good. I had confidence on the head teacher, but still, I wanted to see some output. Yeah And at that time, we didn't have an output. So I was stressing him to accept only one-point race and wait for the results to come out.
37:47	Wait for the officer to visit our school. And then we can see whether what we are seeing or we have the belief, whether

	they are thinking the same way or not. And when I ask him, "Do we have any document? Do we have any milestones in which I can at least compare that what he have done is actually making him you know what should I say?
38:16	Whether he should be given the two-point raise or not. Whether his performance was so much outstanding that we should go for that. So I really insisted not to do that. And at the end, he was convinced that if I'm not comfortable, so we will not do that. So we went only for one-point race. But after next year, when the time came up, the head teacher provided me the document for the head teacher appraisal.
38:49	There is an official document available on the website, which I found. But the share at that time didn't know that we have any such kind of documentary information available in which we can compare the performance of our Headteacher. But we had that. He didn't know that, but we had that. It was available. So I found that by the next year, the head teacher straightaway come to us four or five days back before the meeting and provided us a document. And when we were at that meeting, we knew what to compare and how to compare his performance.
Sarah Chung: 39:24	Okay. So that sounds just to briefly recap there. So the chair at the time wanted immediately to go to a two-point race for the head teacher, but you felt that you hadn't seen enough evidence to do that, and you had suggested a one-point raise. And then you weren't given any documents to support the two-point raise, were you?
Ava: 39:53	I didn't have the information. Do we have any document where we can see that performance, how he should perform, and how he is performing. No way to compare.
Sarah Chung: 40:04	Okay. And you got that the next year, though, didn't you?
Ava: 40:07	Yeah. I got that next year. But the next day, I found it on the internet. It was available. It wasn't that difficult. But I didn't know that. I don't know why. But he said, "No, we don't have any such kind of document. We can tell us that how should we perform?".
Sarah Chung: 40:23	Right.
40:23	Okay. And as you said, the chair of governors didn't know that was available either.
Ava: 40:29	No, he didn't know that.
Sarah Chung: 40:30	Okay. And do you feel that some training on head teacher appraisal would have helped support you both through that process?
Ava: 40:39	Yes. But now he's not the chair because after six or eight months, he left the board because of his personal reasons. So now we have a new chair in our board.

40:53 She don't have that training. I'm insisting you know I have been suggesting her too many times to go for that training. I did that training and I found it very you know I did that training a week before that appraisal activity because I told you I have a very short memory. So I didn't get that training months before. I got that training a week before that. So it helped me a lot. It helped me a lot.

41:17 And whatever suggestions I gave to my chair after that meeting, you know after that meeting, I must say. And though she was not convinced with me, she was very excited to give him two-point raise again straight away without waiting for that. But this time, my answer was not I'm not convinced. My answer was that we were expecting these points. Some of these points have been achieved, but these two points, we are still not clear.

41:49 So keep that one-point raise as a reward for a good performance. Yeah If you keep on giving them two points every time, it will lose its effectiveness. Yeah It's a kind of a you know toffee or the chewing gum you are giving for every [inaudible] of your child. And after that, if you start thinking as a right, then now it's my right. I should be given that. So it's a useless. But she wasn't convinced.

42:19 And when she sent that email to the council, LBC, and the advisor gave her the same suggestion which I gave her, the same suggestion. Wait for the wait for the offset. Yeah. And this is the new chair of governance that we're talking about now, isn't it? She is a new chair, but she is not a new board member. She is there from the last six years.

42:50 Okay. So she's got substantial governance experience in terms of length of time. Yes. She got very extensive experience. She was a teacher. She's got brilliant experience with her. But it's kind of a personal attachment issues. I don't have these issues. I don't recognize these issues while working professionally, you can say. But some people, you know you have that attachment issue.

43:16 When you are comfortable working with someone, you want to give every kind of good thing to that person. Yeah Just to assume that we care for you. I don't think like that. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe they are right, but I don't think so. I know you mentioned your new chair is actually a teacher. Is she a teacher in your school or is she a teacher externally? No, she's not teaching. She was a teacher. She has quite good experience in teaching.

43:47 Okay. But is she a little reticent to do any training or? Yes. She is very reluctant to do any training. This NGA training for the development of chair, this was available for two of the two board members. This was available for two members. It was a funded training, if you know that. So it was available for at least two members can avail. And I asked her to go with me to start that training.

44:17 Previously, it was impossible for us because they were not offering that for our area. I'm in Luther. So in our area, they were not offering that. But this was a remote training, so it was a good opportunity for us to get on board. So why not? But she wasn't interested. Do you know why she wasn't interested? She has been to quite a lot when I told you that in the initial years, she has been to quite the trainings.

44:45 But she didn't see any positive output for those trainings. She always says that I've been to 10 or 12 trainings. But what's the use of those trainings? Yeah Why we should waste the time? Now she's thinking after experience she's thinking, then why would we should waste the time? Learn from the experience. Okay. Okay. Thank you. Thank you for sharing that.

45:13 So have you ever felt when you've challenged, have you ever felt uncomfortable challenging? Not uncomfortable. Not uncomfortable or rather confident, I must say. Not uncomfortable. Yeah. Not uncomfortable. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for the management of staff. How confident are you in this area?

45:44 I was not that confident in that area because but during 2020, 2021, we had the proposal for staff restructuring. So because of that proposal, we've been through different discussions on that. So it was a good learning experience for me, actually, to learn how to think from that angle.

46:08 When you have a staff instructing, when you don't want to just say to your staff that we don't need to do anymore, they have the families, they have the homes to feed. But at the same time, your budget is not allowing you. At the same time, you don't want to compromise the performance of your children. So which can be the aspects of this restructuring?

46:36 So I've been to different discussions during that time. We didn't go for that. We didn't go for that because during the pandemic, we got different kinds of funding from the government. So our budget got improved we can see. So we had funded in that time. So we dropped the idea. But at that time, it was a good learning experience for me to learn that when you have thinking about the staff restructuring, what angle should be considered.

47:11 Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So as well then as setting the ethos and strategic direction of the score and also ensuring there is a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing. Financial property must be clearly displayed in any financial oversight of your school. I know you said you're chair of the finance committee. How comfortable are you within this situation?

47:46 Can you please rephrase your question? Yeah. Absolutely. So basically, property must be clearly displayed in any financial oversight of your school. So can you explain how you as a

governor ensure that the school budget is managed well, for example?

48:11 Okay. The example which I gave you before, that it's not always when you're talking about the management of the school budget, it's not always about the cost of any aspect, anything. It's about the value. Sometimes it have a great cost, but at the same time, it has a great value for that. But sometimes it has very cheap cost, but it doesn't have any value. So cost and value should go together.

48:39 Value should prevail on the code. It's true that most of the schools and our school having that budget constraints, we don't have money to spend on everything we want to. So we'll have to prioritize which thing is important. So our priority remains not to compromise on the learning of the students. Okay?

49:04 If we can compromise other things, we can go for that, or to think about the more avenues to generate more income for your school, for example. Yeah Rather to cut off your from different aspects which can impact your students' learning, improve your income. Try to consume the things in a way more efficiently, you can say.

49:32 Just like consume less papers. Budget for your electricity. Try to use it effectively, efficiently. You can compromise in those situations, but you can't compromise on the learning. If you want to, for example, we don't have these what do you say? These electronic boards, touch boards, smart boards. Yeah Everything is smart. They're smart.

49:59 So if you want to have that new technology into a school and your children will learn from that, not to compromise on that. Go for that. But you can compromise on other things without putting their learning into any compromising situation. If you want to go outside, if you want to provide them outside learning, the learning outside the school, give them the maximum opportunity. Give them the maximum opportunity. Try to arrange those trips, which are cost-effective, but at the same time, they are learning opportunity for the children.

50:33 Okay. Okay. Thank you. And can you think of a time where you or another governor, for example, challenged a financial decision? Challenge the financial decision. We can only suggest them, actually. It's not a challenging them. We can only suggest them.

51:03 If I say that if you want more clearance or more explanation from them, yeah from any number you are seeing in the budget or in the financial reports. If you ask more and more bifurcation or more explanation on that number, it can be hard for them. It can be challenging for them.

51:25 But I don't think so that we can say them not to do that. We're not in that position to say them not to do that. We can say them think about that again. I don't seem that it can be beneficial. But at the same time, when the things come to the

management perspective, we don't have anything much to say in that. Okay. Okay.

51:51 And when you say you don't really have much to say on that, is that because, as you said, as a governing body, you feel that all you can do is make a suggestion rather than a challenge. When you say challenge, it can be challenging. Okay. If I ask them, "Can you please explain me a little bit more?" yeah Can you give me the bifurcation of this number? They can do that.

52:20 Can you explain me why this number is there? It shouldn't be there. Why is there? Why we are spending more? We have been spending less. Now we are spending more. What's the reason for that? So they can explain. If you are saying that it's challenging for them, yes, it can be challenging for them. But for me, it's just a question. The more elaboration of that number you can see. Okay. Thank you, Nahid. That's giving so much detail. Thank you. So let's move on now to sort of the eight elements of effective governance.

52:51 These have been identified as essential to good governance. So in your own words, I'm going to run through a list now, but in your own words, can you explain what these mean to you? The right people around the table. The right people, the people with right skill. And it depends on the need of that specific board. There's no generic formula for that. For example, in our board, we are really struggling with the financial people in our board.

53:20 We have just two members in our board. I'm just giving the example. I want more and more people in the finance committee, so we are struggling with that. So right people, in my case, in my board, should be having more financial people. The people with more financial understanding, I can say. Not the professional, but some have some financial understanding or the desire to sit in that committee. I'm not seeing the other eight people sitting in the other committee and two people sitting in one committee.

53:46 Other people are not able to oversee that financial information. They are, but they're not willing. Okay. Okay. So the right people depend on the type of the boot. Thank you. Thank you. So B, understanding the role and responsibilities. Yes, it is crucial. It is crucial because there's a fine line because I was a parent governor, and there's a fine line. You are not representing the parents.

54:16 You are a parent governor, but you're not representing them. So everything has a very thin line. You can't take your personal issues into the board. So understanding our role is much more crucial. And it should be done in the initial months with specific training. You know When the people join the board, they should be suggested that go for these training. Try to understand your role. You specifically if you are in a MAT, if you are in a state funding school, you are in a primary school, in high school, you should know what your role is demanding from.

54:51 Okay. Thank you. Good chairing. Good sharing is as crucial because that good chairing is not only it shouldn't be just a rubber stamp tool for the management. It should be a good communication bridge between the members and between the management, okay? And all the information which they are having.

55:19 Apart from those administrative aspects, sharing the meetings, timely meetings, information, everything, it's a crucial part, but it's more like a clerical function. It's not a function which is only done by the chair and get someone ready for your succession. Okay. Thank you. Professional clerking. Very, very important. Professional. I have seen this contrast.

55:45 Working with professional clerk and working without professional ad hoc basis. When we were working with professional credit, we were getting information on time, specific from every issue resolved in a second, every information you got in a second because she had the full-time job for that. But after the ad hoc clinical responsibilities, you know we have been struggling with that. We are struggling with that, actually.

56:14 So I know the contrast that that's very crucial that professional clerk is absolutely the soul for a boat. Okay. Thank you. Good relationships based on trust? Yes. It's also very important. Everything you are saying is important. You can't ignore the importance of that because if you have that trust-based relationship with your chair, with your management, with the other board members, you will feel that you are sitting in an environment where you can easily express yourself.

56:52 And your words wouldn't be taken for granted or as a means to tease you. It will be taken at DC as a discussion. Yeah Nothing really personal. You are not there for personal for the personal reasons. We are there for personal reasons, but not to present your personal issues over there. Yeah That trust is very important as like any other job, any other profession. It's important. Okay. Thank you. Thank you.

57:20 Knowing the school. Yeah. Knowing the school is also important. If you know your school, if you know the community from where the children are coming, that will help you to provide any suggestion, to raise potential risk, which you can have if you know the community, if you know the children. So that's crucial. That's also important to know that where your school is situated.

57:50 As I told you that our school is situated, where? Yeah. Okay. Thanks. Asking challenging questions. Is something you know in the personality of the person. You can encourage people to ask questions, but you cannot make everyone to ask questions challenging questions. It's not just about asking the question. If the question doesn't matter how difficult the situation is, how difficult the question is, you should have the courage to ask this question.

58:22	No question is right or wrong. It's in your mind, just express it. Okay. Thank you. And then having courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people. Yes. If you have some passion in you, and if you are there to improve your school or the children in the schools and the lives of the children in the school, you will be able to do that. But it also depends on the personal trait. Most of the people want to do that.
58:53	Believe me, most of the people sitting in that board wants to do that, but they're not doing that. Not because they don't believe that. They can't do it. They don't want to do it. They can't do it. Thank you. That's wonderful. Wonderful. Okay. So moving on now, we're going to look at the line between strategic and operational. It can be quite a gray area for some. How confident are you in knowing where governance ends and head teacher SLT responsibility begins?
59:26	I was not sure at the beginning of my role. I've learned through the process that what is the fine line between that strategic and management role, there is a side where we cannot give our input. And there is a side where we are supposed to give input. And there are gray areas.
59:47	Where you are not sure, what I do, the areas where I'm not sure, whether it's a strategic, purely strategic or purely management, rather to keep quiet or not to ask, or not to ask for more explanation. I just ask the question, "Can you please clarify that versus that?" And from the answer, I try to perceive that, "Should I intervene more into it or not?" yeah Because the answer provides me with an opportunity to understand that this is a gray area.
01:00:20	Sometimes it's a gray area for me. Otherwise, it's not. It's very clear, but I'm not understanding. And sometimes it's better to say. Better to say. If you are not pushing someone, it's better to say that. Okay. Okay. Thank you. Wonderful. So thinking about the policies in your school, what role do governors play in policy, implementation or development? With the development, they have the written policies.
01:00:51	They're getting from most of the council, from the education department. They are just adapting the policies for the schools. Most of the policies they are just adopting. And while adopting that policies where they are putting something new in that, just bring that policy into the board for us to see and give our input, which we are doing that. Sometimes in a meeting, we have 10 to 12 policies to review. That's insane, I think.
01:01:22	Sometimes it's ineffective. I've always been asking that question. Why are you putting too much policies in one meeting? But they're required to. They can't do anything because that's the process. They'll have to update their policies. They'll have to take our consent. Sometimes it's just, I must say, useless exercise. Because if you're not giving any input, just one is of what we say. Proposing that and other. That's a process.

01:01:52 But sometimes there are some policies which they highlight that we have been doing the changes. Actually, we had very long discussions on that. Okay. Okay. Thank you. That's a great explanation. So now let's look at the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on your ability to govern effectively. So you know for example, did the lack of governor visits impact your ability to monitor?

01:02:23 Yes. There was zero monitoring visits in the school because it wasn't allowed. So it was a barrier, I must say. But at the same time, children were not at children at their home. So where to visit? Because they were not in the classroom. So this was a useless exercise at that time. But when the school gets open, still there were some restrictions for the outsiders to go into the school.

01:02:48 So there was a kind of disconnection feeling from what we are seeing as a document, we're not able to see it in practice. So that's the kind of hesitation we had. Everyone had actually. But we didn't have any choice for that. But the good thing was that when there was an initial part of that COVID and all the meetings cancelled, school closed. And it was more required to meet at that time to plan the strategy for the children from onward at that time.

01:03:22 So I was the first person on board, actually, who gave them the idea. Why not to meet on Skype? Why not to meet? I didn't have any idea about Zoom. So why not to meet on WhatsApp even? Yeah If we can call other people in WhatsApp, why can't we meet on WhatsApp? Now we have different platforms available. At that time, it was just a discussion. If our children can play online, why can't they learn online? Okay.

01:03:52 You've answered my next question really well there, actually. So you moved everything online pretty quickly. Yes. Quick in that. And after one month, all the children were getting their homework through their online. The Google classroom was set up. And we as a parent was sitting with our children in school. Everyone was doing that.

01:04:20 So as a governing body, you communicated online as well? Yes. Which platform did you use? Governor Hub. Oh, Governor Hub. Okay. We did use Governor. Initially, when we didn't have any other way, apart from email, we communicated through the governor hub. And after that, we switched ourselves to Teams meeting and Zoom. Okay. Wonderful. And were they effective?

01:04:50 Initially, it was quite hard you know when we are used to discuss face-to-face, personally having discussion. But most of the Zoom or in team meeting, most of the videos as today, I didn't switch on my video. So it's sometimes very difficult to understand other people without seeing them. Yeah, So these were the issues, but no, it's next to our habit now.

01:05:18 You can see the people. If you can't see the people, it doesn't make any difference. Yeah. Yeah. Wonderful. So you used

both Teams and Zoom. Was there a preference, or was there a restriction on which one you could use, or? Initially, it was a preference. Yeah, Now it's a policy. Okay. Okay. And do you feel that you were kept up to date by SLT during the pandemic? Yes, we were.

01:05:45 We were getting the updates continuously without an interval and very clear. Okay. Wonderful. And did governing in a pandemic highlight any areas that you felt underqualified or under-trained for? Yes. We were not overseeing that aspect, actually, before that. But after that, it became crucial that our school was focusing more on literacy and math and less on the computers.

01:06:21 Yeah. They were focusing less on ICT classes. But after that, when it becomes crucial, that children should have the understanding how to use computers, how to do their homework online, how to submit, how to open the document, how to copy, how to pay a different aspect. They were not quite good at that time, but now they are working very because after that, it becomes that we have to focus on this aspect, too, as we are focusing on math and literacy.

01:06:51 Okay. Okay. So it's almost that balance. Yeah. It's a balance. Now we have quite a vast syllabus, just like science, geography, history, computers, and everything. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So I want you to think now about governor training. If you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be?

01:07:22 And why do you think this is essential? One training. Yeah. If you had to pick one training that you thought was the most important training for governors, what would it be and why? Yes. I think so. There's a training on the resources, how to utilize your resources or to get the maximum output from the resources. It can be your human resource.

01:07:51 It can be your any resource available in the school. So I think that that was a very good feeling. Okay. So that's how to get the most out of your resources? Yes. Okay. That was very good training, I think. So because it deals with different aspects. Okay. I hope I'm not going into too much detail. No, no. This is wonderful. Thank you. It's really helpful.

01:08:24 So conversely, what is, in your opinion, the least valuable piece of training for governors and why? Induction trainings. Sorry? Induction training. Induction trainings for new governors. Oh, induction trainings? That's only be done when you are joining the board. It should be communicated to you in five minutes sitting in front of you.

01:08:48 Rather to spend one hour on that. Okay. You're doing induction in your school. Your head teacher or your client should be able to explain about your school, specifically your role in 5 or 10 minutes. Are you wasting time on that? Okay. Okay. So for your perspective, induction training should be

very school-specific. It should be very school-specific. Otherwise, it's not useful for everyone, I must say.

01:09:19 Maybe it's my opinion. Yeah. Okay. No, it's wonderful. Thank you for sharing your opinions. Because I took that training very anxiously that I will get maximum out of it because I have joined that board. I'm a new governor in that. And after that training, I will have all the information I want, but I didn't. Yeah. Okay. Thank you. So now I'd like you to think back to your initial year of governance. Did you feel supported?

01:09:51 Supported. Supported in terms of So for example, did you have a mentor or a governing buddy who you could ask questions from? Unfortunately, no. I asked for that, but no. Okay. And the lady who is chair at that time, I asked at the clerk at that time that I need some mentor who can mentor me, who can explain a little bit for me, and from whom I can ask questions.

01:10:18 And she assigned me that lady, which is chair now. Yeah And she asked me, "Okay, you can have my number, and you can call me anytime." But most of the time, she wasn't available. Most of the time, she wasn't willing. So yes, I got the mentor, but no, I didn't get any support from the mentor. Right. Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.

01:10:49 Okay. And what are your thoughts on mentors for governors, chairs of governors, and clerks? Are they helpful? Should the mentor be from another governing body, for example, or your own? Can we say it again? Sorry, I missed something in there. Okay. So what are your thoughts on governors for chairs sorry, what are your thoughts on mentors for governors, chairs of governors, or clerks?

01:11:18 So one, do you feel they're helpful? Yes. They can be very helpful, especially the mentors. Because mentors are the people who are sitting with you in the room. They are not sitting at the seat of chair. They don't have as much responsibility as the chairs have. They're not much administrator like the clerks, but the mentors should be the person who is sitting with you, who like you. Okay? There's too many things to ask, which you don't ask because these are very trivial questions.

01:11:50 Sometimes these are trivial, but this can be very challenging when the time is gone. Yeah, of course. Different abbreviations they use, we become familiar with those, but initially, we don't. Yeah People are discussing or just looking at them. What do you mean? What are they trying to say? Yeah So it's a kind of disconnection, but when you have a mentor, who is sitting right in front of beside you, you can say, or you are just going anywhere.

01:12:22 You can just meet, "Okay. I didn't ask that, but can you please explain it a little more? What is the procedure? What should I do? How can I contribute? What are the preferences of these people and how they have been doing?" This is a different question in your mind. Yeah. That's really wonderful, Nihi.

Thank you for that. Do you think do you think the mentor should come from within your governing body, then, or from an external governing body, somebody that you can approach outside of governor meetings?

01:12:59 No, I think so it should be from within your board. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So the NGA have openly stated that they feel induction training should be mandatory within the first year and in Wales, it already is. In your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this and why? As I told you, I'm not in a 100% commitment or agreement with that. Yeah If it should be compulsory, it should be effective.

01:13:29 If it's not effective, believe me, it's just a training. Attractiveness is much more important than the quality. Quality is more important than quantity. Okay. Brilliant. And I don't know how they will improve that, but they know how to improve that. I know these people, they have the continuous research, and they can do it. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Thank you. That's great.

01:13:58 So if mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following? Content. What should be included? Content. It should be the school. But you know if I'm asking that, it should be school-specific. It should be this person-specific. I have different professional skills. Other people have different professional skills. They have different set of experience with them. I have different set of experience with them.

01:14:27 We are working in the same school, and the training is telling you generic information for 100 schools, for med schools, for any kind of school. And you can be any type of that school, not that school-specific. So it can be very hard. I know that this is not possible to provide specific training to certain people. But I think abroad groups can be created. Broader aspect, if the people are coming from this profession, how we can get more input from those people.

01:15:01 If these people are coming from law, accounting, you know finance, anything, their music people, their teachers. How can we get more and more input on the basis of their experience? So at least a broader groups can be created. Okay. So maybe personalised again to the group that you're within? Yes. Okay. Fantastic. Thank you. And how should the training take place?

01:15:30 So for example, currently, most training is conducted within LEAs and in-house, within schools. Do you feel online training would be beneficial? These trainings are online. Okay. Yeah. We have got a lot now online, I think, haven't we? I think they are. Most of them, the induction training, which I saw is online. Either the Borough Council is providing that or NG is providing that.

01:16:00 Councils do have their face-to-face training in different avenues, but most of them are now doing online. Okay. Do you think that will stay after the pandemic has gone down? Not the induction training. It should be face-to-face. It should be face-to-face. Okay. Thank you. What are your thoughts on a

modulated course delivered online and resulting in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year?

01:16:32 If I can think about the course which I recently did, the development of care certificate program. And it was quite a collaborative kind of thing in which we had the chance to discuss with the other class members, discuss with our moderator of the course, to come up with some solutions for our specific school problems. So it was quite an interactive one.

01:17:00 That was the best I think. So what I did so far, that was the best course from NG. So that collaborative, that interactive nature of it really sold the course to you? Also provide the platform to network with other people. And you don't think so that you are sitting somewhere in isolation. There are the people who are working in a different way, but still you're doing the same thing. Networking, understanding the other boards.

01:17:30 Okay. Okay. That's fantastic. Thank you. So we've reached the end, and I'd just like to take this opportunity to thank you once again for your participation and just ask you now if there's anything else that you'd like to say that you feel would be beneficial to the study? No. I don't think I have any input for that. You know better than me, actually. But I don't know how you are going to compile these interviews.

01:18:01 Are you picking any buzzwords or buzz phrases? Well, I'm going to go through, and I'm going to do a thematic analysis of documents. Yeah. And then we'll go from there. We'll see where it takes us. Yeah. Best of luck. Best of luck. Thank you so much. Come good for you. And are you in first year or second year? Well, I'm a fourth year part-time. No.

01:18:31 It's a challenge. You are doing another job, yeah? Well, yeah, I've got two little boys as well, so I'm working and doing this at the same time, yeah. Best of luck then, best of luck. You'll be fine. Everything will be fine for you. Oh, thank you ever so much. Easy to analyze the interviews quite extensive and because the people talk too much like me. It's very difficult to accept the things which can be useful for you. It's difficult.

01:19:00 I know that. Oh, it's lovely. I absolutely love talking to people about governance and hearing the passion in their voices. So you know it's been an absolute pleasure to talk to you today. Yeah. That passion is common. That's why we're here. Otherwise, we're getting nothing. Something on that. I am of the opinion that if you are buying the time of anyone else, they are professional people. You are buying the time.

01:19:29 At least give them something in return of that time. Not everything is free. If you want commitment, if you want more and more commitment, try to provide some essence for that commitment. Money in a ton of that, but something. Is that in terms of governance? No, sorry. We are providing we are giving time.

01:19:59	We are giving time. A lot of professional people, we have other commitments, but still we are providing the time. If we are providing the time, this time cost us, not in terms of money, but it can be compensated in other ways. Not always in terms of money. So how would you suggest? I don't have any clear idea about it. I'm still thinking that how can we compensate it? How can we ask for the compensation apart from me?
01:20:30	So Michael Wilshaw said some time back now, he proposed the idea of paid governance chairs. Is that something that you could see or would see coming down the line? I'm not sure that paying is the only way to compensate anyone. It can be the only way. But people can be compensated so many various ways.
01:20:59	You know I don't know. I'm still thinking of that. When I come up with something, I really share with you. Oh, thank you. That would be wonderful. Best of luck to you. Thank you so much. And have a wonderful day, Nahid. Oh, yes. Same to you. Thank you. Bye. Cheers. Take care. Bye-bye. Bye.

Charlie

Sarah Chung: 00:01	Wonderful. So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. During our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this.
00:26	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor and how it has impacted participation, duties, and training.
00:50	I would like to remind you again that as stressed in the letter of participation you've just kindly signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years.
01:16	Should you wish to copy have a copy of the results, please feel free to email me either the email that you've already used or [redacted]. Do you have any questions before we begin? No, only to note that I am somebody who will be interested in seeing a copy of the outcome report as such. Oh, wonderful. Okay. I shall try and I'll add you to the list. It's going to be a little bit of time.
Charlie: 01:45	Yeah, yeah.
01:45	No, that's fine.
Sarah Chung: 01:47	But yeah, wonderful. Okay. So shall we jump in with how long have you been a governor?
Charlie: 01:54	Oh, gosh. That shouldn't be a difficult question, should it? 11 years.
Sarah Chung: 02:00	11 years. Wonderful. Thank you. I'm assuming you're enjoying it then.
Charlie: 02:05	Yeah. Well, either that or just feel called to it. But yes, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 02:10	So what's been the most enjoyable part of your governance?
Charlie: 02:16	Probably seeing well, no, not probably. Seeing the impact it can have in terms of what I describe best as a domino effect. So being able to secure high expectations but also high accountability, which in turn cascades through the whole

	school and ultimately has that impact on children. So I won't go into particular examples at the moment.
02:43	We can talk about those if you'd like to later. But seeing real improvements, tangible improvements in school from the perspective of children's outcomes and children's attainment and progress, I guess.
Sarah Chung: 02:57	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. And conversely, what is the least enjoyable part of your governance?
Charlie: 03:08	I think there's increasing challenge within the sector in terms of teacher and leader recruitment.
03:21	And I think there's probably a broader expectation being put upon governors. And whilst I don't necessarily dislike that, it does become an increasing challenge, shall we say?
Sarah Chung: 03:32	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So the NGA have described governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction.
03:45	The following questions will explore your understanding of vision, ethos, and strategic direction. Yeah So to begin with, in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?
Charlie: 04:00	I think it's horizon scanning. It's having a view towards the longer term. It's looking at the endpoint and then, to my mind, working backwards to then support leaders in planning on how to get there as their operational leadership role.
Sarah Chung: 04:18	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. And using your own experience as a governor, can you explain how you've shaped your school's strategic direction?
Charlie: 04:28	Yeah. We have a stakeholder day, typically once a year, where we draw in governors, but also staff and also the input from things like parent and child surveys as well and you know any school improvement partner visits and things like that to shape the longer term.
04:50	I think it's difficult to shape vision at the moment because the sector feels like it's ever evolving and what I want to achieve through governance in school now in five years' time is probably quite different to what that might look like in even two years' time, really, because there is that broader keeping up with the sector, if that makes sense.
Sarah Chung: 05:18	Yeah. Absolutely. Okay. Thank you. So have you faced any difficulties or uncertainties whilst trying to set strategic direction?
Charlie: 05:31	It'd be untruthful to say no. I think the main challenge is prioritisation given the breadth of things.
05:41	So do we focus upon ensuring our curriculum is the best possible, or do we ensure that we're Ofsted ready, or do we ensure that the needs of our most vulnerable children are being met in the best way possible? And all those are really

valid things that I'd want to include in some kind of long-term vision thinking. But actually, prioritizing that and distilling that into things which are achievable becomes unrealistic, if that makes sense.

Sarah Chung: 06:10 Yeah.

06:10 Absolutely. Do you think there's anything that could support you with that? Any training that might help?

Charlie: 06:20 I think possibly broader national sector updates in the sense of, and I'm going to talk about my professional work now, but we run a termly briefing for governors within our locality, and I know a number of other local authorities do the same, whether that's a sort of director's briefing or similar. And those are really helpful from a local perspective.

06:40 But actually, to possibly have that kind of forum with the Department for Education so that we're hearing it direct from those decision-makers would be really helpful because then that's helping us to discern the key perspectives from their mind. And I also think I'm going to be challenging in what I say here, but there's a real risk of divergence in governance.

07:06 And whilst I don't deny that there is an ongoing priority of climate change, I'm maybe less supportive of the National Governance Association's work with regard to climate change because it's not statutory and there are other things which are statutory which we need to prioritise, if that makes sense.

Sarah Chung: 07:28 Okay. Yeah. No. Absolutely. What would you prioritise, ahead?

Charlie: 07:33 I think there's a big question certainly after the publication of the white paper to do with school systems and structures and academization or not academisation, I guess. I think there's also some more in-depth work which needs to be done around COVID recovery.

07:55 So not just getting children back into the classroom and trying to plug gaps in learning, but actually being able to reflect and plan for the longer term because you know there'll be at least seven years impact in education because there'll be some children who didn't sit, didn't get a good level of development in the early years, who then won't have a progress measure for key stage two. And how are we going to counteract that?

08:21 And it's those kind of questions I guess I want to be talking about and answering now rather than in seven years' time when we suddenly realise that we've not gotten the data we used to have. And I think i think Ofsted post-pandemic would be helpful because the school where I chair the governing body was inspected pre-pandemic in November '19. And I cannot see how the same process can be applied now after the disruption we've faced over the last two years.

08:55	And whether that creates a sort of inequality in the framework and the system inadvertently.
Sarah Chung: 09:02	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So in your own words now, could you talk me through school ethos?
Charlie: 09:12	Yeah. I think some of school ethos is the undocumented.
09:18	I think it's the way a school feels, the values it holds onto as part of delivering its vision, and probably some very unshakable core values that are held onto in the course of trying to pursue everything, really. I think one of the big misnomers about ethos in my experience is that it becomes words rather than applied.
09:51	So a school I've previously worked with had an ethos around being resilient. But actually, in practice, neither staff nor children really applied being resilient through their day-to-day. So to coin a phrase slightly, it's to practice what you preach.
Sarah Chung: 10:09	Oh, okay. Okay. So it's got to be for you, a practical element to the ethos.
Charlie: 10:14	I think it's got to be, yeah, realistic and applicable.
Sarah Chung: 10:19	Okay.
10:20	Wonderful. Thank you. So can you tell me a little bit about how you developed your schools, Ethos?
Charlie: 10:29	Again, it was through stakeholder engagement and consultation in terms of what do we hold on to, but also taking quite a child-focused metric on that in terms of when children have been in our school for seven years, some of whom may have been in our preschool beforehand, what do we want them to leave with?
10:50	And I actually quite like and sometimes compare it to the I think it's National Trust, 50 things that every child should do before that 10. Yeah And it's that kind of model I would probably look at now if we were to sort of review ethos in terms of what do we want for these children? What are the non-negotiables in addition to quality teaching and learning that we want for these children? And how do we then strategize from that, I guess?
Sarah Chung: 11:20	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Are you happy with your schools, ethos?
Charlie: 11:26	I think the application of it can sometimes be lost, as I've just sort of referred to. But overall, yes.
Sarah Chung: 11:32	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Do you think in terms of ethos, there's any training that might be beneficial for newer governors, for example?
Charlie: 11:47	I'm going to talk more broadly and then come back to your question if that's okay.

Sarah Chung: 11:51	Yeah. Absolutely.
Charlie: 11:52	I find far more value in any governor training which can apply back to my home setting. So whilst I'm really grateful for things which are theory or good practice, being able to hear from somebody who's done it is far more empowering for me and then being able to possibly during the training have a bit of a networking session with other attendees to talk about our school's current situation and how the training might move it forward is the often missing piece of the jigsaw as I see it, I guess.
12:29	I do think probably not just ethos, but more vision, ethos, and mission, shall we say. Training, yes, would be helpful, although maybe not as part of governor induction because I think at that time there's so much to learn in terms of the new arena, you're not necessarily the most prepared and equipped person to be redefining those things.
12:52	Whereas possibly for somebody like me who's been around the table for a longer time, as we start to look at refreshing and changing that, it would be really helpful, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 13:04	Okay. That's wonderful. So I think just to clarify that, that for you, any training should start almost more locally within the school and then branch out?
Charlie: 13:18	Probably a bit of a sort of circular motion, actually.
13:23	So to start in understanding the school's current approach, to then potentially go external and learn the theory, the best practice, but also the applied experience of others through either case studies or hearing from them. But then coming back around that full circle, then having more of an opportunity, almost as a call to action, either to network during the end of that external training session or to have that call to action to take things back to your own school.
13:56	Because I think that, for me, it's the application of training, which is the most missed part, if you know what I mean.
Sarah Chung: 14:03	Yeah. Absolutely. Thank you. So now looking at vision, in your own words, can you describe vision?
Charlie: 14:16	It's a longer-term set of principles and ideas that you aspire to consistently be, I guess.
14:31	I think if you're not careful a lot, you can get lost in vision because it's a very high-level strategy. And I think, indeed, I've experienced through complaint processes that actually vision can be used against you almost. You say that you are this, and my experience isn't that. And it's like, sometimes that's really hard. It's got to be more than just words.
14:57	But again, it's got to be part of the language of the organisation, to my mind. It can't just be something on certificates or something branded across the top of your agendas. There's got to be an understanding from

	stakeholders at all levels as to what that means to them in their respective role.
Sarah Chung: 15:16	Okay. That's wonderful. So again, similar question. Are you happy with the vision that you've set in your school?
Charlie: 15:25	Yeah.
15:25	Again, I probably reflect that some of that latter part of the point I've just made about the application and consistency of application is important. But I think that will always be important as communities change and staff change and children change. But overall, yes.
Sarah Chung: 15:42	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So let's talk a little bit now about pupil performance. Can you explain a little bit about how your governing body oversees pupil performance?
Charlie: 15:53	Yeah.
15:54	So through either full governing body well, through either full governing body or either of our committees, there's a lot of data presented which talks about data metrics, attainment and progress versus year-end forecast position. We then try and triangulate that with looking at books and undertaking learning walks and monitoring to try and quantify what we're seeing in numbers in sort of narrative in terms of children's work, if that makes sense.
Sarah Chung: 16:32	Yeah.
Charlie: 16:33	We also hear on a regular cycle from various different curriculum leaders. So we like to hear from leaders other than just the head teacher who can provide us with some kind of assurity and confidence around their particular areas of the curriculum. One of the big challenges we're grappling with at the moment is how do we know what performance looks like across the foundation curriculum.
17:01	We find that much easier and are obviously very well rehearsed in terms of our core, but the foundation curriculum is something that's evolving for us at the moment.
Sarah Chung: 17:14	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So how comfortable are you with understanding the data that's presented to you?
Charlie: 17:22	Yeah. I am pretty comfortable, possibly by virtue of my professional role on the data that requires me to interpret too.
17:31	But also, I'm a big advocate of asking the naïve question sometimes. And actually, if something just doesn't make sense, asking the naïve question, which can often open a really rich conversation. I think there's an aspect of me which following more recent learning and sort of reading has turned data analysis on its head.
17:59	And I think that's challenging if that's to be broadened. So for example, if the head teacher comes and says, "Oh, we've got 80% passing the year, one phonics screen," my question then

	focuses on what about the 20%? That's one in five children who aren't achieving. And it can come across as overly negative. And it's not that I'm wishing to take away from 80% being broadly in line with or versus national averages.
18:25	But yeah, it is about considering those children who aren't getting there and why. I think the other thing which is really important to me is to have those rich and rigorous comparators. So local and national averages for similar cohorts, etc. Because I've been in more than one school where it's, "Well, we're better than the school down the road, so it's okay." And actually, the school down the road may be the worst performing school in the area.
18:53	So it's about knowing who you're knowing who you're benchmarking against, both from a school-to-school perspective. So a little bit like how they do the financial benchmarking, possibly looking at data comparisons that way rather than just the locality in the national, but recognizing that the locality in the national will always have a place because there's league tables and such light to consider.
Sarah Chung: 19:23	Okay. In terms of your other governors on your governing board as well, is it something that you feel training would be beneficial for?
Charlie: 19:36	To probably refresh, if I'm honest, I would typically suggest that data analysis is or can be one of the quicker wins when it comes to governor training because people a...typically and I can't say this holistically have got some experience of working with data, even if that's only sort of going shopping and understanding how much that costs or that kind of thing.
20:05	And again, I think it would be more helpful in terms of what that means as a knock-on effect, if that makes sense. So this data tells us that we are 65% achieving the expected standard. In addition to the data, I'd want more of my governors to understand what that means for that 65%, what is the expected standard, but also what that means for the 35% who aren't there yet.
Sarah Chung: 20:36	Okay. So it's contextualising the information you're given.
Charlie:	Yeah
Sarah Chung: 20:40	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you.
Charlie: 20:42	And also, sorry. And this is going to be really difficult over, well, the immediate future because of that lack of data I've just talked about. But encouraging aspirational targets, I think sometimes there's a bit of a risk of complacency.
Sarah Chung: 21:08	Right. Okay. And as a governing body, then you feel empowered to encourage that?
Charlie: 21:15	Yeah. And I think then, though, it's also about looking at your annual business plan or your school development plan and

	being able to prioritize it in those documents, too. Because, again, it's a bit like what I was saying about the sector, there's always going to be multiple priorities in any school.
21:38	And you know if we're most concerned about the year one phonics data, let's focus on the year one phonics data and worry less about the key stage two reading, writing, and maths. And I'm not saying to drop the ball. I think you do have to have that balance strategy. But how are we as governors going to change our work and approach to look at more key stage one phonics, for example?
Sarah Chung: 22:03	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.
22:05	So let me just see. Do you as your chair of governors as well, aren't you? So in your role, and perhaps even before you became a chair of governor, did you feel comfortable raising questions or challenging?
Charlie: 22:22	Yeah. Absolutely. I understand why people don't, and particularly not people from an educational background. But actually, yeah, I've never had a problem with that.
22:34	But that could be partly down to personality as well, to be fair. Okay. Wonderful. Can you describe in your own words a time that you have challenged? So do you feel the response you received was adequate, and did it resolve your concerns? I tend to like questions to lead to action and impact rather than just a satisfactory response.
23:01	So whilst I've never particularly been dissatisfied with the response, that's not to say I don't want something else to come out of it in terms of, "We'll see this again at the next meeting," or, "We'd like to see this again instead at the next meeting." There was a time where we were challenged by the impact of the use of our additional adults. And there was suitable challenge in meetings about that because it's a significant financial investment, and the impact wasn't necessarily being felt by children.
23:34	And I'm not sure things necessarily moved quick enough. And that's hard, though, isn't it? As a strategic leader to try and command pace, but without being operational, is difficult.
Sarah Chung: 23:52	Yeah. Absolutely. Okay. Thank you. So can you describe in your own words a time that you've ever felt uncomfortable and challenging?
Charlie: 24:04	Primarily, if I'm honest, when the person I've been challenging also holds the role of staff governor.
Sarah Chung: 24:10	Right. Okay. So could you explain a little bit?
Charlie: 24:13	Yeah. And this is where anonymity is really important. SEND was something which came out of our previous Ofsted inspection as needing some development. And that wasn't that

	we didn't know that beforehand. We went through the inspection very much reflecting that.
24:30	And at that time, the SENDCo was the staff governor and is and remains to be a very well-respected colleague. But it was really difficult to hold that person to account as a leader in their own right when technically that person was sat around the table as a colleague at the same time.
Sarah Chung: 24:52	Right. Okay.
Charlie: 24:54	And even when we weren't necessarily directly holding to account, it felt like talking about the elephant in the room, if you pardon the phrase, if you know what I mean. We were talking about somebody as if they weren't there, but they were. And similarly, actually, if I go back to academic year 19/20, we had some challenges with the performance of our business manager.
25:21	And it was a really fine line between providing that strategic challenge and accountability, but ensuring that that didn't become part of that performance management process, shall we say?
Sarah Chung: 25:35	Yeah. Absolutely. So were you chair of governors at the time, or?
Charlie: 25:40	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 25:40	Yeah. Did you have any support? Not particularly. The head and I have a relatively close relationship.
25:50	So we discuss some of the sensitivities both before and after meetings. I never really rated this, but I think the clerk had an understanding of the sensitivity of it, if you know what I mean. Yeah. Sometimes the support for governors, particularly chairs, actually, isn't always timely.
26:24	I'll use this example. Said business manager I've just talked of left soon after quite a challenging committee meeting and was then trying to effectively throw me under the bus, and it was my fault because of the challenging meeting that had passed before. And I found that really difficult.
26:50	And whilst the clerk provided the reassurance they could that they didn't think the meeting was untoward, it still didn't stop me from being concerned, I guess. Yeah And it didn't necessarily feel like there was anybody there just to say, "This is prickly. Can you help?".
Sarah Chung: 27:15	Yeah. Absolutely.
Charlie: 27:17	As somebody who leads local authority governance services, I'd like to think that governors within my authorities would feel able to pick up the phone and have that kind of conversation. I didn't particularly, but what I've not mentioned but should mention, it doesn't create any difference. I'm also an elected member of the local authority. So that avenue of relationship

for those kind of I say well-being concerns is maybe different than the average chair of governors, shall we say.

Sarah Chung: 27:50 Right. Okay. So I'm sensing that you felt almost a little bit isolated.

Charlie: 27:57 Yeah. And whilst there was people to talk to. The clerk, from a governance perspective, reassured me that the meeting was okay. Fine. Tick. The head was trying to sort of process the concerns which were being pushed towards both her and I.

28:20 So in some ways, we were no good for each other, if that makes sense, because I'd have to try and say the right thing to her, but then she'd have to try and say the right thing back to me in terms of trying to reassure each other. Yeah Yeah, it did feel isolating.

Sarah Chung: 28:37 Did you have a vice chair at the time, or?

Charlie: 28:41 Yes. But somebody who probably had less understanding of the severity of the situation.

Sarah Chung: 28:50 Right. Okay. And at the time, were you able to contact an external mentor, perhaps, or?

Charlie: 28:58 Yeah. But that was only through my own networks rather than through anybody facilitating that, if that makes sense.

Sarah Chung: 29:04 Yeah. Absolutely. Okay. Did that mentor relationship, did it help?

Charlie: 29:09 Yeah. I maybe didn't use it as a mentor relationship as much as just a more informal sounding board, if you know what I mean.

29:17 But yes, it did help because then there's somebody else who would or could be sat in my role and position saying, "No, I'd have done exactly the same, and this is just somebody throwing sour eggs," or you know those kind of things. And equally, I did speak to HR colleagues, and we buy back HR from the local authority. And they were sort of of the view that we can only really get involved if it becomes something.

Sarah Chung: 29:46 Ah, okay.

Charlie: 29:47 And I think that's the other thing, actually. And this is true for grievances, complaints, and such similar things. Governance falls a little bit into a gap because we're not employees, sometimes people will actively talk and understand the role and responsibilities we hold, and sometimes we won't. And it's the latter which then causes that isolative feeling to my mind.

Sarah Chung: 30:17 Okay. Okay. It sounds like you had quite a tricky time.

Charlie: 30:22 Yeah. And you know sadly, in some ways, it's not the first experience. There was a situation in a previous school where I was the chair and the head teacher was off long-term absence

	and ended up being supported out. But the relationship and the understanding of the vice chair there was something I could rely on much easier. And because it was an HR process, HR were much more engaged.
Sarah Chung: 30:47	Ah, okay. So that was a little bit more helpful to the situation at the time.
30:51	Yeah. So you know I don't want you leaving here thinking, "Goodness, Charlie has got nobody to talk to." It's just that you know I didn't naturally think to pick up the phone to the National Governance Association because I don't perceive that's necessarily something they'd help with, if that makes sense.
Sarah Chung: 31:09	Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. Okay. Thank you. So another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for the management of staff.
31:19	How confident do you feel in that area?
Charlie: 31:22	Again, probably because of my background within the sector and the fact that I see a lot of schools most days of the week, quite confident, really, because I believe I have a good and clear understanding of what good and outstanding looks like and therefore can hold them to that high expectation. I think the challenge comes if there's a differential in perception there.
31:49	So for example, our early years lead came to present to governors around the early years and suggested that only 57% of children were going to get the good level of development. But the rest of the presentation was remarkably positive. And I reflected on it, but went back to the head and just said, "Something doesn't add up here.
32:11	If this class is as settled and wonderful as this person's telling us, and the teacher is as good as you're telling me, 57%'s nowhere near good enough." yeah And it was a bit, "Oh, you know just let us get on with it." And it was like, "No, you know 57% is a significant amount below average.
32:34	There is a disconnect now in terms of and we got there in the end, yeah but I felt like it took quite a bit of explaining that I wasn't just being difficult and trying to cause a problem, but rather that something didn't quite marry up. Yeah. Okay. And so that challenge was almost felt deflected slightly, do you think?
33:02	My head teacher accepts challenge very willingly but sometimes isn't afraid to buy it back. Right. And actually, I respect her as a professional for that provided that we can both remain objective in that challenge. And I do believe that through the course of working together, we've developed that better. At the beginning, one or other of us might take it personally.

33:32	More so now, we've got that understanding of the way we work. We talk more openly and honestly about things. And to an extent, have each other's back, if you know what I mean.
Sarah Chung: 33:44	Yeah. Absolutely. So that relationship then has grown over time?
Charlie: 33:48	Yeah. Okay. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So what methods are used to examine the head teacher's management of staff?
Charlie: 33:59	So we have a pay committee, which obviously quality assures, for want of a better phrase, the performance management side of things. There's obviously the head teachers performance management, which is supported by an independent advisor. And equally, there's been experience in the recent past where the school improvement partners visit has focused on particular things that we're working on, but that's maybe left other things unseen by the outside eye.
34:30	So we've commissioned some extra support from outside to just come in and give us a specific focus on those things. I think feedback is important in terms of staff and children and parent questionnaires, but also that sixth sense of how it feels when you're walking around school, either with that person or without that person.
34:58	There's an element of culture in it for me because that person, to my mind, is ultimately responsible for the culture of the organisation and driving any change they want to see in that.
Sarah Chung: 35:09	Okay. Wonderful. So do you have any developmental or reward arrangements in your setting for staff?
Charlie: 35:23	In terms of performance-related pay, sorry?
Sarah Chung: 35:25	Well, developmental opportunities for them as a teacher or a staff member.
Charlie: 35:32	So we're a single form entry primary school, so developmental in its broadest form is challenging. And that's one of the considerations as we look towards the future as to whether a multi-academy trust enables us with more opportunities to sort of grow and develop people within a larger organization.
35:53	We're really open to staff coming forward with potential sort of qualification ideas. Our deputies doing a master's in education at the moment. We've got two colleagues who've just completed the NPQSL. I guess not the caveat at all, but the additional rung to that is that I'm always conscious as to what the impact is on the school, both positively and negatively.
36:20	Because quite often, those can be at the expense in terms of time of being able to do something in school. So actually, how could your MPQSL research project be related to a school-based priority so that it's mutually beneficial? And I think we've honed that quite well. I think was the question specific to teachers or staff in general? Staff in general, really. Yeah.

36:48	It's an area we're still trying to work on with our support staff. And yeah, we've still got some work to do on that.
Sarah Chung: 36:58	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So as well as setting the ethos and strategic direction of the school, and also ensuring there is a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing. Probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight.
37:18	So how comfortable are you within that situation?
Charlie: 37:23	Yeah. Yeah. I am comfortable in that situation. 11 years has made me comfortable in that situation. It was probably an area in the beginning which I found more challenging. And also because I think while schools are very used to school improvement partners and other types of external quality assurance, they feel more threatened by things like financial audit processes.
37:52	But that's not to say we've necessarily shied away from that. But I think historically, one of the things I've learned is we've had less external assurance and validation around those things, yeah which does lead to less overall certainty, shall we say.
Sarah Chung: 38:09	Yeah. So I can see that you've mentioned before about having external people in to do walkthroughs and general staff overviews and things like that.
38:19	And with that financial aspect, like you said, you don't really get that. What about training in those terms? Do you think that's beneficial?
Charlie: 38:31	Yes. And I think it's lacking, if I'm honest. And I say that even for the authorities I serve, actually. I think we probably give governors basic skills in terms of how to read a budget and what dedicated funding streams are, and so on and so forth, but not necessarily departing to the water of if you think there's something wrong or if you're concerned, this is what you should do.
38:57	So the school I chair, the local authority is incredibly small in terms of capacity. So the last time we saw an auditor from the local authority was five, six years ago. So we do have to rely a lot on our own sort of audit work through the school's financial value standard. And that's helpful and purposeful.
39:24	To an extent, you're only as good as the information you're provided with. And do you as a governor ever want to make it look like your school isn't doing something? And I am a big critic, I suppose, of self-evaluation in the sense that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. You know And that's not me saying I don't do it. You know We do a skills audit every year.
39:51	But when I look over that skills audit to sort of think about training priorities, I sometimes fear some people have got an overgenerous view of themselves in some areas. And that then makes that conversation slightly more challenging.

Sarah Chung: 40:06	Absolutely. Okay. How did you challenge that then?
Charlie: 40:11	In terms of the skills audit process?
Sarah Chung: 40:13	Yeah.
Charlie: 40:15	I depersonalised it and sort of went to the whole governing body and said the skills audit tells us this.
40:23	However, in addition to this, I think X, Y, and Z could probably work with some development. It worked to an extent. Some people understood that they needed to step up and develop in that way. Other people who I'd have hoped and needed to do that didn't. So I can't say it was entirely successful, but it led us in a slight improvement direction, shall we say?
Sarah Chung: 40:46	Okay. Okay.
40:47	And just reflecting back again on the financial side of things and the financial training, it seems, from what you were saying, that there's almost an approach from the training that's currently provided that everything is going to be fine so they don't reflect on the possible...
Charlie: 41:06	I think certainly the finance training I've been on presents a compliant school system. And I think we have to respect that that's not true of all schools.
41:17	And actually, it ought to be governors who are the ones who are, first of all, picking up on any incompliance.
Sarah Chung: 41:23	Okay. And do you think any form of contextualising the training or providing examples within the training would be beneficial to that?
Charlie: 41:32	Yes. I'm a big believer, as you've probably got from the conversation in terms of contextualising things where possible. I think the only risk with that kind of training, from my experience, is that local authorities use sometimes very different systems and therefore to contextualise something on a meaningful basis for a nationwide provider, for example, is almost impossible.
41:55	But could local authorities be promoted to do that? Yes, I think that would be really helpful.
Sarah Chung: 42:01	Okay. Wonderful.
Charlie: 42:02	And indeed, if I can just reflect on a very recent experience. So the local authority where we are has recently changed from using the [redacted] Reporting System to another system. It's been an absolute car crash in terms of the transition. But we as governors haven't really been informed as to what the changes mean.

42:23	So we've now got the business manager saying, "I'm sorry, I can't any longer run that report," and we're not in any kind of informed position to say, "Yes, you can." Okay. Or that's what we expect.
Sarah Chung: 42:37	That's a current situation, is it?
Charlie: 42:39	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 42:40	Do you have any idea about how you might tackle that? There is those initial conversations to put sand in the oil of, "Are you really sure it doesn't deliver that for us?" But then it's equally about going back to the local authority and saying, "This is what we're being told.
42:58	Can you either tell us that that's the truth or not the truth?" And if that's the truth, what are you going to do to improve the system fundamentally?
Sarah Chung: 43:05	Okay. And you feel confident enough approaching the local authority?
Charlie: 43:09	I do, but as I mentioned, I am an elected member of the authority, so that's less of a challenge to me. I anticipate that there are a number of chairs of governors or governors in other schools within our locality who are sat there incredibly frustrated but feel that they're disempowered to say anything.
Sarah Chung: 43:26	Okay.
43:26	That's wonderful. Thank you. So in terms of your score, can you explain how, as a governor, you ensure that the school budget is managed well?
Charlie: 43:39	Yeah. So as the chair, I attend a terminal meeting with the local authority finance officer along with the business manager, the head of the deputy. That then feeds into our leadership and management committee, which in turn reports back to the full governing body.
43:58	We also have a view to the impact of funding in certain areas. So things like SEND, PE, Sports, Grant Pupil Premium. I don't just want to know the pounds and pence of what we're spending, but moreover, the impact that's then having on children and being able to triangulate that in a better way. We do do the SFVS, as I've mentioned, and that obviously poses some questions around value for money and systems and processes.
44:26	And we also have an annual benchmarking report from our business manager which benchmarks us using the DFE tool to compare and contrast us against similar schools across the country. And that's, well, enlightening in many ways because for some areas, we are significantly higher and for some we're considerably lower. And actually, that has to inform our conversation about where and why we spend money.

Sarah Chung: 44:51	Okay. Wonderful.
44:55	Can you think of a time where you or another governor have challenged a financial decision?
Charlie: 45:10	I think in terms of value for money, mainly. And there's an extent of that which is pertinent challenge.
45:21	And there's an extent of that, if I'm really honest, of some people maybe being old-fashioned and not realizing how much things cost in 2022. Atypically, where financial challenge has been raised, and this is true of the current and former business manager, they would bring back further reassurances, i.e., three competitive quotes or what particularly was included for the cost that we thought was higher than we expected.
45:54	I think I think it sometimes takes governor's initiative to challenge on areas around true value for money investment. And an example is that so we've got one large and long school building and then a mobile classroom at the bottom which houses our preschool. And we've just had our fire risk assessment and the fire risk assessment says there's technically two separate fire alarm systems they need putting together invest something like three and a half thousand pounds to put it right.
46:29	And it was presented to governors as we need to spend three and a half thousand pounds to put this right because that's what the fire risk assessment tells us. And I sort of stepped back in and said, "Well, hang on a minute because the conversation we had at the last meeting was that that building's near the end of its life. So why are we investing £3,500 into a building which will soon be knocking down and can just do the whole hog at once, basically? Yeah And it felt like that was a penny drop moment of stretching thinking, shall we say?
Sarah Chung: 46:58	Right. Okay. So do you think it was received quite well?
Charlie: 47:04	Yeah. Because I think people understood why I was asking the question.
Sarah Chung: 47:09	And in terms of your head teacher or SLT, they received it quite well as well.
Charlie: 47:16	Yeah. And at the moment, we haven't gone for the three and a half thousand pound solution. We're looking into alternatives before we do invest that money.
47:24	I think from a governance perspective, I'd have been happier if somebody had taken the initiative before I had to ask the question and come with option A is three and a half thousand pounds for a new fire alarm system or option B or option C or option D yeah because that shows that somebody's thought about it holistically rather than just accepting the piece of paper they've been given from a fire risk assessment.

Sarah Chung: 47:48	Okay.
47:49	So in a sense, did it feel a little bit like it was not quite crossing over into you know the practical side of school life. But it was borderline.
Charlie: 48:01	Yeah. And I think i think quite a lot of elements of good governance should feel like that.
Sarah Chung: 48:09	Okay. Why do you feel that way?
Charlie: 48:14	I think if you are truly arm's length, it's very difficult to provide the level of rigor, accountability, support, and challenge that is expected of us.
Sarah Chung: 48:23	Okay. So naturally, you feel like there should be some crossover?
Charlie: 48:30	Crossover or toe on the line rather than over the line. I struggle with the entire principle of completely arm's length. And equally, I also think with so one of our governors is a health and safety consultant, it would have been unwise not to use his expertise in that area to discuss the alternatives.
48:51	So yeah, we've got close to the line with it, and I'm not fearful of that at all.
Sarah Chung: 48:57	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So we're going to look now at the eight elements again. The eight elements of effective governance have been identified as essential to good governance. So what I'm going to ask now is, in your own words, when I give you the element, could you explain what it means to you? So we'll begin with the right people around the table.
Charlie: 49:22	Yeah. So I think that's having a breadth of skills and experience around the table. It's about having enough people around the table, but not too many, but also about making sure that the people around the table have a clear understanding as to why they're there and what's required of them.
Sarah Chung: 49:37	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Understanding the roles and responsibilities.
Charlie: 49:42	I think that ties into what I've just started to say, but it's about an understanding of primarily being strategic rather than operational, but also some of the statutory and also the non-statutory expectations upon school governors, which some of the non-saturated stuff will differ from school to school.
Sarah Chung: 49:59	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Good chairing.
Charlie: 50:05	I think that's really important. I think it's about having a good and mutually respectful relationship with school leaders. It's about somebody who understands that it's not a position of privilege in the sense of valor, shall we say, because I think there are still schools where people from the local community

	feel like it's the right thing to do or maybe weren't the chair of the parish council, so we'll be the chair of the Village School Government Body.
50:32	And whilst that's noble and admirable in some ways, it's not just about a title anymore. There do come certain roles and responsibilities and helping to connect things together, really, in terms of leaders' priorities versus governor's priorities versus the Clark's role in terms of strategy compliance and moving things forward in that direction.
Sarah Chung: 50:58	Okay. That's fantastic. Thank you. Good relationship.
51:02	Oh, nope, sorry. Professional clerking.
Charlie: 51:06	Yeah. Huge advocate of that. So recognising that that person's not just there to provide administrative support, but also to provide that advice and guidance and making sure that that person has the respect and confidence to be able to do that within meetings as opposed to just reflect upon things that maybe didn't go well after the meeting.
51:29	For me personally, and I'm sure other chairs as well, sometimes providing some of that organisational capacity and support as well in terms of prompts for an agendas need to be reviewed and approved or follow-ups on whether action logs have been completed, etc., etc.
Sarah Chung: 51:48	Okay. Thanks. Good relationships based on trust.
Charlie: 51:55	I think it's about that common purpose.
51:57	And I'm really clear that my common purpose regardless of the school is its children. And actually, if people aren't fundamentally there for children or don't understand how their skills and role within the school and the governing body can't benefit children, that's really hard to overcome. I think for me, good relationships and trust has to rely on everybody in the organisation as well.
52:25	It has to rely on sports staff, teaching staff, and the leader because fundamentally, the leader and the information they provide to you can sometimes only be as good as the information they're being provided from somebody else.
Sarah Chung: 52:38	Okay. Wonderful. Knowing the school?
Charlie: 52:43	Yeah. I think that's about knowing the school, but also knowing how the school is measured.
52:49	So doing that monitoring and observing those things and being part of meetings, but understanding how that either does or doesn't contribute towards the school's outcomes, the school's offset inspection framework, the school's CIAMs, if it's a Jewish school, etc., etc.

Sarah Chung: 53:07	Okay. Fantastic. Asking challenging questions.
Charlie: 53:15	I think that can be twofold.
53:18	So one, it can be sort of disagreement and challenge in terms of wanting better or providing accountability. I think the other aspect of challenging questions also needs to be stretch and challenge in terms of expanding people's thinking to the next step and stage. And that's where it ties in nicely with the whole strategic leadership.
Sarah Chung: 53:45	Okay.
53:46	And then having courageous conversations in the interests of children and young people?
Charlie: 53:52	Yeah. Nothing's done by being timid. And sometimes some of those challenging conversations and those courageous conversations are right by children. And that's fundamentally how I sleep at night, shall we say there have been situations where we've had to target underperforming staff. And as a human being, that's really not a nice thing to do.
54:16	You don't want to see people fail. But fundamentally, has it improved the quality of education for the children in that class? Yes. And so long as the answer's yes, then it's worthwhile.
Sarah Chung: 54:26	Okay. Thank you. So we've already briefly touched on this, but the line between strategic and operational can be seen as quite a grey area for some. How confident are you in knowing where governance ends and head teacher SLT responsibility to begins?
Charlie: 54:48	I'm going to throw you a curveball here.
Sarah Chung: 54:51	Oh, okay.
Charlie: 54:53	I don't think the line is in the same place in every school. I think it's slightly different in every school. Because there are some school leaders who are very new to headship and possibly need a little bit more hands-on support from their governing body, shall we say.
55:11	There's equally some really experienced school leaders in some really challenging circumstances where that's also required. There's also some school leaders who can do it with their eyes shut, and governance can be a long way back from the line as I sort of perceive it and can just literally be that check and balance. So I think that's why there's a grey area because I don't think there's a one-size-fits-all model.
Sarah Chung: 55:34	Right. Okay. Thank you. That's really interesting.

55:41	So within your school, for example, policy-wise, what role would you play as a governor and as a governing body in developing and implementing policies?
Charlie: 55:54	Less so in developing. Well, no, actually. Less so in implementing. It's more around and we're having a sort of conversation about this at the moment, actually, in terms of what policies governors need to see and what governors should see, if you know what I mean.
56:13	So we're focusing on statutory policies, particularly. I expect leaders to be writing policy. I expect governors then to be quality assuring that that policy is fit for purpose. And yes, we may ask challenging questions and grapple with some of the detail of that. And I've not quite got this nailed at the moment either, but want governor monitoring where appropriate to be quantifying that that aligns with policy.
Sarah Chung: 56:38	Okay. And how are they planning on quantifying that then?
Charlie: 56:42	So thinking particularly things like our behaviour policy, which sets out some really clear principles, is that what they are then seeing when they could be monitoring maths, but are they seeing that in a school and I'm using a fictitious example here, but in a school which policy says nobody shouts, are they witnessing adults shouting at children? So there's a contrast then from policy which they can triangulate back.
Sarah Chung: 57:07	Right. Okay. That's great. Thank you. So we're going to move towards COVID now.
57:14	The impact of COVID-19 pandemic has been immense. Can you describe your experience of governance during this time?
Charlie: 57:23	Yeah. I think it was a lot more supportive than challenging and accountable during the immediate stages. I think I personally and we corporately have had more of a view towards head teacher and staff well-being during the time and also towards children's home circumstances and potential deprivations.
57:48	Governance for me became probably the bare bones for that first certainly the first term, possibly the first two terms. Not that we weren't doing anything or were incompliant, but we weren't necessarily asking more of leaders, if that makes sense. We've met virtually throughout that time. Monitoring has been very constricted during that time.
58:17	And I think the other thing which has led to a lot of disenfranchisement, not necessarily just within my own governing body, but not being able to get in and see the children and see the ultimate impact of the work you're doing arguably makes it far less rewarding thing to do.
Sarah Chung: 58:34	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. During that time, how did you as a governing body stay in touch? Were you Zoom?

Charlie: 58:45	So we used Governor Hub anyway. So we used Governor Hub to be that communication channel. He and I spoke regularly on the telephone. We met virtually. It was a combination of Zoom and Teams off the top of my head. So yeah, we maintain communication channel.
Sarah Chung: 59:07	Did it feel effective? Most of the time. Okay.
Charlie: 59:13	I think it's felt increasingly effective as we've got more used to being in pandemic response mode.
Sarah Chung: 59:20	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. And did you feel the SLT kept you up to date throughout?
Charlie: 59:26	Yes. Absolutely.
Sarah Chung: 59:27	Wonderful. So did governing in the pandemic highlight any areas that you felt underqualified for or under-trained for?
Charlie: 59:45	Well, I'd reflect this not just personally, but for the sector, actually. There was an aspect of playing God in terms of do we or don't we open? What does our risk assessment look like? And it's not that I can't risk assess.
01:00:00	I can assess risk and sort of put in mitigating factors, but it was that defining moment of, "Are our mitigating factors good enough?" Because fundamentally, it did feel like we were playing with the health and safety of people's lives in terms of and actually, parents, too, for drop-off and pickup arrangements, or if their child contracted COVID whilst at school, what would that then mean for their family? I think it made me realise the broader ramifications.
Sarah Chung: 01:00:31	Right. Okay. Thank you.
Charlie: 01:00:34	I think and you know I won't necessarily be drawn on the government's handling of the pandemic, but the guidance led to a disparity of the ways in which schools dealt with things, which then didn't necessarily help in terms of governors either talking to each other or on forums together going, "Oh, well, we've closed today because we've got one case when I'm saying, "I'm not closing until we've got 10% of our school with cases, if that makes sense.".
Sarah Chung: 01:01:03	Yeah.
01:01:04	Okay. No, that's great. Thank you. So there was that lack of clarity then, I suppose, wasn't there? In terms of pandemic responses such?
Charlie: 01:01:17	In the initial stages, more so than the latter stages, yes. I think that very first summer when it was well, summer, spring/summer, wasn't it? But that was true pandemic response. It was critical response time.
01:01:34	And actually, did I expect more from the government? Not necessarily because they were almost in the same position in

terms of closing the country down. I think the thing which bothered me more was the January 2020 year opening, then you're closing because by that time, it felt like we'd got used to what we had to do. I'd have expected the same of the government at that time.

Sarah Chung: 01:02:06 Okay. Okay. Thank you. So now, thinking about governance in general, even outside of COVID, if you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be? And why do you think that would be essential?

Charlie: 01:02:34 Probably an adapted induction.

01:02:38 So an induction which gives that breadth of roles and responsibilities, but can also more tangibly either cover or give a very brief introduction and oversight to some of the other essentials, shall we say. So teacher performance management, SEND, Pupil Premium, Health and Safety. Because whilst I absolutely understand that induction currently will signpost them towards all those things, there's no guarantee of the timeliness or even the completion of those things.

01:03:10 And there's a lot within that, which actually, you just need to know from day one.

Sarah Chung: 01:03:15 Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. And conversely, then, what, in your opinion, would be the least valuable piece of training that a governor might receive?

Charlie: 01:03:28 I'm going to be contentious here, actually. Things around staff well-being and people well-being.

Sarah Chung: 01:03:35 Ah, okay. Yeah.

Charlie: 01:03:37 I think the theory of it is useful.

01:03:39 And if there can be ideas from other settings, that's helpful. But even the very best-trained people can't necessarily just apply the same methodology in every school. So I'd want them to get more school-based experience and knowledge of that before coming back with the world and his friend's idea as to what good looks like, if that makes sense.

Sarah Chung: 01:04:03 That does. So again, we're coming back to that contextualising.

Charlie: 01:04:07 Yeah.

01:04:07 And I think it's particularly true in that field and particularly prevalently true at the moment in that field, in that everybody has felt the need to focus upon it, and I absolutely agree with that. But the world and his friend have almost waded in as experts, and we're saturated with lots of different ideas. But

actually, sometimes none of which would apply to our school and what we, as governors, feel are the right things to do.

Sarah Chung: 01:04:40 Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So I'd like you to think back to your initial year of governance 11 years ago. Did you feel supported?

Charlie: 01:04:51 Yeah. I undertook induction training, and there was a clear sort of training plan in place.

01:05:00 I met with the head and the chair and had a tour around school and put more meat on the bones contextually in terms of what that school's pupil premium strategy looks like, for example. The one thing which was lacking was a mentor. But I'm not sure that would have necessarily shaped or changed things drastically.

01:05:30 But I do respect for some people who I've seen almost come and go through the system in quite quick succession, that mentoring opportunity can be really valuable.

Sarah Chung: 01:05:41 Okay. Wonderful.

Charlie: 01:05:42 And I think the other thing and it's something I'm trying to pioneer in [redacted] and [redacted] more around sort of modelled monitoring. So it was that one-to-one opportunity of you're now the maths link governor.

01:06:00 And actually, it was that bit which was almost left undefined in terms of what am I looking for? Who am I telling? What's a good question? What's a bad question? And because it's one-to-one, there's no place to hide. Yeah, And in week schools, staff can sometimes then tell you only the things that they want to tell you. And that's obviously then a risk of an overgenerous viewer, if you know what I mean.

Sarah Chung: 01:06:29 Yeah. Absolutely. And that's something that you're starting to work on at the moment, or?

Charlie: 01:06:35 Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 01:06:36 Okay - how's it going?

Charlie: 01:06:38 So at the moment, we, as in my colleagues and I, are doing the modelling. So we're pairing with governors in some of our particularly high-priority schools to look at that. And it's going well because, again, it's so pertinent to their roles. It's their school. It's not just the theory of what good monitoring looks like.

01:06:58 It's good monitoring in practice. And yeah, I envisaged that it will be an incredibly powerful tool.

Sarah Chung: 01:07:10 And how long has that been going on? Sorry.

Charlie: 01:07:14 — We did our first probably last summer.

Sarah Chung: 01:07:20 — Okay. Okay. Have you had any feedback from the governors?

Charlie: 01:07:24 — Yeah.

01:07:24 — Positive from those people who've taken part in terms of the genuinely supportive nature of it, the preparation which went into it, but also the feedback which comes out of it. Consideration, I guess, in terms of development point of whether it could be a more staged development, i.e. I do, we do, you do kind of model. So where the modeler does it entirely the first time and is watched by the other person, then we'll do a bit together.

01:07:56 — Then on that third opportunity, it's over to you to apply. Okay. Okay. Yeah, So that's still in the process then of development and wonderful? Yeah. And refinement.

Sarah Chung: 01:08:08 — Okay. Fantastic. So the NGA have stated openly that they feel induction training should be mandatory within the first year. And indeed, in Wales, it is. In your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this?

Charlie: 01:08:26 — Yes, absolutely. I think well, for new governors, yes. If I was to go to a new governing body, I'd expect to do something school-specific in terms of getting to know that school, but I'm not sure I'd need a governance induction from a local authority in the same way, if that makes sense.

Sarah Chung: 01:08:49 — Yes, it does. Yeah.

Charlie: 01:08:52 — But I think, fundamentally, for new governors, if they don't know what they're signing up to and the commitment and expectation that's required, there's an aspect of falling at the first hurdle there because how are you ever going to be able to live up to the expectation if you don't actually know what it is?

Sarah Chung: 01:09:06 — Yeah. Absolutely. Okay. So if mandatory training was introduced, yeah what would you like to see in relation to and I'm going to give you a little list here to the following content?

Charlie: 01:09:22 — Sorry, induction training or training in general?

Sarah Chung: 01:09:27 — Well, mandatory induction training.

Charlie: 01:09:29 — Okay. What would I want to see content included? Roles and responsibilities, typical year as a governor. And then, I guess, what I was talking about in my ideal world situation, that bit of an overview of statutory things, at least.

01:09:48 — So send people premium, head teacher performance management, etc., etc. Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 01:09:55 Okay. Wonderful. So how do you feel the training should take place? So for example, a lot of training is currently conducted either through LEAs or in-house within schools. Would you, for example, find online training beneficial?

Charlie: 01:10:13 That's a really difficult one.

01:10:16 I think a hybrid, when I define hybrid as part of the course where it's all people virtually, but then part of the course where it's all people together is my preference just to be a bit indecisive.

Sarah Chung: 01:10:38 It sounds like a good mix, though.

01:10:41 Do you think that, given everything that's developed since COVID with the online world, that hybrid would possibly be a way to go for the future?

Charlie: 01:10:51 I think it's about having a clear definition of hybrid because for some of our governors, we've talked about hybrid meetings, and it means that half the meeting's in the room and half the meeting's virtual, and it's an absolute nightmare to clerk. I expect the same to be true for training. So provided there is a consistent definition of hybrid, yes.

Sarah Chung: 01:11:11 Okay. Wonderful. So what are your thoughts on a modulated course possibly delivered online, possibly not, which resulted in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year?

Charlie: 01:11:27 Yeah. That's certainly what we do in terms of our chair course. We do four modules over the course of the year.

Sarah Chung: 01:11:35 Okay. Wonderful. And has that worked well?

Charlie: 01:11:39 Yes.

01:11:39 Far better than when we just used to do it as a one-off standalone because it keeps pace of people. It keeps track of their progress and development.

Sarah Chung: 01:11:49 Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. So that was the final question. I'd just like to thank you for joining me again today. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Charlie: 01:12:04 I'll be interested to see I appreciate this isn't National Governance Association Commissioned Research, but I'll be interested to see how the National Governance Association's regionalised model works out as it moves forward in terms of having regional leads again because I think that's been lacking. And I think if I was being honest with you and you can well, you will choose what you do and don't include.

01:12:30 I think the National Governance Association is at risk sometimes of being autocratic. So I sometimes sit and watch Breakfast Television and the National Governance Association

says this on behalf of its members. And whilst I don't expect I will always agree with it. To my knowledge, I've never been asked.

Sarah Chung: 01:12:49 Right. Okay.

Charlie: 01:12:50 So how do you say it on behalf of your members is, I guess, my criticism?

Sarah Chung: 01:12:55 Yeah. So it's almost like a clarity again in where they're getting those responses?

Charlie: 01:13:01 Yeah. And if they're about to go out and talk about teachers' recruitment or pay or, I don't know, whatever, stick a two or three email survey to all members and those who respond form the basis of your judgment. I'm not always sure how they can suggest to be a membership organisation when there's been a number of things where I've actually sat there and gone, "I'm sorry you don't talk for me on that." But more so because I've not been given the opportunity to at least comment, yeah if after I'd commented the majority still felt a different way, that's different because at least I've put my comment in.

01:13:42 And they can then justifiably say our members say in the majority that the sky is blue. The fact that I've said the sky's pink makes no difference. And I wouldn't then say, "Oh, you don't speak for me." I guess I find it underrepresented in terms of the way it's led and the relationships it then starts to sort of interface with.

Sarah Chung: 01:14:09 Okay. That is really, really interesting.

01:14:13 Thank you. Okay. That's wonderful, Charlie. Thank you ever so much for today. That's okay.

Charlie: 01:14:20 No problem at all. And if you would add me to that list, I'd be really grateful to receive a copy as soon as research is completed.

Sarah Chung: 01:14:26 Absolutely. So I'll just make a note here. There we go. Yeah. So hopefully, it will be finished by some point this time next year. It's going to take a little bit of time to analyse it and everything.

01:14:41 But obviously, I'll send you a copy as soon as I can. And again, thank you for because I know we've gone over time as well. So thank you so much for that.

Charlie: 01:14:49 No, that's quite all right. Thank you very much. It's lovely to meet you. Lovely to meet you. Take care.

Charlie: 01:14:54 Bye, Sarah. Bye. Bye.

Elizabeth

Sarah Chung: 00:00	Okay. So just a little bit of housekeeping in terms of reminding you sort of your right to withdraw. Firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you are aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. And during our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this.
00:32	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training. And I'd like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation that you've signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date.
01:07	Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymised data destroyed after a period of 10 years. If you wish to have a copy of the results, please do email me. I'll be happy to share those. Any questions before we begin?
Elizabeth: 01:30	No.
Sarah Chung: 01:31	Oh, wonderful. Okay. So should we jump in and start with something really nice and simple?
01:37	How long have you been a governor?
Elizabeth: 01:40	So it's coming up for nine years, although I am stepping down at the end of this month. But yeah, it's been nine years.
Sarah Chung: 01:46	Okay. Wow. So what's making you step down here?
Elizabeth: 01:51	My son's leaving the school because I started when my eldest was at the school, and my youngest has now gone through the school and will be leaving. So yeah, it sort of felt like a sort of natural time to step down. I've been doing it for, yeah, almost nine years.
02:09	And I was doing four and a half days a week. So I was able to use that extra time for governance stuff as well. And then, it's just sort of re-evaluating what I want to do now.
Sarah Chung: 02:19	Yeah. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Yeah, that's quite a substantial amount of time, isn't it? It is, yeah. So what has been your most enjoyable aspect of governance so far?
Elizabeth: 02:35	I guess it's just sort of seeing the changes within the school and knowing that we've had some influence in that. You know

	It's been quite challenging, but it's, seeing the improvements and the improvements it's making for the children and for the staff.
Sarah Chung: 02:52	Okay. And conversely, then, what was the least enjoyable part of your governance?
Elizabeth: 03:00	Dealing with complaints and grievances and, yeah, all the sort of stuff that you think, "Gosh, how is a volunteer dealing with all of this?".
Sarah Chung: 03:11	Yeah. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So the NGA have described governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction. The following questions are going to explore your understanding of those three points.
03:30	So in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?
Elizabeth: 03:35	Oh, gosh. So I guess it's looking at where the school wants to be in a particular time period and the sort of the aims and vision for getting there.
Sarah Chung: 03:48	Okay. And can you explain a little bit, using your experience, how you've shaped or helped shape the school's strategic direction?
Elizabeth: 04:01	It's a good question. I think a lot of it has been looking at you know what's happening in the wider world, you know in terms of the local authority around some of the policies coming through and looking at how our school adapts to it. So things like when the changes about having a broad and balanced curriculum came in, it's making sure that you know we are aspirational in terms of our curriculum, and we have a vision as to what you know we want our children to achieve.
04:35	I mean, I'm a governor at an infant school, so you know you've only got sort of three years of children. So it's really tricky because you know I guess with secondary school, there's quite a different sort of perspective. But obviously, in an infant school, it's just getting that sort of basics and the grounding so that the children can then progress to junior school and secondary school with a love of learning and you know experiences, really.
Sarah Chung: 04:59	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you.
05:02	Did you have any difficulties or uncertainties when you were trying to set that strategic direction?
Elizabeth: 05:10	I think the challenge has been sort of working you know sometimes with the school, it's like, "Well, we've got a vision. You know It's fine." So I guess you know the challenge has been trying to look at where the governors can lead on that. And they should be leading on it, but you know I think it's that negotiation with the head teacher at times who maybe has a particular perspective.

05:33	So yeah, I think the difficulties have been trying to understand what we want for the school, but also make sure that that fits with what the head teacher and the staff would want for the school.
Sarah Chung: 05:45	Okay. Wonderful. So in your own words again, can you describe what is meant by school's ethos?
Elizabeth: 05:52	So the ethos, I guess, is how the school conducts itself. So we have the rights respecting rainbow, which is all throughout the school.
06:04	So it's that sort of ethos of respect, you know valuing learning, listening to others. And that's sort of I guess, just how the school operates, but the sort of values that they ascribe to.
Sarah Chung: 06:21	Okay. Lovely. Again, now, in your own words, can you describe what is meant by vision?
Elizabeth: 06:29	Vision. I think it links to that strategic direction.
06:33	It's what we want you know our children to achieve. You know So I guess for us, it's about having it was the sort of whole child experience that the children will leave our school with that love of learning and having a range of experiences.
Sarah Chung: 06:53	Okay. Wonderful. So can you explain a little bit now about how your governing body oversees pupil performance?
Elizabeth: 07:02	Good question. So we have a staffing and pupils committee who see you know a lot of sort of more day-to-day sort of regular data. And then we would look at the school data primarily once a year. So that would be in line with, I guess, the stats results and phonics results and things.
07:24	So a lot of it is around looking at data, but then we would go in and we would work with the subject leads to look at what they're trying to achieve for the pupils, do learning walks, talk to pupils, talk to staff. And so, yeah, different ways of monitoring that.
Sarah Chung: 07:46	Wonderful. So do you, as a governor, feel able to challenge and raise questions when necessary? Yes.
Elizabeth: 07:54	I think it takes time. I think you know because I've been there a long time, I think it's easier. But I think when I first started, and it's the same for a lot of governors, when you first start, you just don't really know what to challenge. And I think it's getting that confidence to challenge and ask questions. But it also depends on how receptive the head teacher is at the time.
08:20	So you know one of our head teachers because there's been a change in head teacher fairly recently, the previous head teacher was often quite defensive. And of course, that puts people off asking questions.
Sarah Chung: 08:33	Yeah. Okay. How hard was it then for you to work as a governing body if you was that defensive with you?

Elizabeth: 08:44	I think it was very difficult at times because I think you sort of felt, "Well, there's no point me asking the question because I'm just going to get you know shot down or whatever." But we did have some challenges with that head teacher anyway. So yeah, I think you sort of get put off, but I think some people continue to ask questions.
Sarah Chung: 09:07	Yeah. How did you resolve that issue in the end?
Elizabeth: 09:11	Well, the head teacher left.
Sarah Chung: 09:13	Oh, okay.
Elizabeth: 09:15	But you know it was challenging to try and resolve it. And you know I was chair and a lot of that was sort of having those conversations to try and help the head teacher see the other perspective of why people might be asking these questions. But I think some of it came down to the head teacher's sort of view of you know the governors seemed to be a bit of an annoyance at times. You know And I think we've been quite a complicit governing body.
09:41	And I think as we developed confidence in asking questions and challenging, I think the head teacher didn't like that as much. But yeah, I think it just comes from that sort of confidence and knowing that other people are beginning to ask the same questions.
Sarah Chung: 09:58	Yeah. It sounds like it was quite a difficult situation for you. Did you feel as chair of governors, did you feel supported?
Elizabeth: 10:08	Yes. Because I had two very good vice chairs.
10:12	And you know I think that's helpful where you know we'd been on some of the training courses together and you know been able to sort of develop that bond where we were able to bounce ideas off between ourselves and look at, you know why are they being defensive here? How can we sort of rephrase that?
Sarah Chung: 10:30	Okay. So the training supported you then in that?
Elizabeth: 10:34	Yeah. I think going on the training together, I think, is quite helpful. So there have been a few sort of courses where we've been together, and you can sort of start to think about your own context within it.
Sarah Chung: 10:45	Okay. So another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for management of staff. How confident are you in this area?
Elizabeth: 10:59	Fairly confident. I think it's really tricky because I have experience of managing staff and doing sort of performance reviews of staff. Yeah And then you're sort of suddenly thrown into performance managing the head teacher.

11:13	And you do have the support from a link advisory, you know the sort of independent person who comes in and helps once a year. So there is that sort of external validation of what the head's doing. But yeah, it's how you triangulate a lot of the information that the head gives you. And I think it's trickier as a chair to be on the performance panel. And it was something that we've looked to avoid now because you've got that relationship with the head already, so you know what's going on a lot of the time.
11:41	And I think you need to be slightly independent of that in order to do the performance review.
Sarah Chung: 11:46	Right. Okay. What made you consider that then? Was there anything specific that set that off?
Elizabeth: 11:55	I think it was going on one of the training courses, and at one point, they said, "Well, you shouldn't have the chair and vice chair being on the performance panel." And it was like, "Oh, yeah." And you know we talked about some of the potential conflicts. You know And obviously, if the head you know it's very difficult to have that sort of relationship with the head that you need if you're then also doing the performance review.
12:16	So I think we've tended then to have so the vice chair and one of the other governors would be on the panel rather than the chair. And it just means that if there's any dispute, it can be escalated to the chair as well rather than the chair being involved.
Sarah Chung: 12:30	Okay. So it's a lot of strategy behind doing that then, isn't it?
Elizabeth: 12:33	Yeah. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 12:35	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So could you explain the process then in appointing a new head teacher?
Elizabeth: 12:44	So we actually had a deputy head who'd been acting up for a while because the head teacher had gone off sick. So the process was basically, we had to follow sort of the local council process. And we had to put together a job description, advertise as you normally would, and then go through the interview process. So it's fairly sort of standard process. And the deputy at the time did then get the job.
Sarah Chung: 13:13	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. So were you on that panel?
Elizabeth: 13:19	No, I wasn't on the panel, I think, just because of availability. But I was involved in so the panel then made a decision, and then we had a sort of recommendation meeting. But we had a lot of meetings with the local authority just to establish what the process was, how it would work, you know who would be involved.
Sarah Chung: 13:37	So. Do you feel the support for that came mainly through those meetings with the local authority, or had you attended any training sessions specifically?

Elizabeth: 13:47	No, it mainly came through the meetings with the local authority. Hadn't done any training on that. I mean, we've done sort of safer recruitment training, but nothing specifically about recruiting a head teacher.
Sarah Chung: 13:58	Okay. Do you think that's something that would have helped?
Elizabeth: 14:02	I think i think it was a sort of just-in-time need, really. So actually, you know the person from the local authority basically ran through almost like a mini training session anyway.
14:14	So I think it would be really awkward to go on a training course about the head teacher recruiting a head teacher if you've already got a head teacher. And I think the head teacher gets an update on some of all the training that staff have attended, so it would just be a little awkward. But actually, I think it was you know because each situation is slightly different, because our deputy had been you know in an acting up role for well over a year, you know we were sort of like, "Well, you know can we advertise just internally?
14:45	You know We've got a great candidate who's really been pushing forward." So there were a lot of sort of discussions that actually was useful as a governing body to attend that training. Whereas I think if I just attended a training course, just me and then you know expected everyone to attend individually, I think you wouldn't have got that dialogue about you know and it helped us to think about what we wanted from a head teacher as a group. So we had, I think, a couple of sessions with the local authority to sort of help tease that out.
Sarah Chung: 15:12	Okay.
15:12	So it sounds like that personalised element, that arranging it as and when you needed it works better. Okay. Wonderful. So as well as setting the ethos and strategic direction of the school and also ensuring there is a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing. probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight of your school. How comfortable are you within this situation?
Elizabeth: 15:41	So I think this is the one that all our governors seem to struggle with because I think school finances are very different. Even though we've had people from financial backgrounds, school finances seem to be very different to anything else. You know And I was on our resources committee which did sort of budget setting and things. And I think you're very much led by the school. I mean, there's a lot of challenge around, "Well, what's this funding for? How can we spend it?
16:06	Why have we spent it on this?" But I think that's the area most of us and you know I sort of struggled with a little bit around how do we ensure that we're doing the right thing.
Sarah Chung: 16:19	Okay. So then as a governor, can you explain how you manage the school budget?

Elizabeth: 16:36	It's been a while since I was on that committee. I mean, I think, basically, we get the resources committee meets, I think, four times a year or three times a year plus a budget setting meeting. And then we have a pay committee who oversee sort of staff pay. And it really is just reports from the school person or school business manager. And just looking at what the income and outgoing is.
17:04	I mean, the difficulty for us is that the budget is mainly on staffing. So, I think you know we're quite heavy. Looking at where cuts can be made is very tricky. We've done some sort of three-year planning, which I think the local authority came and assisted with. But it's really difficult to sort of do a great deal around the budget when most of it's staffing. And I think you know it's that balancing where you go in and monitor in the classrooms, and you see the real need in the classrooms for that staffing against the budget.
17:36	You know So looking at do we get extra learning support assistance or TAs in to support? And how does that then map with the budget? And then you've got to look at the staff and people well-being against that. So, I think that's the challenging bit.
Sarah Chung: 17:52	Yeah. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So, the eight elements of effective governance have been identified as essential to good governance. What we're going to do now is almost a little words association type activity.
18:07	So, in your own words, can you explain what these mean to you? And what I'm going to do is I'll read you each element now. A, the right people around the table.
Elizabeth: 18:18	So I guess that's about looking at the skills that you have as your governing body and making sure that the skills and also the diversity of the governing body are complementary.
Sarah Chung: 18:33	Okay.
18:36	Understanding the role and responsibilities.
Elizabeth: 18:43	I guess that's about having clear job descriptions or descriptions of what the role of a governor is, but also the varying different roles that you might have on your governing body. So chair, vice chair, link governor, health and safety governor, so that people know what's expected of them.
Sarah Chung: 19:02	Okay. C, good chairing.
Elizabeth: 19:06	Good chairing. I guess creating that safe space so that people can have a constructive conversation and, you know, are able to challenge making sure that everyone is happy, I guess, you know, and, and able to contribute. But I guess there's the sort of chairing in the meetings, but also the, the broader bit of chairing.

19:34	It's being, you know, being supportive to each other you know, and, and making sure that things get done as well.
Sarah Chung: 19:41	Okay. So do you feel it's almost like a mentoring aspect as chair of governor that you're overseeing.
Elizabeth: 19:52	I think yeah, I think so. I mean.
Sarah Chung: 20:00	Oh, Elizabeth, I think you're frozen. I don't know if you can still hear me.
20:09	Hello?
21:03	Hello? Hello? Hi, Elizabeth.
Elizabeth: 21:09	Sorry. We've just had a power cut here.
21:12	Oh, no. Oh, gosh.
21:15	Yeah. I'm just going to check. It's not my... I thought, "Oh, why's my screen just gone off? Obviously, my laptop just died." I was like, "Oh, okay." This is a bit strange.
21:24	Oh, no. I did wonder. I thought, "Oh, I'm not sure how to get a message in case it was my end." So I, I was about to email you and just say, "Oh, it's, it's all frozen," but Yes.
21:34	Let me just check it's not something.
21:36	I think it's a power cut rather than my fuse box, but I'll just check anyway. No, it looks like a power cut.
21:44	Okay. That's interesting. Right. I am on my phone, so it should be fine.
Sarah Chung: 21:50	Okay. Are you still happy for me to carry on?
Elizabeth: 21:55	Yeah. Yeah. That's fine. Oh, lovely.
Sarah Chung: 21:57	Okay. Thank you. So we were going through the elements of effective governance. So D, professional clerking.
Elizabeth: 22:12	Oh, the power's come back on, right? Let's go.
Sarah Chung: 22:13	Oh, lovely.
Elizabeth: 22:17	All right. I'll stay on here for the moment and then see if I can re-join. Professional clerking. I think now.
22:28	I guess that's about supporting the governing body with a number of more administrative processes, but also making sure that the governing body are following the processes that they need to, providing that support, I guess, to the chair, developing a sort of timeline of when things need to be done.
Sarah Chung: 22:54	Okay.
22:56	Lovely. Thanks. Good relationships based on trust.
Elizabeth: 23:05	I guess that's essential. I don't know what else I can say.

Sarah Chung: 23:12	Okay. Lovely. F, knowing the school.
Elizabeth: 23:18	About being visible, about, I guess, reading and finding out more about the school, finding out you know knowing who the teachers are, you know visiting when you can, but not just you know to monitor, to go in and visit you know some of the events celebrating with the school. Yeah. Okay. Gee, asking challenging questions. Again, that's essential.
23:46	I guess it's a core part of governance is asking those challenging questions and making sure that you get an answer that you're happy with.
Sarah Chung: 23:55	Okay. Lovely. So H, having courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people.
Elizabeth: 24:05	Making sure that you always put the children and you know in some respects, the staff first and always consider their perspective and what's in their best interest.
24:16	So you know when new things are brought in, it's sort of asking you know how does this benefit the children? What's the children's perspective on this? What's the impact on the staff? What's the impact on the pupils? Okay. All right. I'm just going to re-log. It'll come back again. Oh, there we go.
24:51	All right, there we go. That's better. How weird.
Sarah Chung: 24:56	Oh, isn't it funny? Technology has been so fabulous over two years, but it's still got its little downsides, hasn't it?
Elizabeth: 25:02	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 25:04	So now we'll move on a little bit and we'll talk about strategic and operational.
25:09	So we know that the line between strategic and operational can be seen as quite a grey area for some. How confident are you in knowing where governance ends and SLT responsibilities begin?
Elizabeth: 25:22	Fairly confident. I think you know that's one of the things when I sort of became a chair. But you know obviously, before that, it's establishing that with the head teacher as to you know what is the governor's responsibility and having that clearly written into things like the terms of reference of the committees.
25:40	I think the roles and responsibilities documents really help with that. But also not being afraid to ask the question, you know is this operational? And I think sometimes in meetings, you know we end up talking about things, and you have to sort of pull it back and go, "This is getting operational now." you know And I think that's where the clerk can be very helpful in that, saying, you know actually, this is operational, and you know we need to be thinking about the strategic element here.
Sarah Chung: 26:05	Okay. Wonderful.

26:11	So, thinking about the policies, for example, at your school, what role do the governors play in..?
Elizabeth: 26:19	So a lot of the policies come from the local authorities. So they are model policies, and they tend to get adopted. But the kids would review all the policies. We have got a sort of regular review cycle for a number of policies.
26:33	So they would typically be reviewed by an individual committee on behalf of the governing body or where it needs to be by the whole governing body. And typically, it's looking at them, making sure you know I mean, things like typos get corrected, making sure the information is correct, like you know updating the safeguarding lead, for example. Then, yeah, just reviewing them, but also inputting into them. So you know we might think there could be additions made.
27:00	So we worked quite closely with the school around the remote learning policy, for example, and making sure that that was clear and communicated out to parents. So that's the other aspect, is making sure that the policies are available and communicated out both to staff and to parents.
Sarah Chung: 27:16	Lovely. Okay. So the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has actually been quite immense, hasn't it? Can you describe your experience of governance during that time?
Elizabeth: 27:30	I think it was a bit hands-off a lot of the time because I think when we first went into lockdown, it was agreed that the chair would maintain contact with the head, but we sort of didn't hold some of our committee meetings. I think because the school were just trying to get their heads around everything. Yeah And so, yeah, it was quite hands-off, but we did have sort of fairly regular updates from the head via the chair. So the chair was that main point of contact.
27:58	And then once things were a bit more settled, we went back to having sort of our regular meetings. They were all held online. And we even did some of the monitoring online. So we have a link with each subject lead. So we held a discussion with them. And we tried to do things a bit more asynchronously. So we put together a set of questions for each subject lead, and then we emailed the document across, and then they completed it. And then we had a sort of a chat about that. And I think that's something that's continued.
28:28	So I think that's been useful because it means that the subject leads have got more time to think about their responses as well. And it's only been sort of in the last probably six months or so that we've actually been back in. So yeah, even governors weren't really allowed in. It was mainly just staff. So we've started going back in for events and things.
Sarah Chung: 28:51	Okay. So you say that the monitoring online, that's continued on.
28:57	So that's a good aspect that's arisen out of it, would you say?

Elizabeth: 29:02	Yeah. And I think you know having virtual attendance for some of the meetings, although the setup isn't always ideal. It's better for the committee meetings where there's a smaller group. So we tend to meet in the head's office and you know somebody can be on the computer. So I think that's helped with just people's availability. Now back.
Sarah Chung: 29:22	Yeah. It's all right. You froze again. Okay. Wonderful.
29:26	So did you feel then if you were more hands-off, in a sense, as a governing body, did you feel that you were there in more of a support capacity, almost a pastoral capacity?
Elizabeth: 29:41	I think so. I mean, like I said, the chair tended to do a lot of that liaison with the school because they didn't want too many. And some of our governors are also members of staff, which is an interesting dynamic.
29:54	They don't work enough hours to be ruled out and have to be the staff governor. But yeah, at least two or three of them were already in the school as well. So they were sort of the eyes and ears of the governing body at the same time. So they were able to provide some of that support on behalf of the governors.
Sarah Chung: 30:16	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now we'll look at more generalised training for governors.
30:25	If you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be and why?
Elizabeth: 30:31	Oh, I don't know. We have five core training courses that we ask people to do. I think probably just about the role and managing expectations of the role. I think especially where you get parent governors coming in, you know I think they don't always know what the role is.
30:51	So I think that understanding of what you're there for, what you're not there to do and I think is probably the most valuable thing. Obviously, you know we look at things like the prevent, equality, diversity, inclusion training, things like that as well. We have them as sort of one of our, I think, five core courses. But I think it's key about the role because I think you need to sort of manage those expectations upfront.
Sarah Chung: 31:18	Yeah. Absolutely.
31:20	So you've mentioned the five core courses that you have. Is that something that you've decided as a governing body is essential?
Elizabeth: 31:28	Yeah. Yeah. Let me just bring up the list. So one of my first roles on the governing body was the link governor. So responsible for sort of skills audit, advising on training. And I put together a governor's handbook. So the idea is it sort of helps new governors work out what training to do.

31:47	I mean, [redacted] recommend that people do the sort of getting started and being effective courses, and they run them fairly regularly. Where's the training? So there are two. And then one is safeguarding, which has to be done. All governors need the safeguarding training. Yeah. One's equality and diversity, I think, because we felt that was useful for people to have because it covers all aspects, you know not just about being a governor, but working with staff and the pupils.
32:20	And then Prevent, I think, was a key one as well, sort of linked to the safeguarding. And then we recommend some other ones. So there's one around governance, your role, your responsibilities, your organisation. So some of these are on the Learning Link page, the NGA Learning Link. Because the challenge is the training courses, the in-person ones, whether that's online or in a physical space, they don't always run that often.
32:45	So it was useful where you know people couldn't sign up for the getting started and being effective to go and do the NGA Learning Link one, at least just to get that initial view on what governance is. We've got one around structures, roles, and responsibilities, so just key functions of the governing board, one around effectiveness. So they sort of link to the starting courses. It helps people when they do go along to the West Sussex courses. They sort of have a feel for what to expect as well and what sort of questions they might want to ask.
33:15	And then we'd put one in around Ofsted because at the time, we hadn't had Ofsted visits since, "Oh, gosh, was it 2007?" It was a long time. Yeah, yeah. And then they came in last year.
Sarah Chung: 33:27	Oh, wow.
Elizabeth: 33:29	Well, brand new head teacher, but of course, it was the deputy head who'd been acting up. Yeah. Third week of September, they came in. Yeah. It didn't go well, mainly because I think the timing wasn't right.
33:42	Our reception cohort had not been in any form of education or sort of even nursery settings because of the pandemic. So there were a lot of challenges, and they were bringing in a new behaviour policy at the same time. So I think had offset come a bit later in the term. It might have been a bit more favourable, but you know it was a good experience. And like I said, the school hadn't had an Ofsted visit. So I think there was that nervousness around it anyway. Yeah. Absolutely.
Sarah Chung: 34:09	So given that there was such a length between your Ofsted visits, were you originally outstanding as a school?
Elizabeth: 34:16	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 34:17	And you've dropped down to good?
Elizabeth: 34:20	Requires improvement.

Sarah Chung: 34:21	Requires improvement? So as a governing body, what was your first step to tackling that maybe?
Elizabeth: 34:29	To tackling the requires improvement or the Ofsted visit?
Sarah Chung: 34:33	Well, both, I suppose, really.
Elizabeth: 34:35	So we sort of we knew that Ofsted were coming for a while.
34:38	You know There was always this threat that OFSTED would come on. And we've had regular visits with our Link Advisor anyway. So we always knew we'd probably be around the good mark. And yeah, I went on the Ofsted training, which was interesting because part of the training was looking at your last Ofsted report and working out what you know your actions were from that and what you were doing as a governing body. And it didn't really work for me because they presented me this really lovely little report back from 2007 when the Ofsted inspectors used to write this nice section for the pupils.
35:13	It was like, "Oh, we really liked visiting your school. You're a very friendly school." you know It's so sweet. But there were hardly any actions. And even there was one action. And it's like, "Well, this isn't relevant now." So it was really tricky you know going on that training. It was like a two-day training course, and it was like, "Okay. Well, this is very nice." But you know it's helpful to know what to expect. And then, yeah, when Ofsted came in, I was one of the governors that spoke to them. And I think it was a bit of a shock to the school to get requires improvement.
35:43	But I think we all acknowledge that actually the timing you know like I said, had the timing been different, I think we would have got a different result. But you can sort of see why Ofsted had questioned it, you know the new behaviour policy coming in and some of the behaviour they saw, you could see the impact of the pandemic. But obviously, they have to go on what they've seen. So for us, it was about sort of supporting the staff because, obviously, it was a big shock for them.
36:13	Like I said, a lot of them had never been through Ofsted, especially where they'd been at the school for a long time. So I think, yeah, supporting them with the outcome and actually reassuring them that we know that they are working at a good level. But it's what do we need to do to show Ofsted when they next come in and making that action plan with them. And you know talking to them about the areas that Ofsted had highlighted, so around behaviour you know and just really challenging them you know about the new behaviour policy.
36:45	What are you doing to embed this in? There was some stuff around sort of the language that children use and how that progresses from year to year. So what we've done is you know as part of our observations, we've made sure that's something we've looked at. So we talk to children about the language, and we're hoping to see that progression. So you know in reception, here are some of the terms they use, and here's

what they're now using in year two. So it's about how we've adapted our monitoring for that as well.

Sarah Chung: 37:15 Okay. So it was mainly, would you say, then, on behaviour and language that brought that down, or?

Elizabeth: 37:24 I think it was, yeah, mainly the behaviour. And I said, having that new behaviour framework coming in, which was a therapeutic approach to behaviour. And I think it was how it had been implemented, and staff confidence, I think, in implementing that as well. So it's something that the local authority are encouraging schools to do.

37:43 And it sort of aligns with our ethos around sort of that therapeutic approach rather than you know sort of punishing children quite publicly, you know being very supportive. So you know yeah, I think it was a big shift away for staff from what they'd been used to. And I think some of it just came down to that confidence. But you know in terms of the management and governance, that was all rated good.

Sarah Chung: 38:11 Okay. Okay.

38:12 Do you know when your next Ofsted is due?

Elizabeth: 38:16 I'm not sure whether they I think it's about two years, I think they come back, but I'm not sure. I mean, obviously, they can come back at any time, but you know I think we're preparing for them to come back in sort of one to two years.

Sarah Chung: 38:29 Okay. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So we started this discussion by talking about the training that you think would be essential.

38:40 Conversely, now, what, in your opinion, is the least useful piece of training for governors?

Elizabeth: 38:49 I'm not sure. I think it depends on your background, really, and you know what your skills are coming in. But I think all the training has been useful to some degree depending on because I think you know when we talked about performance managing the head, you know I've done performance management, but actually it's knowing how to performance manage in a school with a head teacher.

39:13 So I think it's about I think all of it has been useful to some degree. The finance training was not useful, but I think that needs to be a bit more practical. I think that was more around how it was delivered rather than finance as a topic. Okay. So how was it delivered? How did that? They just did a very long quiz.

39:42 And I think with the finance, you need to be looking at some budgets and really understanding. And we did a little bit of that, but it was mainly this very long quiz. And three of us actually went on the course together. And none of us enjoyed it. We just found it really difficult to get to grips with. And one of our governors is very hot on the finance.

40:03	And I've said to her, "Look, can you just do an overview of you know how it means in practice?" And I think that's what you need more, is more of an experiential learning where you're actually looking at budgets and almost simulating that environment because I think just doing a quiz on, "Well, what does this fund mean? And what's this for?" And you know it just didn't work.
Sarah Chung: 40:25	Okay. Wonderful. So I'd like you to think back now to your initial year of governance nine years ago.
40:35	Did you feel supported?
Elizabeth: 40:37	Yes. So we had a link governor at the time who was very supportive. She was almost like a sort of mentor. And you know we went to a couple of the training courses together, which was quite nice.
Sarah Chung: 40:52	So she wasn't officially a mentor, but she was more unofficially your mentor?
Elizabeth: 40:56	Well, I think the link governor sort of takes on a role of welcoming and checking in on the new governors.
41:04	So it's a sort of unofficial role. And obviously, the chair has a role in that as well. But we try to sort of buddy people up, and it tends to be with the link governor.
Sarah Chung: 41:15	Okay. So what are your thoughts then on mentors or governor buddies for not only governors, but chairs of governors and possibly even the clerk?
Elizabeth: 41:27	I think it's really useful because I think you know sometimes as a chair, you're almost on your own.
41:32	And you know we've looked at national leaders of governance and things like that. I have been to some sort of governor network sessions. So there's a sort of partner school that would run gatherings for chairs, and you could come and talk about different issues. And I think that's quite useful. We haven't had a great deal of sort of connection with the locality governors, so the ones in our town, although I think that's starting up again.
42:01	I think some of it as a governor, you sort of end up just being so involved in your own governing board. It's just making that time to work with others. So I think that's where actually going on some of the training courses has been really useful because you do get to see other governors and it's sharing of experiences with them. But I think it would be useful to have sort of a mentor governor. You know Within your governing body, I think when you first start, but for chairs and for Clerks, I think having either sort of a one-to-one or that network of clerks and chairs that you can call on.
Sarah Chung: 42:33	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So thinking a little bit more about the mentor role, do you think it would be preferential to have a mentor within your own governing body or one external?

Elizabeth: 42:48	I think, like I said, I think for just your sort of general governor, I think having it within your governing body, especially when you start, I think, because it's about getting to know the other governors.
42:58	But I think for chairs, probably vice chairs and clerks, I think it probably is better to have someone external because I think you know the chair often becomes a mentor to people within their governing body. So it's having that other person as a chair to talk to who understands the role of a chair, I think, would be useful.
Sarah Chung: 43:18	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So the NGA have openly stated that they feel induction training should be mandatory within the first year.
43:27	And indeed, in Wales, it already is. In your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this?
Elizabeth: 43:34	Yes. And I think we say that our governors should attend the training in the first year. I mean, the challenge is when the training course is run. And like I said, that's why we encourage people to do the learning link online courses, so at least they've got something. But yeah, I mean, we would be asking questions if a governor didn't go on training within their first year and complete the five courses that we've identified as our sort of core courses.
Sarah Chung: 43:59	Okay. Wonderful. So then if mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following? Content?
Elizabeth: 44:09	Content? Well, I think it's probably the ones we've got. You know What do you need to know as a governor? How to be effective as a governor? The safeguarding, obviously, is essential. Equality and diversity and prevent. And I think we also have sort of some recommended courses.
44:25	I don't know if I've got the list here around sort of challenging, so good questioning, monitoring. So those are our sort of next level. But I think you know it's how do you build that confidence to ask good questions. And I think that's where it comes back to that sort of practical training. So you know giving us a set of potential questions. So I went on, of course, during the pandemic around effective questioning. It was really useful because they gave us some questions that you could then use.
44:57	And then they gave us some scenarios that you might sort of think about how you might use those questions. So I think that's what you need is that sort of crib sheet of useful questions, but you know those practice environments to sort of test them out in.
Sarah Chung: 45:10	Okay. So it seems that, for you, that context of the training is important to be able to contextualise the training.
Elizabeth:	Yep, yeah...

Sarah Chung: 45:20	Okay. So how do you think the training should take place?
45:25	So for example, a lot of training is done through the LEA at the moment or in-house within schools or trusts. What are your thoughts on perhaps online training?
Elizabeth: 45:38	My role as [redacted] head of digital education [redacted] at the university. So, yeah. For me, I mean, online training, I think, is great because it provides that flexibility. I think, obviously, there's different aspects. So one reason we recommend the Learning Link is just so that people can get started with the training and start to think about their role and what their responsibilities are.
45:58	But I think with the online training as it is on the Learning Link, it's very much you just read. And it can be quite interactive, which is great. But you don't get that dialogue with the other governors. And I think that's what you get from attending the online training or the in-person training. So whether that's online or in a physical classroom. So I think it's that discussion you often need. So the one I went on, I did one around, I think, being a link governor and training.
46:29	And we were put into breakout rooms, and we got to talk to other people about what we do. And I think that's the valuable thing, is going and picking up those ideas, you know someone going, "Oh, you know so I have a spreadsheet that does this," and other people going, "Oh, that sounds really interesting. You know Can you share that with me or talk us through how it's used?" And things like colour-coding minutes and stating the three core aims at the top. It's little things like that that you pick up and you bring back to your governing body that I don't think you get so much from the fully online training.
46:59	It's just the sort of asynchronous online training.
Sarah Chung: 47:01	Okay. So effectively then, the training can almost be boosted by those corridor conversations, those smaller interactions.
Elizabeth: 47:11	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 47:12	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Okay. So what are your thoughts on a modulated course that was delivered, perhaps online, perhaps in person, or even hybrid, which resulted in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year?
Elizabeth: 47:30	I think that'd be great. So one thing I did, so [redacted] have a certificate of governance. And the idea was that you had to complete I think they've changed it recently, but you had to complete certain there was like four core courses, and then I think it was three additional ones. And what you had to do was then write a little statement to say what you'd learned as a result of that. So I actually applied and got my certificate of governance from them. It was only like a little short statement, but you just had to attend I think it was seven courses.

48:02	But some of them had to be their core. I can't remember which ones they were now. Have a look. Their core ones. I don't know if I've got it here. I can't see it immediately, but. Yeah. I think like I said, I think they changed it. So you definitely had to attend the getting started and being effective. And I think was there one around safeguarding maybe. Yeah. But yeah, that was good.
48:31	You know And I've tried to encourage other members of my governing body to get it because I think it's useful to have that little certificate to sort of say that you've done it.
Sarah Chung: 48:38	Yeah. Absolutely. So I'm assuming then that's just for your location. That's not anything that's widespread. That's just for local governors.
Elizabeth: 48:49	Yeah. So it's just for [redacted] [redacted] See if I've got it here. It's been a while since I did it.
49:08	Yeah, I'm assuming they still do it. Okay. Now, I can always send you the details afterwards if you're interested.
Sarah Chung: 49:18	Oh, lovely. Yeah. Absolutely. If you don't mind, that would be wonderful. Okay. So that's actually completed the interview. So thank you so much for joining me.
49:31	And do you have anything that you'd like to add that I've maybe missed or not asked or?
Elizabeth: 49:38	I think one thing I would add would be that role of the link governor.
Sarah Chung: 49:43	Yeah.
Elizabeth: 49:44	I don't know if you've come across that very much.
Sarah Chung: 49:47	I've spoken with some who have link governor roles that are specific. So a link governor for PP pupils or a link governor.
49:59	Is your link governor role slightly different then?
Elizabeth: 50:02	Yeah. So in [redacted] [redacted] the link governor role is basically the training governor. So the idea is that you're the one who promotes and encourages training within the school. And you're responsible for doing things like the skills audit. So we developed our own skills audit, and then we used, I think, the NGA have got one as well. And we still use both of them because the NGA one, I think, is really useful for when new governors are coming in.
50:32	But what we've done with our one is we've tried to tailor it to the training courses that are provided through [redacted] [redacted] And you know we review the skills audit on every one to two years, and especially when new governors come in, and we look at where our areas of weakness are. Yeah And then based on that, I would make recommendations as to which training courses so which ones are a priority. So if you're on our resources committee, you need to make sure

	you've done the finance course and ideally the finance beyond the basics.
51:01	And so there's ones which are priority for your committee that you're on, and then others are sort of recommended. So I think you know we've got a good level of skills in terms of questioning, monitoring, but here are some recommended courses. If you haven't done it, it can be quite useful for you to go on. And then we keep a log and audit sort of the training that takes place every year. So the link governor reports back to the governing body around what training's been done and just promotes various different training.
Sarah Chung: 51:29	Okay.
51:30	It sounds like it's quite an important role within your governing body then.
Elizabeth: 51:36	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 51:41	So then I'm thinking you've got it layered then, the training. So certain committees will have certain requisite training. So what's requisite for the finance might be an optional for somebody on.
Elizabeth: 51:56	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 51:57	Okay. Wonderful. Yeah.
Elizabeth: 51:59	So you know we've got different roles. So like the health and safety governor, we'd expect them to do the health and safety training, for example. Safeguarding governor would do the safeguarding you know so where your role dictates particular training courses. But yeah, committees are then linked to particular training courses. So it would be a priority for them to do it. But you know that's not to mean anyone else could not do it.
Sarah Chung: 52:20	Yeah Is there any comeback from have you ever had governors who've refused or just not done the training?
52:29	And what happened?
Elizabeth: 52:32	We have. I mean, and it's really tricky. Yeah. I think questions will be asked by the chair as to you know when you're not engaging in training you know and trying to understand the reasons for that. And so having the online training, I think, has been great. So we can say, "Well, look, okay, you can't go to this in-person one, but here's the relevant course on the Learning Link." So we sort of say, "Look, you can do the in-person one or you can do the online one." And I think you know we did have a time when there was a governor who didn't really engage in training.
53:01	And I think conversations were had with him by the chair at the time. But it's really tricky because you know unless you want to lose someone. But yeah, I think you know it's been pointed out to people. But the challenge we've got is some staff work for

	the local authority or at least one of the works for the local authorities. So he trains in some of these. So you know some of it is tied back to that skills audit. So you know if they're saying, "Well, I've got a 5," as in you know I know all of this, then you could sort of given them a pass and say, "Well, actually, you don't need to go on the training." So, yeah.
53:34	I mean, one of ours trains in some of the areas anyway, so we wouldn't expect him to do that training. So it is tied to the skills audit as well. But where somebody maybe notes on the skills audit, this is a one or a two, then their priority might be slightly different to somebody else. So it is slightly individualised as well, the training that they're asked to do.
Sarah Chung: 53:55	Okay. Okay. That's brilliant. Thank you. It's been wonderful speaking to you today, Elizabeth. Thank you ever so much. And for getting through all those technical hitches.
54:06	So that's wonderful. I am hoping to share the findings. So if you are interested, I'm happy to forward you a copy.
Elizabeth: 54:13	Yeah, it'd be good to see.

Emilia

Sarah Chung: 00:01	Okay. So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in the study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. During our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this. Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role.
00:37	We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training. I would like to remind you, as stressed in the letter of participation that you've just signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years.
01:13	Should you wish a copy of the results, then please do email me [redacted]. Do you have any questions before we begin?
Emilia: 01:26	No. That's it.
Sarah Chung: 01:27	Wonderful. Thank you. Okay. So should we jump in and start with how long have you been a governor?
Emilia:	Four and a half years now, yeah, four and a half years.
Sarah Chung: 01:41	Four and a half years.
01:42	Wonderful. Okay. What made you choose to be a brother? Well, I was not brought up. I didn't study in this country, and I'm originally from [redacted] So education there is very different from education here. And then when I had my children here, I wanted to know and you know how they were thought and what was going on in the school. And a friend of mine suggested you know a parent governor, and I applied for it, and I got it.
02:15	And I started from there, really, to learn how to understand you know how school works from the inside you know because as a parent, you don't really know inside and outside of what's happening inside the school. So being a governor has opened my eyes a lot of things. And that's one reason I became a parent governor. And then from there because I was enjoying it quite a bit, I decided to you know become a governor in other schools as well.

02:44	So now I'm a governor, a parent governor in a second primary and secondary school. And I'm a co-op governor in a primary and secondary school as well, so.
Sarah Chung: 02:54	Oh, wonderful. Okay. So you've really embraced governance then.
Emilia: 02:58	Yes. I do enjoy it, so.
Sarah Chung: 03:01	Well, that's fantastic. So that brings me quite beautifully to the next question. What has been the most enjoyable part of governance for you?
Emilia: 03:10	I think it's understanding how the system works.
03:14	I find it really interesting how, you know as a person from inside, see how school can have a hard time getting things done. Because from outside, as an individual from outside or even as a parent, you think that, "Oh, the schools are not doing good enough. The school is not doing that, doing this." But when you're from inside, you see how difficult it is to get things done at times. It's not just you know one person just makes up the mind and that's it, and everybody says yes.
03:46	You know, you have to have so many people to agree with things, and not everybody has the same opinion on things. So yeah, that's one reason. I think I find it really interesting. And it's also with different schools. They all have different approach in things. And I find that really interesting. And that's, I think, what I enjoy the most. It's not only just one school has the same thing. They're all different and learning all of them and then sort of contributing my part to all different schools as well, which I really enjoy.
04:19	I think that's what is really, really. And of course, seeing children being you know doing really well because of school as a governor, as the teachers are doing everything they can, working hard, and you know putting it on for the kids, really, and the kids becoming really successful and doing their work and being hardworking. And the best of all is seeing children coming to school and loving it, not where they want to say, "Oh, I don't want to come to school," so.
Sarah Chung: 04:50	Yeah. Oh, that's wonderful. Thank you. Conversely, now then, what would be the least enjoyable aspect of governance?
Emilia: 05:01	Least enjoyable. Maybe not everybody carrying their weight on things. I think sometimes people think being a governor is easy, and it's you know just turn up for meetings and go back home because, obviously, we don't get paid, so.
05:21	And I think, yeah, it's just contribution from those who don't really carry their weight. I think that's the most horrible thing.
Sarah Chung: 05:32	Okay. Thank you. That's really wonderful. So the next part now, the NGA described governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction. The following questions will explore your understanding of vision, ethos, and strategic direction.

05:50	So in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?
Emilia: 05:56	Oh I think it's just trying to think. I think just trying to think that, basically, governors are there to get things done. We need to do things whether sometimes whether the school likes it or not.
06:21	And we are there to get it done and to make the school successful, to make the school you know where people want to attend the school. Children want to attend school. So the parents want to apply for that particular school. And the governing body, I think that's what they need to aim for to get things successful, how their curriculum is done, how welcoming the school is, and how well the school does in exams.
06:49	It's not only just paperwork that you know like for the SATs at the moment, we don't want it, "Oh, yeah. They have to do well just because for the school, we show that the kids are doing it because they want it to do themselves, to show themselves what they're capable of doing it." So I think that's what, as a governor, we want to show that, that this is what we can do. It's the children that are doing it for themselves. It's not for the school. But the governors are doing it for the school.
07:17	But we are doing things to make sure the children are doing it for themselves, to prove it. And that obviously will make the school much a better place. Children are studying hard and governors are doing their work. And of course, the teachers, they are the most important thing as well. If you have to have good teachers, is to have a good teacher in the school and a committed teacher, which is most important as well. I'm not really sure I answered that question properly, but I think it is.
Sarah Chung: 07:46	Yeah, that's great.
07:48	Thank you. So using your own experience now, then, as a governor, can you explain how you've shaped your school's strategic direction?
Emilia: 07:59	Oh Well, as a chair to one of my schools, I would say I am making sure the school is you know getting things done, you know making sure everything is ready.
08:22	Just say if Ofsted was going to turn up tomorrow, we are ready for it. We don't have to be you know huffing and puffing everywhere and getting worried about it. So basically, it's getting things done, making sure governors are doing their work, putting on their weight you know doing their weight of work, doing their training that is required, make sure the staff you know also doing their jobs and the well-being of the staff as well, which is really important because we have to have happy staff to have happy children.
08:52	So at the moment, I think with all the schools, I contribute as much as I can in doing things when it's required. I mean, when somebody says, "you know This needs to be done," I do them.

	I don't sort of question them as much to say, "Why should we do it? I want to do it because I want to make a good school." Because also, when it's a good school, it's good governors. And if I'm one of the governors, which is great. So I don't want to be you know one of the governors in a not very good school.
09:22	I mean, unfortunately, it happens, but I think I could proudly say all the four schools that I'm going to govern in, teachers are all brilliant. They all work very hard, and they prove that they work hard, and they hate teachers are also brilliant. And the governing body is also great. I mean, one of us we are very new governing body, but all of us are getting together and making sure we are getting better and being good, which is really, really good.
09:52	And I'm really glad. And I mean, I think what we call being a governor in a lot of the schools as well shows you what you're capable of doing. And I think I'm hoping that I can provide more I don't know. What's the word for it? Helpfulness. Help with the schools. I'm willing to do anything for the school. I mean, if they ask me, even just say, "Can you come in to you know just help out, just stand by the corridor for the kids?" you know Things like that.
10:24	I think that's what you need to help schools out. And I'm hoping that all the schools I mean, all of them have been aiming quite high in their standards, and all of them have been quite high in the standards of education. And I'm quite to say I'm quite happy that as a governor, we all have contributed to it as well. So we all have good governing body, good teachers, good head, and, of course, good pupils.
10:55	Not sure about the parents, but pupils.
Sarah Chung: 11:01	Thank you. That's wonderful. So looking now at ethos, in your own words, can you describe what is meant by our school's ethos?
Emilia: 11:10	Oh I'm not really sure. I mean, I know what ethos is, but when you ask me to explain oh God.
11:27	My brain is completely blank now.
Sarah Chung: 11:30	That's okay. We can always come back to that if you want.
Emilia: 11:34	Yeah. Yeah. If we come back to that, what they call things. If you give me an example, it's like my brain is like, "Ethos. What's ethos now?" It's like, "Never mind.".
Sarah Chung: 11:44	It's hard when you're put in the spot, isn't it?
Emilia: 11:47	Yeah. When you put in the spot, it's like everything just goes completely blank. It's like when I'm sitting for exams, that's where everything goes completely blank.

11:52	All of a sudden, I'm thinking, "Oh my God, I can't remember anything," so. But yeah, I'll come back to that at the moment, so.
Sarah Chung: 11:58	Okay. Not a problem. So the next part of that question is, actually, can you describe. Vision is for a school?
Emilia: 12:10	I think most of the schools, their vision is to provide a good education, provide a good curriculum, a balanced curriculum to schools.
12:20	And obviously, to have the school to be the first option for all parents and to make sure that the kids are happy in school. So I mean, most of the schools I mean, most of the visions of our schools, that's what it is like where everybody wants to be the best, so. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 12:47	Okay.
12:48	So are you happy with that ethos at your school? Sorry, with that vision at your school?
Emilia: 12:54	Yes.
Sarah Chung: 12:55	Okay. Do you think there's any training that would help in terms of understanding either or all of vision, ethos, strategic direction?
13:07	I think there's always there's no such thing as, "Oh, we are perfect," that we know exactly what's really good. We know exactly what our I mean, we do know what our visions are, our ethos are, you know, whatever we need.
13:19	We do know that. But it is good to be reminded Mm-hmm. because I think we can forget it at times. And it is good for to be reminded. And there are times when I think training is you know, we don't need training every month or anything like that, but once in a while to have training to make sure that everybody remembers it because sometimes it's easy to forget, especially when you're just teaching and you don't think about all the other bits of what's happening in the background. So, yes, I think you would do some training, but, you know, depending on the schools, really, as well.
13:50	And like I say, my school, I would say, they do remind them what they are to make sure the teachers, the pupils, even the governors are aware of it, and don't forget it, really.
Sarah Chung: 14:04	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. Did you want to try ethos, or should we move on?
Emilia: 14:10	Next one first.
Sarah Chung: 14:15	This is supposed to be as comfortable as possible. So if there's anything you do want to come back to or you're not sure, just let me know.
14:22	So can you explain a little bit, then, about how your governing body oversees pupil performance?

Emilia: 14:30	Oh, we have data that are provided to us by the teachers. And then we also do have a governor link. So we do school visits as well to see how things are done, you know how things are being done in schools like for reading or phonics or what they call things like that.
14:53	So we do have those to read upon as well. I mean, that's mainly it is. It's just the data and the visits that we do. And I mean, of course, we question all of them, but that's the main way of us looking how the thing is being done, really.
Sarah Chung: 15:15	Okay. Okay. So how comfortable, then, are you with understanding the data that's presented to you?
Emilia: 15:26	I do understand it. I mean, to understand what the data is being given to us. But if you ask me, like, if it's a finance, yes, I can be a bit sort of like, "Hmm, not really sure." Because I'm not a financial I don't have financial background, but I do try my best to see if I can understand it. Yeah. So we do sort of I mean, you know, it's a basic. As a governor, basic, I can understand it.
15:50	But if they want to go more in detail, I mean, as a governor, I would say myself, personally, I wouldn't really be able to help too much because I wouldn't know. We do have some governors. That's the reason we have governors who are in financial things like accountants and stuff so they can see it a bit more in depth. So we do ask questions. I mean, I still do my training for them for any things regarding finance so that I can understand the concept of it, at least, you know the front bit at least, even though I cannot go deep into it, I won't be able to answer anything.
16:25	But at least the top bit, I can understand, like, why is this spent on this? Why is that spent on that? You know How much is this? How much is that? I can do all that. But if you go into a calculation and stuff, then I say, "Unfortunately, I'm not a finance person," so.
Sarah Chung: 16:41	Okay. And in terms of data for the children's performance?
Emilia: 16:47	Well, performance, like I said, like I said, the teachers do give us how the students have performed.
16:55	And if there's a reason why they haven't performed properly, we do have what we call data on that. And you know then we try to maybe ask if there's anything that we can do to improve the performance of the students. And if there is, we get it done. You know We say yes to whatever needs. Like Just say there was a resource that they need to improve them.
17:24	And most of them, I mean, I think a lot of what we call performance by students are also it's good that we know what the performance for the students are, but at the same time, sometimes I think we can sort of example, for the SATs, a lot of students sit for it, but they're not really looked at properly when they go to secondary school for year seven.

17:54	So it's mainly for the school to know that you know this is how many kids are doing really well, which is good. I mean, I think most of the schools know how many kids are doing well, you know especially the kids who are what they call falling behind, which is good. That's one way of seeing the data to make sure that those kids are given intervention or helped in any way to make sure they get one.
18:18	But I think in data part of it, I just find that as a governor or even as a parent, I don't find it sometimes useful because especially the year six SATs. Because you know they go to year seven and whatever school they go to, they end up sitting for a test there to see what their one is. So I think it's like data, which is good if we can see unfortunately, because a lot of schools have so many kids.
18:47	It's so hard to see one individual kid how exactly they did from the beginning, from year one to year six, and you know the teachers change as well. And it's useful to certain extent for the school, but I just sometimes don't think it's really useful for the pupil or for the parent.
19:13	As the governor, probably, yes, just to know where we stand for the pupils, what they're doing, whether we are doing a good job or not, whether they're studying, they're not studying. I think that part is good. But I think can sometimes be not really useful at this point as well because, I mean, a student A could do really well one time and then suddenly not do well at all for his SATs or her SATs and then do well again and go to secondary school.
19:40	So data sort of goes back and forth with the student's performance, really.
Sarah Chung: 19:46	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. That's a really lovely detailed answer. So do you, as a governor, do you feel able to challenge or raise questions when necessary?
Emilia: 19:57	Yes. We do raise I mean, we do ask questions. Like I said, if I don't understand something, I do ask questions. And if it's something that doesn't seem right, I also question it to find out whether maybe I've got a different view than somebody else.
20:15	And so to just find out we challenge to make sure that whatever the head is doing for the school is correct and is the right way of doing it because sometimes it's a correct thing you know what the head have done is correct, but the way of doing it might not be. So we have to make I do make sure that we challenge enough to make sure the procedure is used is all correct because it's not just getting the decision is right, but the procedure is wrong.
20:49	We can be screwed up as well in that sense. So we'll make sure. So yeah, I do challenge. I think every governor should challenge their head by asking questions. And there is no such as they always say, there's no such a stupid question. Every question is a good question because as governors, we are not there to see if we are specialized in things. We have come in

because we want to be a governor. So not all of us are lawyers, doctors, engineers kind of thing that we might know everything.

21:21 And so I mean, with example for myself as well, even I'm a law graduate. I've got my own self I'm self-employed, but I'm also considered as I don't work now, so I'm considered as a housewife. A lot of people think, "Oh, housewife, being a parent governor, you wouldn't know anything." Sometimes say, "Yeah, I don't know anything." That's the reason I ask questions. That's the reason you need to be challenged because somebody who is, you know, working and everything, they might not even think of that question.

21:48 Because I think having so many different type of people as governors as well helps ask challenging questions, really.

Sarah Chung: 21:55 Oh, that's interesting. So as you said, having others from different backgrounds helps with challenge. Is that because of the different skills?

Emilia: 22:09 I think it does because, I mean, there are times where I have to say, some governing body where they have got specific way of thinking.

Sarah Chung: 22:19 Mm-hmm.

Emilia: 22:20 and they didn't want to listen to what other people think. Mm-hmm. And, you know, I mean, to say that maybe they don't really think that particular governor has the knowledge.

Sarah Chung: 22:34 Mm-hmm.

Emilia: 22:35 You know, somebody who is in a higher, you know, who's got a degree must be got better knowledge than someone who don't. So it's just like I mean, I have to admit, as a parent governor, sometimes I find, "Am I doing this right?" Because everybody around me is all some sort of profession.

22:54 I mean, I've done my degree. I've got my law degree. I mean, I'm not as if you know I didn't went to school or anything. I am. But sometimes you just feel because I'm always like, "I'm a housewife." I sit at home because I look after my kids. I take my kids to school and everything. But it's just like, "Am I smart enough? Do I know things?" But it's amazing, actually, that even though I've got different titles in governing, like co-opted governor or foundation governor or parent governor, they all are the same.

23:26 It's just different titles, but they're all the same. I mean, unfortunately, there are some schools who make them different. So for me, it's to show that, no, there's no difference between a parent governor, a corporate governor, a foundation governor, which I trust governors. There's nothing. We're all humans, and we want to do a particular job, and we all got

different way of thinking. I mean, you know if all of us got the same way of thinking, we'll be a boring, boring world.

23:53 So we've all got different way of thinking, different way of seeing things because we all have different backgrounds. And it's amazing how you know one person might say A and the other person might say B, and you're thinking, "Oh, my God. A and B are correct. We could do that that way." you know And I think that's what a school should do as governors. You know I mean, that's how I find it very challenging, especially if you've got diversity, like say, you know so many different type of backgrounds of governors.

24:23 You know And from governors who are families who have been living in another country, and they have come back to UK, and they joined. And it's amazing how much you learn from everyone. So I think that's what the governing body needs to do as well, really. It's like have a small get-together without having a meeting to know everyone in your governing body. It's like a big group of friends to know each other you know professionally.

24:53 And I think that is really useful because I think some governing bodies don't really know their colleagues, you know like what do they do or where do they live, how many children they have. I think as a governing body, when you know all that about all the governing, you tend to work better together as well in your opinions. I think when you challenge it, it's not as like, "Oh my God, that person is challenging me." you know They're like, "Oh, okay." That's a good question kind of thing, so.

25:24 Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 25:25 So it's a collegiality, isn't it?

Emilia: 25:28 Yes, it is. I mean, it's a good way of working together. I mean, that's what I think I enjoyed the most because I meet so many different people, so many different backgrounds, you know young, old, what they call you know brown, green, yellow, purple, whatever colour they are. You know And all of them got different ways of saying things, which is great.

25:52 You know Especially in this world now, you know even you say one word and they're like, "Oh, that's racist. it's like of for God's sake." It's like not racist. It's just a word. You know So it's just nice to get to know other people and understand them so that you learn what the new world is like, basically, because everybody is thinking so differently nowadays. So yeah.

Sarah Chung: 26:16 That's fantastic. Thank you.

26:18 So thinking now, reflecting back over your time as a governor, can you describe in your own words a time when you have had to challenge?

Emilia: 26:31	Yes. I've had where I had to challenge I don't know whether it's had to challenge or not, but I basically had to I don't think I've ever I mean, I've challenged where I've never had what in a governing body where I have challenge of saying, "Oh, what you said is wrong." I've never had that.
26:59	But I have had where the governing body I needed the governing body to get up and do their job. So I ended up having, unfortunately, an article when I'm a chair at one of the governing bodies. That's what I had to do because I had to make sure that all of us are on the same page. So I set up emergency meeting with everyone. So I could tell them, I said, "All of you need to do A, B, and C.
27:28	This is what it is. And this is what being a governor is. Yeah And you have to do it. I mean, because, like I said, I'm a new chair. There were so many new governors. And I was worried that you know there were going to be a lot of there might be backlash on things saying, "Oh, no, we can't do this. We can't do that." But amazingly, because we never had a chance to get together, and this is the first time we got together informally, and I was able to say, "This, this, this needs to be done," and they all agreed with it.
27:59	And we are doing it now, which is great because I think as a governor, trying to challenge someone, saying I wouldn't say the word challenge as much. I have to admit, there is I'm not saying, okay, any of my school accounting body is like brilliant. All of them have their ups and downs.
28:18	But I have to say that there is nothing that they have always presented to me that for me to say, "I don't think that's right." So you know, it's always where I'm like, "Hmm, do you think we can we spend less money here or less money there?" I mean, questions like that, which I think is a small challenge kind of thing. But yeah, it's just my biggest challenge was trying to get my governing body to work together as a team.
28:48	And we had a meeting, and we are doing it, so which is a relief because it's been months, and I'm thinking, "I do not know how to do this." I was really stressed out. I was like, "you know Not sure what to do." And all we had to do was communicate with everybody. And I think that's what the governing body needs to do. It's communication within the governing body to make it successful. If you don't communicate with people and just expect them to do their job and don't talk to them, you will never have a successful governing body.
29:20	And that's how I find that. I think governing bodies, you do need to get to know them. You do need to you know even though I know we've got messages saying, "Can you do this? Can you just do it?" Instead of speaking to the person, I guess. You need to speak to the person to ask the person, not just say the question and expect somebody to answer. So that's my way of just seeing things.

29:46 I think communication in a governing body is the most important thing because through that, then you can ask challenging questions, which makes sense. And you're more brave to ask them because I have to admit, at one point, when I just started as a parent governor, I was so scared to ask anything. I was so scared to even challenge anything because I was thinking, "What am I saying? Is it right? And I think that's what a lot of governors need to understand as well.

30:13 You shouldn't be scared to challenge a question," or, basically, because they find that challenging a question is like asking a stupid question. And there's no such thing as a stupid question. Every question is important. And so it's a challenge. I mean, if you think you know as an individual, because I might think it's great, you might think it's not. So I have to put you have to give your opinions out. I think as a governor, you have to tell your opinion as long as it's relevant to the question, you know to the stuff that you're talking about.

30:45 And see where it goes from there. I mean, they might just say, "Oh, no, we can't do that." Oh, okay. That's fine. But yeah, challenging I think it's just not only challenging questions. It's just challenging an overall as governing body. I think it's communication is the most important thing for the.

Sarah Chung: 31:03 And do you feel that applies as well to when you're speaking with your SLT, for example?

Emilia: 31:10 Yes. It's the same thing as well. I mean, SLT can be slightly bit more awkward because we don't really know them.

31:16 I mean, we know them you know once in a while. And well, for what I see is not all governors tend to have communication with SLT often. Either you're more like a chair or a particular, you know, like a safeguarding link or something that tends to be a bit more. Everybody else, not as much.

31:41 And also, if you're in a map, the governing body, the local governing body is not going to be dealing with SLT unless SLT comes into the meeting and gives the what they call presentation. And then if you've got a challenging question for that, when I wouldn't say challenging, but you've just got questions regarding what they've asked, you know what they've given us, yes. But I think SLT can be a bit more difficult to ask them you know unless it's a presentation that they've given us first and have any challenging questions.

32:10 But as an overall, I don't really think as a governor, you have that much of an open relationship with them to say you know what you're doing is maybe not sure because it's their school. You know They do what they need to be done, and we are not there for what they call the word for it. I can't remember the word for it. Like A head teacher does their job. Operational. That's it. No, we're not there for operational staff.

32:41 So I think with SLT can be a bit more difficult. But I think at the end of the day, it's still communication. If you've got a question, ask you know if you have to say, "I apologize if this doesn't

	sound right." Maybe you apologize in advance if you already think it might be a question that they might get not really happy with. You know But I think it's communication. Ask the questions. If it is there, ask for it.
Sarah Chung: 33:07	Okay. That's wonderful. Thanks.
33:09	So I can see that you feel quite comfortable challenging within your own governing body. And although there's a level of the unknown when you're challenging SLT, have you ever felt uncomfortable asking a challenging question? So to either SLT or another member of the governing body?
Emilia: 33:36	I've had, yes.
33:37	I mean, when I just started as a new governor, I have where I found it. Like I said, I just find it's like, "Oh my God, this is going to be a really stupid question." And sometimes I think I found it was I just emailed the question instead in advance for anything you know like a presentation's giving, I emailed the question so that I don't have to be in the group asking the question and thinking, "Oh, my God, this is such a stupid question." And I mean, in the beginning, I used to do that, and it turned out there were no stupid questions.
34:13	Like I said, there's never a stupid question. And it turned out that it was one of the quite interesting questions to ask, and it was useful because all other governors was thinking the same thing. But no one ever is like I might want to ask something, but another governor is thinking exactly the same thing, and a third governor decides to open their mouth and say it. And we were like, "Oh, thank God." And so it does happen because at the end of the conversation, we say, "Oh, you know what? I was thinking the same thing, but I was so scared to say it," and somebody else decides to say it.
34:41	So it does happen with quite a lot, especially new governors. Yeah I find it. I mean, the longer I was a governor, I found it a bit more brave to sort of say it. And I do remind you know where I'm chaired, do remind them that there's no stupid question. You just feel like asking, just ask for it. Don't feel that you think you know it is. If you don't feel like I say, email it. If you think you know if you don't want to say it in front of everybody because you just feel really embarrassed, you know go for it.
35:13	But I think, yeah. I think the older ones, the older governors, you know the governors who've been there for a long time, I don't think they well, I don't find them because I usually see all the ones who are much more experienced than me. They seem to just ask everything and be like, even till now, I mean, I wouldn't say I'm a new governor, but I find I'm still a bit you know I do still thinking, "Well, is this a question to ask? This is not helping." If I'm not sure, I'll just email saying, "Sorry, not sure about this, but can I just ask this kind of thing?" And they're like, "Oh, yeah, it's this one." Oh, there you go.

35:47 And I was thinking, and I was so worried about it. I was like, "Oh, I guess." But yeah, I do. But like I say, mainly, I think a lot of new governors do feel that way. And I think a governing body needs to assure them that it's nothing to be embarrassed about. Or you know if you want to ask, you ask because, hey, at the end of the day, they always said, "If you know everything, you wouldn't be in school to study." So if you know everything, you wouldn't be a governor either. So you know they're there to ask questions, to make sure the school is doing things right, so.

Sarah Chung: 36:18 That's wonderful. So I can see then that experience. You feel experience is quite important to that confidence almost.

Emilia: 36:28 Yeah. I think the longer you are, the more confident you become. I mean, I mean, there are a lot of people I find that when they become governors, they are very confident people. And they can.

36:43 But they're not just because sometimes with just an example, an accountant, they know everything about accounts, but they're not going to know how a school does it or what a school covers. They still have to learn. So they still have to do the training. If you don't do the training, it doesn't mean you're going to know everything. You will be in the same category as a housewife who doesn't know anything about accounts. You know I mean, of course, you still do know about accounts because you buy stuff for the house.

37:13 You know Got budgets for the house and things. But yeah. So I think just because you're new doesn't mean you're going to be you can be confident, but you're confident in different type of confident, I guess you could say that. So I think that's why I think choosing governance as well doesn't mean a thing. You know It doesn't have to be in a hotshot somebody or you know somebody who is I mean, we do want somebody I think most people, most governors, when they're doing their position, knowing what is there to do.

37:52 I mean, most of them who feel that they cannot deal with it, they resign quite quickly anyway. But those who stay will realize that they do their training, they become confident. I mean, I have to admit, when I became a parent governor, I was not confident at all. I was scared shitless. I was petrified. I was thinking, "Oh, my God. What am I going to do now?" You know? And I felt, like, really small thinking, "Yeah, but I'm not, you know, hotshot doing office work and stuff like that." But then after for a while, I realized that that's not what it means.

38:26 You know, it means is how much passion I have to be a governor, how much passion I have to make the school good, and I want the school to be a brilliant school, and I'm proud of the schools. Like, you know, if anybody recommends saying, "Oh, what school do you what school do you recommend around this area?" I have no problem saying, "Oh, this school is brilliant." So I think as a governor, beginning, there are a lot

of what we call not really sure. It's like starting a new job, isn't it? It's like when you start a new job, you're not sure.

38:55 Even though you have worked previously in another job, same thing, but because it's going to be new people, new things, and different company, and everything. So you start a bit nervous and not sure, but the more longer you stay there, the more experienced you become. And I think that's what with me is I became a bit more experienced. I'm a bit more daring enough to say things instead of, like, I'll just email and say that. I'll just email. I won't say anything. I mean, I still have that, but that's me as an individual, you know, not what they call thing.

39:27 But yeah. But like I said, I think it's just to get the experience. And I think being a governor gives you a different type of an experience of working because one is you don't get paid. You know And two, you have to I mean, there's not much of a time that you use. I mean, three times a year, you have your FGB. Three times a year, you do any of these committee meetings in a year, 365 days.

39:56 That's not much to do. But I think you just need to balance it out. If you can balance your work life with a governing, being a governor, and have a family life, I think it's excellent. I mean, I know I say, "Yes, I'm housewife." But like I said, I'm housewife. I still have to deal with my children. And I think I'm not doing a bad of a job. You know I'm a governor for four schools. It's just that I'm not getting paid for it.

40:27 But I'm dealing with my kids, and my husband as well, you know and you know taking them out. I'm basically the taxi driver, you know going back and forth and everything. And like I said, I think that's the best part of it. And I have to say, I'm very proud to say, you know when people say, you know like when people say, "What do you do?" I don't say, "Oh, I don't have a job," or, "I'm a housewife." I do say I'm a governor.

40:52 You know And I think it's quite a prestige title to have as a governor, but it's just, unfortunately, I think also a lot of people don't understand what a governor is, especially parents. They don't really understand. They just think governors are the snobbish people who think they know hotshot about everything, but it's not. But yeah, it's just I think some places do need to governors need to be explained to a lot of people what they are and what they do for the school so they understand it.

41:24 But yeah. So experience is good, but inexperience, governance is also good because you bring different type of light into a story because somebody who's not experienced you know because you might keep on seeing two stars, two stars, example. And the third person comes in who have no experience thinking, "No, that's actually four." And they think, "Oh, yeah." you know So we do need the inexperienced ones.

41:53 Of course, they do the training to become experienced and to become successful, really. So yeah.

Sarah Chung: 41:59	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for the management of staff. How confident are you in this area?
Emilia: 42:15	Some of the schools, I could say I'm quite confident. The teacher is what we call a thing.
42:21	Some of the other schools, not so much. Well, I think they are, but I think because some of the head teachers I'm aware of, they're also new. So it's just I have to give them the opportunity for it. And also, because of COVID that has happened as well, it's a bit hard for some of the HIIT teachers. I mean, some of the HIT teachers have been there for a long time.
42:50	So I say, yes, they do a really brilliant job. Some of the teachers I have to admit, I don't really know them very well. So even though I'm a governor in the school, but I don't really know the head teacher so well. I mean, all I hear is about through the reports that they give about any you know like we asked, you know how is the staff doing or well-being of the staff, things like that. And some of them, I know, because of not being so experienced, they're not there yet, but they are doing their best to get things done.
43:24	So I think different for me is I've got different ones. I've got one which is really, really good. You know I've got one which is also a new one who's just starting sort of like especially since after COVID to get to know people better. And I've got some, what do you call not much of a relationship with because I'm just one of the basic governors, I guess you could say. I'm not the chair there or anything like that.
43:51	So in a few different categories, I could say that head teacher with their staff, it's very, very, very important. But I think most schools would have a brilliant relationship with a head teacher. Otherwise, I don't think head teacher would last long. And all the schools that I have been, I know the fact that all the head teachers even though some of them have been new head teachers, but they have been head teachers before or a deputy head.
44:23	So all of them are experienced, and they've all been brilliant. Unfortunately, with COVID coming up, they can't shine as much. Yeah So I'm hoping now it starts. So let's see anyway.
Sarah Chung: 44:39	Wonderful. Thank you. Do you know what methods that you use as a governing body to examine the head teacher's management staff?
Emilia: 44:51	I don't know whether this is part of it.
44:54	Obviously, we do the head teacher appraisal.
Sarah Chung: 44:57	Right. Okay. So that's the head teacher's performance management?
Emilia: 45:00	Yeah. Yeah. What do you call? I mean, he does the appraisal for the staff as well, for the pay for the pay to see how staff have been doing and then whether they qualify to get a pay

	rise. So they have that. Yeah, that's done usually once a year because, obviously, decide how they have like all the teachers have a target that they need to aim for.
45:24	We as governors don't really see what those targets are for the teachers, but the head teacher will go through all that. And then at the end, he will say, "you know I think that you know A, B, and C have been really, really they did really well. They could go up stage or whatever, however they say it on their what do you call them? Things like you get one point or two points in the salary part of it. And then they inform the pay committee of it.
45:55	And the pay committee is the one who decides whether that has been followed and agree with the teacher. You know I mean, we don't have like you wouldn't know who the teachers are, but you can say, "Yes, teacher did this, this, this." And that's why I think they deserve an increase of this much. And first, the pay committees first to agree with it, to say, "Okay," and then it's given out to the FGB for it, to tell the FGB this is what the pay committee has agreed, and they said, "No, we have agreed with the head teacher.
46:27	He's done an appraisal for the staff." And I mean, that's the much that we have other than the head teacher having maybe like a talk with any of the staff to find out how they're doing and things like that. The governors don't really have that little insight of it, I guess you could say.
Sarah Chung: 46:49	Yeah. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.
46:52	So as well as setting the ethos strategic direction of the score and ensuring there's a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing, probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight. How comfortable are you within that situation?
Emilia: 47:15	Can you just say that back thing again? Sorry.
Sarah Chung: 47:17	Yeah. Absolutely.
47:18	So in terms of school, there has to be clear financial probity displayed. So how comfortable are you within that situation? So I know we discussed briefly earlier, didn't we, that possibly you feel a little less comfortable in financial situations than you do?
Emilia: 47:40	Yeah. I think yeah, that's the only thing. I mean, I, I, as an individual, find it less because, obviously, it's maths.
47:49	Even though I'm good at my mats, but not at those type of accounts kind of thing. But yes, otherwise, I am comfortable with them. I'm happy to say that I'm not completely like I I'm not naïve to say, "Oh, if somebody just tells me, "Oh, just spend this money." I'm like, "Okay." Kind of thing. I'm not. I can understand it. And if I really can't understand, I will ask or even

to the business manager if they need to explain things a bit more.

48:17 But otherwise, I think I am comfortable enough to understand that as a governor.

Sarah Chung: 48:24 Okay. So how is the governing body do you ensure that the school budget is managed well?

Emilia: 48:37 One is I mean, I know the budget thing is coming through right now.

48:44 It's basically to see we have a finance committee that we see what we meet up once every few months and to see whether what is being you know what things are where the monies are going and see whether it's okay to spend those money.

49:04 And if any, you know increase in at the moment, increase in electricity and gas and things like that, we see what the school is doing and whether we agree with them or a challenging question is we ask them, say, you know have we asked another electricity board for a quote? Are we going to get it cheaper elsewhere? Do we do this? So I think in one way, we do ask questions about where the money is being spent.

49:35 You know I know for me, so when there is certain words like I remember one time one of my schools where they said, "Oh, they're no longer having support staff or agency staff." And on the budget thing, it said the agency staff and how much it was. And I questioned it. So I said, "you know I thought we're not going to use any agency because we had enough staff. So why do we have agency staff here for this amount?" And I was told that that was because we still have that agency staff from last time.

50:07 They are still there. They haven't stopped working. So we are going to discontinue with that, but we are not bringing any future agency staff. So I'm like, "Okay." So at least that I understood that because, you know, I was told, A, quite a while ago, but because this person has been working there for that long, yeah we don't just say, "Oh, we're not using it anymore and just dismiss any of them." So at least that explanation is like you know and if it's anything to be spent on, if you're going to have like I know one of our schools, we are spending a big part of the budget as well on the playground, all the equipment.

50:45 We have got quotes, and we question it to see which one is good, and we agree with it, and it goes in the budget to make sure. And then when we have the meeting, we see in the budget where it's returned to say they give a quote of something else. And in the budget, it says something else, different pricing. We question that to say, "Why you say 20,000? Why is it here says 30,000?" So we do what we call keep an eye on the budget. I mean, we have business managers who obviously is the main what they call thing.

51:15 And their one is to give the finance committee or the FGB, or if you don't have committees, you know information of where all

	the budgets are. And for us, it's for us to look through it. I mean, we don't go through each one of them, but we are given the paperwork in advance to look through it. So we know you know and if we don't understand anything, we ask questions, really. So that's how, I guess, we know where the budgets, you know what we're spending on each year.
Sarah Chung: 51:45	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now, the next question is on the eight elements of effective governance. And I'm going to it's a little bit like a words association. So I'm going to read out the element. And then if you tell me what your understanding of it is, that would be good. So the eight elements of effective governance have been identified as essential to good governance. In your own words, can you explain what these mean to you?
52:13	A, the right people around the table?
Emilia: 52:23	I would say that means you have the right [inaudible]. The people that were interested in becoming governors around the table and with their skills, proper skills, you know you've got the right skills as well.
Sarah Chung: 52:43	Understanding the role and responsibilities.
Emilia: 52:51	I guess I understand that as a governor, you go through training to understand what your position would be and what you're supposed to be doing as a governor.
Sarah Chung: 53:02	Okay. Thank you. Good chairing.
Emilia: 53:11	Someone who is willing to take the step of getting the governing board on the right path and also do training so that they can do things the right way.
Sarah Chung: 53:27	Thank you. Professional clerking.
Emilia: 53:34	To have a brilliant governing board, you have to have a brilliant clock as well.
53:39	So they are very, very, very important.
Sarah Chung: 53:43	Lovely. Good relationships based on trust.
Emilia: 53:48	That's very important. But I think that's one of the most important things. Without trust, you won't be able to get the answers you want, really. So I say you know in trust, especially in school governing what you call, environment, an education environment, that's one thing that you should never lose.
Sarah Chung: 54:10	Yeah. Okay. Lovely. Knowing the school.
Emilia: 54:18	As a governor, you do need to know your school, what it's capable of, and what teachers are like, and what the head

	teacher is like. And if you know that, if you know your school, you will be able to represent your school in a proper way.
Sarah Chung: 54:38	Okay.
54:39	Asking challenging questions.
Emilia: 54:46	A good thing to do. And challenging question doesn't also mean, like I said, stupid questions. It can be stupid questions. It can be clever questions. Any questions. It's a challenging question.
Sarah Chung: 54:57	Thank you. Having courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people?
Emilia: 55:04	Having what? Sorry?
Sarah Chung: 55:06	Having courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people?
Emilia: 55:15	I think basically questioning the head for any things that they see which is not right. It's just questioning the head to make sure it's right. So it's basically also like a challenging question to question the head to see are they doing things right or wrong and find out why they're doing it, really.
Sarah Chung: 55:32	Okay. That's wonderful.
55:34	So we're finished on that part now. We're on to the next question. The line between strategic and operational, which I think we briefly touched on earlier, can be seen as quite a grey area for some. How confident are you in knowing where governance ends and head teacher SLT responsibility begins?
Emilia: 56:00	It can be difficult because for me, I can see as a parent governor, sometimes even between a parent governor and being what they call being a parent and being a parent governor. So I find there's two hats there as well that you have to cover. And it can be very difficult because sometimes we might not think it's operational, but it is.
56:25	And that's the one reason to have what you call training on new governance to understand what your responsibilities are and what you can and can't do.
56:39	So even with what Head teachers do and what SLT does and what a governor does, a governor can very easily step foot on the teacher's or head teacher's foot to say, "Oh, this is it." So I think sometimes it's better to ask if it is because if you're not sure whether it's operational, ask whether if it's operational because a lot of things sometimes you're not really sure about.
57:11	It's like I mean, I know sorry, a governor asked about something about the meals that the kids are going to have. You know Why can't we have this?" And I said, "That is not a question for a governor. A governor can ask what's the pricing, you know which companies we are using, and is the food good enough?" But we cannot tell the head teacher that I think the

food is crap. They need to get somebody else, I said. So I think it's sometimes quite hard to differentiate.

57:43 And if you think it is, sometimes it's better to ask the question of, like, you know, "Oh, I apologize. What can we do this?" Because I'm not sure whether it's so I think you need to ask. Like I said, it comes to communication Yeah. for operational and all things. Like I said, as a parent, if I've got a complaint or a friend has got a complaint, I've had that before where somebody had a complaint and they came to me knowing that I'm a parent governor.

58:10 And my job is like, you know, you're just basically complaining to another parent here. So I say you have to go through the procedure. Only then you get things. I mean, you know, I can advise you on what the procedures are for you to look for, or you can ask you where to look for the procedures, but I can't tell you what to do or, you know, saying that this needs to be done, or I cannot take your what they call case into the FGB and tell them saying, "Oh, I've got a parent who did this, this, this, this." You can't do that.

58:43 So obviously, I think you do need to be quite clear. And I do have to say there are a lot of this is between a parent governor and my parent. Mm-hmm. The hat for those two can be very difficult sometimes to one. So you have to make sure you have to be quite aware of which hat you're using when you're doing things because sometimes they can sort of overlap with each other without you even realizing it. I mean, we're all humans. So we make mistakes.

Sarah Chung: 59:13 Absolutely. Wonderful. Thank you. So the impact we're going to go now on to COVID-19 and the impact that's had on your governance. So for example, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic has been immense. Can you describe your experience of governance during this time?

Emilia: 59:36 I think there was a big impact on it because one is we couldn't meet up.

59:43 I mean, we do meet up on Zoom like this, but it's very, very difficult. It's difficult when you talk to somebody through a phone or what they call through a screen instead of face-to-face. Face-to-face have more what's the word for it? I think there's more relationship when you have face-to-face than what you call through that.

01:00:09 And because also we couldn't go into the school to see how the kids are doing, find things out about you know even just if you couldn't go to school, like even now, some of my schools, we still don't go in, but we can still talk to them through meetings through Zooms and stuff like that you know virtually. We still do that. But during COVID time, it was very hard because everybody's stressed out. Everybody had COVID. And a lot of them had COVID.

01:00:39 You know So you can't really go online. And so there were a lot of things left behind. And the worst thing of all is students. I

mean, pupils, they were all falling behind in their reading and spellings and things like that. I think that's what made it worse about COVID is teachers not be able to teach and pupils not able to do their work.

01:01:05 I mean, I know that what they call they gave work for pupils to do virtually you know either virtually classrooms or they just gave them homework to do. Yeah That was a lot of stress on the families. You know I mean, I can't imagine. I mean, that's one reason I stopped working is because I had to deal with my kids.

01:01:28 I mean, I have to admit, if during COVID time, I was working full-time, yeah I have been screwed big time because I find it you know COVID time, teachers, teachers, parents, and pupils, I think they had the worst. Governors did have worse as well, but governors was trying you know to get things done.

01:01:58 A head teacher have to get things done first. If they don't do it, governors can't do much about it. But I think that's the worst because you know students are called not doing things right. Parents find it stressful because some parents work, and you have two children. So I think COVID had screwed everything up big time, especially for children who you know was already lacking behind in the first place, and this made it even worse.

01:02:28 And it's really, really hard because I know I know that is because my daughter is one of them. You know I didn't realize her problem until after she went back after COVID. How much? And all of a sudden, I told that she was on the SEND registers. Like All these years, nothing happened suddenly with this. So I think it's really stressful. COVID has made it really, really bad.

01:02:58 I mean, it is still to an extent, it's still there because you know kids are still having COVID. You know Schools, teachers are still having them, so you don't have teachers there. Then if there's not enough teachers, a particular group can't be taught. And that's stressful. You know I mean, yes. I mean, they think, "Oh, yeah. You know I mean, I know in secondary school, if like my son, if there's no school, it's like, "Yeah, go school. Finally, I'll stay at home and just do the work at home." you know My son is happy to do that.

01:03:30 But I'm not happy for that. But then you can't do much about it. So I think COVID has just screwed everybody, you know every type of individual, not only education in every category, big time. And it's still there. It's still around. It's maybe not as bad, but I think schools are still doing a good job trying to keep it away.

01:04:00 I mean, you know some schools are still you know making sure the kids wash their hands, what do you call things are cleaned regularly after one use of a particular group, things like that. But we are trying to go back to normal. But as a person, as an individual, as a human being, I find that we're never going to

go back as what we were before because it's still lingering around. But we also cannot stay in bubbles the rest of our life.

01:04:31 So either we just deal with it, but just look after yourselves. And the only thing we can tell with schools is you know unfortunately, there are those who couldn't care less and just go anywhere and just get it and just say, "Oh, yeah, I got COVID. Nothing great deal about it or don't have vaccination a great deal." And some of those who you know really do all the vaccinations and don't do anything else. And so I think it's really, really hard.

01:04:58 I have to say, with COVID, you can't there's nothing good to say about COVID. I have not to say the only thing I think the only good thing about when it happened is not because of COVID. What had happened is I think a lot of families, mine included, had better relationship because, I mean, I stay with my kids at home, but my husband works, and he had to work from home.

01:05:28 We were together more. We got to know each other more. We did things together. And I think we formed a better relationship. I mean, unfortunately, COVID did also the bad thing. Those who didn't have a good relationship had the worst relationship and caused a lot of problems, which unfortunately. But I think the positive part, what I see, what they call thing, is a lot of family who were always busy with work and children.

01:05:57 Especially when you got iPads and things and everything, I think it got you together a bit more. So the bad things and well, there's a lot of bad things with COVID, but nothing to do with COVID as long as because it made us isolation. It made us a family. But yeah. But unfortunately, with COVID, I think it's wish we never had it. Wish never came around. Never want to see it again ever. So I don't want to know about any other variation of it.

01:06:28 I never want to hear it ever again. But yeah, so.

Sarah Chung: 01:06:33 It has been a long couple of years, hasn't it?

Emilia: 01:06:35 Yes. It is. It's just been terrible because, like I say, you know people don't visit family. I mean, I haven't visited my children. I haven't seen their grandmother for almost four years now. You know We're trying to get there, and everything is increasing. So I can understand the whole world is basically so screwed up at the moment. You know And then we have war. We have people saying this. After for a while, it's like, "Okay, you know what?

01:06:58 I give up." I just want to stay in a nice it's like they always say the ostrich in the sand. It's like you just want to put your head there and say, "Nothing is happening around the world. Everything is fine." But yeah. That's unfortunately what we have to deal with, bad and good.

Sarah Chung: 01:07:18	Thank you for you know being so candid in your response, and it's wonderful.
01:07:24	Reflecting on it and reflecting on yourself as a governor, did the pandemic highlight any areas that you felt under qualified for or undertrained for?
Emilia: 01:07:41	What do you mean by unqualified or undertrained?
Sarah Chung: 01:07:44	Well, were there any things that arose for you as a governor that made you think, "I don't feel qualified to answer this," or, "I don't feel trained to answer this." So anything that's sort of arisen during COVID that wouldn't normally have happened?
Emilia: 01:08:11	I don't think there was any, not from what it is.
01:08:14	The only thing I think we saw it as is just that training-wise, there were more governance training. because everything was done faced what we call it virtually, which was easier instead of going to places. So there were more people willing to do that. A lot of places also, I know, had was to get a governing governor was easier because it's just online, but it got screwed up once everything got back to sort of normal, and they can't come in yeah because they expect everything still to be virtually.
01:08:46	You can't. But as things happening in school, there was nothing that we said, "Oh, we "you know I mean, there were problems happening in school. Like, you know, kids couldn't mix together or anything, but there was nothing that had come up that we said, "Oh, we don't know what to do." I mean, other than we don't know what to do when one of the children got COVID, and because the government was not the whole thing was not very clear of what happens now, it's like if a kid got COVID now, do they just come in if they don't have any symptoms, but they know they've got COVID?
01:09:19	We don't know what to do. And schools have to make up their own decision to say, "No, you don't come in." And if you don't tell the school, the school is not going to know. So you just go in. Or you know somebody says like now, "Oh, I've got COVID. I can't come in." yeah You don't need to prove that you don't have COVID, or you have COVID. Like Before you had to give the test to say, "See, I've got COVID." So things like that, I think, happen. But generally, as things in school itself, I don't think there is anything that has come up that you know because of COVID, it has come up.
01:09:51	So, I mean, most of the thing is related to COVID. Yeah. There's nothing which is not related to COVID that we could say, "Oh, this would have not come up with singing." This secret came up, what they call since COVID came in, only then the secret was able to come up. I have to say, we don't really have that, but everything is related to COVID itself, so. But yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:10:18	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you.

01:10:20	So thinking now again about your journey as a governor, if there was one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be? And why do you think?
Emilia: 01:10:34	I think it's safeguarding. I know all schools say to have safeguarding, but I think they need to prove that they have done safeguarding, and they know what safeguarding issue is.
01:10:50	Because I find that a lot of once I've done my virtual safeguarding training, but don't think they understand the complete concept of what safeguarding is. So I think that is the most important issues about it.
Sarah Chung: 01:11:06	Okay. Wonderful. So conversely, then, what, in your opinion, is the least valuable piece of training that a governor might take?
Emilia: 01:11:21	I'm trying to see what training did I have that just did not make sense to me whatsoever when I did it. I don't think so. There was any training that I mean, there were boring trainings, but that's, unfortunately.
01:11:40	You know I don't think there is any training. It depends on what you want to train for because there's training for almost everything you choose. I mean, the only training which I found sort of useful but not really as well.
01:12:05	I mean, I know everybody's like, "Oh, talk about the hot topics." yeah It's like they say, "What is the hot topic this thing?" I sometimes find that that might not be I mean, now the hot topic would be offset because everybody's going to have offset. But before, it was like, "Oh, to say it was super premium or you know safer recruitment or something like that." But I would say, "Yeah, but that's not a hot topic for my school." So it's not much of a point of me doing that kind of thing.
01:12:34	It's like even though you do it, but it's like, "Yeah, but that's not my hot topic. I want to know about these things more." So you go for that particular training. So I think with the hot topics is I find it you know because you got training for Offset. Yeah So why don't I just do that instead of the hot topic, which really covers part of it? Yeah So I think that's the only one I think that if I were what we call done that you know I didn't find it useful. I mean, there are others which are like say one is boring.
01:13:03	One is like it just goes over my head because I can't have a clue what's happening, but you know because it's all financed stuff. But you know some of the finances, like wow, it made me understand it so much clearer kind of thing. But yeah, Hot Topic is one, which I didn't really find useful.
Sarah Chung: 01:13:19	Okay. So it's that element of personalising your training, isn't it?
Emilia: 01:13:25	Yes. Yeah. I mean, you need to see what you need to do for your training. And you know if you are a link governor for certain things, you need to do that training because it's silly not to do it.

01:13:36 But any other training, it's useful to you know like if you want to do it, do it. And a lot of these trainings are free. So why not do it? Because you never, ever know when you might need it or understand certain things. That's what I find it. It's not you know I mean, a lot of people say yes because we are working, whatever. But sometimes I have to admit, I've done my training at 2 o'clock in the morning through virtually, obviously, because I can't sleep, and I don't know what else to do.

01:14:09 So I do the vertical thing, and I'm like, "Huh, I never knew that." I was like, "Okay." So I did all that. You know I did the training. And then a few months later, something came up in school about it. I'm like, "Oh, I know that. I've been trained on that. I know." And also I think training is very, very, very important. But it depends. You don't have to do every single training because you have to do the training. Do a training that you need to do for your school or for your position yeah so that you understand it better and you know about things.

01:14:42 So I think, yeah. So that's one good thing.

Sarah Chung: 01:14:46 Okay. Thank you. So you mentioned then that there was some training that was a little bit boring, another training that was just a little bit too over the head. And what could have helped with either of those?

Emilia: 01:15:00 I don't think so. There was much to help with either of those. Those are all sort of if you're really one of those you know okay, I'm going to give an example of one of the trainings is GDPR.

01:15:16 I mean, it's interesting what I've learned. But like I said, during the training, it was like like, "What?" Because it's just so much words and so much what it called. So it does get to you till you sit down where you have to apply to it, where you have to read other things about it later on. That's when you be like, "Aha, I know that now because I read the I know I did this training." But I think sometimes during the training, yeah, it's very, very some trainings.

01:15:49 I mean, I've been because I've got a school in [redacted] and in [redacted], and they have two different type of places they do training for. And sometimes I find like, "Oh, sorry, so much better." Because I do the same training. Just say, example, training for safeguarding. Well, not safeguarding. Safeguarding is basically safe for everything. Curriculum, you know primary curriculums.

01:16:17 And I did the safeguarding for one in [redacted] and one in [redacted]. The way they approach things are different. And I'm like, "Oh, the [redacted] one is better." And then some other ones, I'm like, "Oh, [redacted] one is better," you know because it made me understand it because there are some finance ones that the [redacted] council ones, the way they did it, it made me understand the finance a bit better. I'm like, "Oh, my God, I understood that." It's like, "Oh my God,

	my brain is working. That's really great." you know And then the other times the other what girl makes me understand.
01:16:49	So I think sometimes it's which training places that you go to as well and how they do training, it does help. So that's why I think you should never limit to just one particular company. You have to have few different so you can try out a few different ones and see which one are useful and which one is really good that makes you understand what they're doing. So that's how I found. That's why sometimes, like I say, when it comes to finance, I'm so crap. So it was amazing when I found this one, and I could understand everything they said.
01:17:20	I'm like, "Oh my God, I'm so excited. I could understand everything." you know And then when I went for my meeting, I'm like, "Oh, I understood what the you know when they said this, this, I understood what it was." So it doesn't feel you know but like I said, that's the reason I always say training. It's very useful no matter what position you are in. You know, you're going to be a big hotshot lawyer, and if you've not done certain training, you're not going to know because education is different. Trainings and education is very different from the other part of the world, things that you do.
01:17:52	You know So that's why I always say, you know it doesn't matter what type of governor you are, do your training to understand it. You know A person who is a hotshot might be able to understand it faster than a person who is not. Yeah But you still need to understand it because, as I say, the education stuff are very, very different from working. So yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:18:18	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you.
01:18:19	So just briefly, I'd like you to think back now to your initial year of governance. Did you feel supported?
Emilia: 01:18:29	Beginning, I did not feel supported. I admit. But after I did, so I could say for one of the governing body, I felt not supported at all, and I thought I'll wait for my year to finish my thing to finish and thing.
01:18:50	But after that for a while, I think I did, like you say, communication is important. So I decided to open my mouth and sort of say what I thought and how I felt about things. And surprisingly, actually, they were not you know, things were being done just not the correct way. And now, I have to say, yes, I do feel supported. If I say something or do something, I feel supported, and I'm happy with it.
01:19:16	So I'm glad to say, "Yes, that's the reason I'm continuing to be a governor until I decide to get a full-time job." Then I'm not sure that I would be a governor for four different schools, but yeah, maybe one.
Sarah Chung: 01:19:29	Okay. Thank you. So during your...

Emilia: 01:19:32	Can you hear me?
Sarah Chung: 01:19:33	I can hear you. I think your screen has frozen.
Emilia: 01:19:36	Can you hear me? Yeah. Can you hear me?
Sarah Chung: 01:19:40	Yeah. Okay.
Emilia: 01:19:41	No, because I'm couldn't hear you just now.
Sarah Chung: 01:19:42	Ah, there you go. It's all right. Your screen froze then.
01:19:45	So. I wasn't.
Emilia: 01:19:46	Yeah, I know. That's why you were going slow motion. Sorry. I don't know what you had to say. I did say at the beginning, I didn't feel supported, but the end of it, I did feel supported because I decided to speak up. I think you do need to, like I said, communication is very important. You need to speak up, and I did, and I just realized that there was just misunderstanding.
01:20:12	You know But now, I say, yes, I feel supported.
Sarah Chung: 01:20:18	That's wonderful. Thank you. So when you were in that first year, did you have a mentor or a governor buddy?
Emilia: 01:20:26	I did, and it was very useful. It was really good. But at the same time, it was not enough, I guess you could say. But then again, because everybody works as well.
01:20:40	So it's a bit hard to get help when everybody else is working as well. Yeah So I think it is quite difficult. But I think having a mentor is a very, very good thing for any governing body. So I think it's good, especially for new governors who have no knowledge about governing is to have a mentor. I think that's very useful.
Sarah Chung: 01:21:02	That's wonderful. And what about chairs of governors and clerks? How do you feel they should have mentors as well?
Emilia: 01:21:10	I think they do. They should. And I think I don't know whether it's mentors, but mentors are not article to deal with them, but they do have like for me, I was introduced by my clerk to another governor who is also a chair who became a chair quite early on. And she also had probably some issues. So we got to know each other and basically venting to each other. You know somebody to gossip to.
01:21:40	It's not to talk about schools, but sometimes you just want to take out all your anger and vent and just gossip about the things, but also do it in an appropriate way. You know You're not supposed to be everything about it. But just say you know sometimes you're just stressed out and you just need somebody to talk to. And it is. I think most chairs all chairs should have it.

01:22:05	And I'll say that's why the chairs also should do their course with the NGA, the chair of governor's course, which is really, really brilliant because you meet so many different chair governors or even vice chairs or other governors who want to make themselves better, and you get to know them. So I think it's wonderful because you can compare notes. You know It's like if they do this thing for their school and we don't, we're like, "Oh, we should consider that," you know things like that. So I think, yeah, I think it's really, really useful for them.
01:22:37	And the head teacher as well, especially for the head teachers, so they don't get too stressed out as well.
Sarah Chung: 01:22:42	Very true. Very true. Do you think those mentors should come from within your own governing body, or do you think being external?
Emilia: 01:22:50	I think sometimes external ones are better because they would see you as they would see your situation is different compared to what they call I mean, like I know for the head, they do have people who can help them out, but they're external ones.
01:23:12	They're not from the school. But chair of governors, also, sometimes you have it from external because you're not going to have another chair in your point. But for governors, as general, yes. I think locally, or your own governing body to mentor you, to tell you, you know especially but like I said, I've got my governing body, but all of them are new inexperience. So I can't put one inexperience with another inexperience.
01:23:39	So obviously, trying to get them another person from outside to help them or like to tell them to maybe join a particular group so they can speak or speak to them to find out how things are done if they need to or need help. But obviously, I need to know the person as well, not for them just to go out and find somebody who will just advise them, but introduce some of them I've got my governing body from another school, maybe come in to see if they can sort of help them, you know anybody that needs help kind of thing.
01:24:12	I think it would be. But like I say, sometimes I think it's better to have external ones so that it's a different point of view of things.
Sarah Chung: 01:24:21	Okay. Thank you. A couple more questions if you're still okay.
Emilia: 01:24:25	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:24:26	So the NGA openly stated that they feel that the induction training should be mandatory within the first year. And in fact, in Wales, it is already so. In your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this and why?
Emilia: 01:24:40	I do.
01:24:41	I definitely do. And I do try to get my governing body to do it, but they did not. And that's why we had a meeting. And I've basically now said that this basically my, my three main

	especially two main ones that you have to do, like in September. or anytime if you start, one is the safeguarding. and one is the new governance. Being a new governance through the new governance so that you understand the concept of what a governor is.
01:25:12	Especially because some people might think what they think they know what a governor is, but when they start and they're like, "Oh, no, this is not what I think it is." Especially even for parents who become a parent governor. So I think that's very, very important. I think those two well, say guarding, obviously, but I think it should become compulsory, especially when you first start yeah, be a governor. You should do it at least.
01:25:39	You know I mean, you don't expect to do it every year because, obviously, it's for new governors, but every new governor should do it. I'm surprised England hasn't done it, but England is like a different country altogether than Wales.
Sarah Chung: 01:25:54	Very true, yeah. So in that case, that brings us nicely on to the last question, which is, if mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following? So A, content?
Emilia: 01:26:17	Basically, what it's all about, what that particular training it's going to be about. I mean, it's like, you know, for example, if it's safeguarding, understanding what safeguarding is.
Sarah Chung: 01:26:31	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So how do you feel the training should take place?
01:26:37	So, for example, a lot of the training at the moment is conducted via LEAs or in-house within schools. Would you feel online, for example, would be beneficial?
Emilia: 01:26:52	I think for the compulsory one, I think it should if it's possible to be face-to-face Mm-hmm. so that we know that they have attended, that we know that they're even though online, yes, you could do it.
01:27:09	I mean, I've been doing it online for quite a while, but I also go for, like, my safeguarding ones. I go to the school to do it, but not for all my schools. But I think that going to school to do what you say, face-to-face, I think it's much more useful so that you know that the governors have done it. You know, and also to make sure that they understand it, and if they've got questions on it.
01:27:37	Online ones, and you would say, "It's good if you cannot make things, if you cannot make it." So I think that you know it's like if you did every I mean, online once it's only now much of a thing because of COVID. Yeah. But you can't expect everything to keep on being online. Certain things, I think, yes, it should be online as well. So it's easier, especially if the face-to-face has to be so far away and you can't travel that far. But I think if it's like your school, like safeguarding, if your school is doing it on an insert day with the staff, I think governors should go as well.

01:28:12 Should be invited to do it as well, which I think is very, very useful.

Sarah Chung: 01:28:16 Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So in thinking now about modulated courses, for example, what are your thoughts on a modulated course delivered either in person or online, which resulted in a certificate confirming the successful completion of an induction year?

Emilia: 01:28:39 What do you mean by modulated, what do you call thing for induction year?

Sarah Chung: 01:28:42 So a module approach. So maybe it could be of various ways. It could be once a month, there's a new module to look at. You either attend the lecture or you follow the videos and then maybe answer questions and it accumulates towards the end where you pass or you fail that.

Emilia: 01:29:03 I think it would be quite an interesting it would be an interesting thing to do. I think it would be quite a useful thing to do, a different way of doing things as well.

01:29:12 But it just depends what type of subject or topic that you could do that. I think that's the other thing or issue about what other topics you could cover where you do it. You know You've got them in sections, I guess, so that you do it in a one-month course or anything because most of them are section ones. Usually I always think they're quite a big course that you do like what you call like the chair of governor's course that you do a few of them when you get a certificate to say you've done that.

01:29:44 But I think it would be useful for the major type of training, like safeguarding or things like that, but just not sure how it is. But it'll be a good idea to try to try it out, at least.

Sarah Chung: 01:29:58 Okay. Well, that was our last question. So thank you so much for joining me today. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Emilia: 01:30:09 No. Anyone who wants to be a governor, be a governor. Try it out.

01:30:13 Don't like it. Fine. But then you might really enjoy it. I mean, I never knew I would like it. And now I'm governor for school, so. If I had the time, I would still be for more, but I don't have the time for it.

Sarah Chung: 01:30:28 Oh, it sounds like you've had a wonderful journey, though, to get to where you are today.

Emilia: 01:30:31 It is. It's a very, very unusual experience. It's very, very different because all schools are so different. You know I've got maintained. I've got single academy. I've got MAT. I don't know.

01:30:43 I've got foundation. So it's quite different categories and different ways of doing things. And teachers are very different, and teachers are very different. Yeah So it's very interesting to see how education system works. And I think it's really good

as well because you don't realize how much work a teacher or teacher does.

01:31:05 I mean, you know I mean, I also think, "Oh, I wouldn't mind doing a teacher's job." And then when this COVID happens, I'm like, "Hell no." I said, "I'm not doing." I said, "I'm not doing because I told my husband." I said, "Well, I wouldn't mind maybe do the assistant thing and then the teaching." But when COVID started, I was like, "No, I'm definitely not doing it." I was like, "I've seen the teachers doing it." I was like, "Hell, no." I was like, "The stuff that they have to do, the stress?" I'm like, "I don't have that patience." And I was thinking, you know, you have to give a lot of credit for a lot of the staff that they have done so much work.

01:31:36 You know, and they get so little compliments at times. And you still get parents complaining. I mean, I'm a parent. And I complain as well for certain things. I'm not saying I don't complain. But when I do complain, I normally keep aware of how I'm complaining because at the end of the day, teachers are still human. You know And I just find those thinking, "Damn, they've got a plenty of hard job.

01:32:03 What the hell to do?" I said, "I've only got [redacted] kids, and you got 30 in your classroom." Oh, my God. I would have what we call jump off the window every day saying, "Bye. Got to go." But yeah, I know. Being a governor is very, very satisfying to see how school works. And I also teach you as well that don't complain so much about people or things you don't understand.

01:32:33 You know I'm not saying, "Oh, I can complain more because I'm a governor now because I understand things," but I've got less to complain about now because I see how much work there is in the background of things happening. So sometimes even when I complain generally about anything else, then I think I wonder what's happening inside the background. Probably unless I work there, I will never know. But So that's life, unfortunately. I don't have any more questions. And I'm thinking, you know I need to go and pick my kids up.

Sarah Chung: 01:33:04 Well, thank you ever so much. I mean, I know we've run over, but it's been absolutely wonderful talking to you, so.

Emilia: 01:33:11 Yeah. It was lovely. It was nice.

Ewan

Sarah Chung: 00:02	Okay. So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in the study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. During our interview, we will discuss whether the training you've received has helped you to achieve this.
00:24	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training.
00:49	I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation you have signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymised data destroyed after a period of 10 years. Should you wish a copy of the results, please do email me. Do you have any questions?
Ewan: 01:18	No, no. That's fine.
Sarah Chung: 01:20	Wonderful. Okay. Thank you. Should we jump in then? Something easy with? How long have you been a governor?
Ewan: 01:27	So you might think that's easy. Probably four years, I think. It's because all the schools changed and things. So I kept changing.
01:47	I was originally in a primary school that was in a city school, but that went into a trust, and then that joined. Anyway, its jobs have changed as time has gone on.
Sarah Chung: 02:03	Okay. And what made you join governance?
Ewan: 02:07	Well, I retired, and I thought, well, it's something I could do. And I thought you know give it some you know they're always looking for people.
02:18	So I thought, "Well, I'd give it a whirl." It took a while to get them sorted. I got accepted fairly quickly because I did that just before I left my job at the council, but it took quite a while to actually get placed in a school. Okay. Okay. So what has been the most enjoyable part of your governance over the last four years? Well, it's been understanding how in a new model that the trust system works.

02:53	And I think the governance in a trust is somewhat different if you're doing a single sort of what we call a county school. It's understanding the role there. And going in the school and just seeing you know their successes.
Sarah Chung: 03:12	Okay. Okay. And so conversely, then, what is the least enjoyable part of your governance?
Ewan: 03:25	It's sometimes plowing through lots of paperwork because not only am I in one I'm on four governing bodies within the trust. So it can be a lot of reading. I can imagine. And then also dealing with where there are where there's a disciplinary we've had to deal with you know where people are taking unofficially or various other bits and pieces.
03:57	But those are not pleasant at any time.
Sarah Chung: 04:01	You mentioned you're on four governing bodies. Are those for LGB or are they trust?
Ewan: 04:10	They're all part of the [redacted] Trust. So I've got four primary schools within [redacted] Trust. I was originally on two, but they got a shortage and they couldn't get correlated on the other ones. So I offered to do it for a year. That's at the moment.
04:29	It's going to be another year. And not only am I on the chair for all of them.
Sarah Chung: 04:35	Oh, wow. Okay. So that's quite a responsibility.
Ewan: 04:42	I mean, although I'm retired, it's then trying to fit all those I try to get to each one at least once or two. Yeah I don't do lots of visits because I don't see any point in that.
04:58	I see that you get a feel of a school, but I like to have some sort of focus rather than just sort of, "Hello." Type of thing. So there's a couple of things. Obviously, towards the end of the year, they're doing bits of awards and stuff. But I'm also a safeguarding governor in two of the schools. So again, it's looking at I try and find something in those each time in case we're off steady.
Sarah Chung: 05:24	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.
05:27	So moving on now, we'll look at the three core functions. So the NGA described governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction. The following questions will explore your understanding of all three. So in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?
Ewan: 05:51	It's what the ethos of the school is where we're going, for want of a better word.
05:58	So we're looking at you know the broad spectrum of the curriculum, what's being taken in there. We're not interested in the day-to-day issues that may or may not arise around that.

	We're looking at that. We're looking at the performance of the school and understanding how that fits within the framework of schools of a similar nature.
06:26	All the schools I go to in a school, 97% are families that were not UK-born and the various challenges that makes and understanding how we can support the school in any way in extra funding, particularly sort of as more and more children with special needs seem to coming into school without funding.
Sarah Chung: 07:00	That's a wonderful explanation. Thank you. So using your own experience then as a governor, how did you shape that strategic direction?
Ewan: 07:12	Well, to a degree, and this is where it gets complicated when you're dealing with an academy. It's one of the advantages of it.
07:26	In the academy, they're looking at particular reading material, you know reading programmes, English and history in terms of curriculum that's been developed across the academy so they can share good practice, which is what we encourage. I mean, there is a strategic plan.
07:55	I have been to one of the meetings when one of the meetings when that was being developed in one of the schools. But we do review it and see where the governor's meetings, the list of various things they're looking at in various columns, and where the progress is on that area. And then you pick things out so that when you're visiting the school, you're sort of randomly picking something up because you can't go into that much depth.
08:29	You can have a written document. This is happening. You can only get a feel about that, I think, when you sort of go into a class or something of that nature.
Sarah Chung: 08:40	Okay. Okay. Wonderful. Thanks. So have you faced any difficulties or uncertainties when you were setting up the strategic direction?
Ewan: 08:53	Not really because I think the schools are on a journey, but it was a fairly clear journey what that was.
09:04	And so it sort of came in when there weren't sort of failing schools. One school was sort of looking for improvement. And that sort of changed how it's structured because it was an infant and junior, and there was no head in one, and now they're one school. And there had been one or two issues in terms of that, in terms of the key management.
09:34	But again, it's sort of understanding the support that could be put in. And we have a lot of independence audits and deep dives from other organisations that come in to each of the schools to give a fairly detail, which again gives us confidence in terms of the direction of travel.
Sarah Chung: 09:59	Okay. Wonderful.

10:01	So looking at it now from your position as chair of governor, how do you feel the rest of the governors on your governing bodies understand strategic direction?
Ewan: 10:13	I think reasonably reasonably. I mean, that's one of our problems is that we don't have a fairly small governing body. We have difficulties. We can get one parent if we're lucky in each school.
10:32	The positions are two. Usually got a staff governor. But sort of, if you like, the co-opted ones. Some of them are from heads from another school, are co-opted into the school, which is a bit incestuous. But you know it's about keeping the process going. And then we got one or two other yeah, then we got one or two other people from the community. And I do feel that they understand that.
11:03	And some have got specific roles that are very focused and going to school and have a look at you know I know I'm particularly sort of on those sports and people bring in stuff and goes in and has those discussions. So yeah, you know we have a genuine discussion. We've got back-to-face-to-face meetings, which makes it a bit easier because certainly with Zoom, it was sometimes difficult to draw people in.
11:35	And again, with the sort of parent governors, sometimes it's harder drawing them in to that. So that was sort of part of one of my training things about trying to build teams. But we only meet four times a year, formerly as governors.
12:03	And yeah, that's it.
Sarah Chung: 12:07	So I'm assuming then, if you're four times a year, you're a more traditional model with committees and.
Ewan: 12:14	We don't have lots of committees because, again, you see, you're a part of an academy. So we don't sort of have a finance committee and a safeguarding committee or this committee or that committee.
12:30	You know Sort of we have the governing body. And then because we have these external audits as well, you know we sort of say, "Well, you know what's the point of doing this again?" you know Because they're validated.
12:52	They're not sort of and they use you know it's not quite like you know PwC going every year to the same place and doing that. They do move people around. So again, you don't get that sort of, "Oh, well, they're a bit healthy, a bit close together, being audited." I don't think that happens.
13:15	And I think it's quite good in terms of, again, we have that comparison thing across the five schools, which are actually I don't deal with the one, the five schools within the trust, which gives us sort of, again, a bit of a lot of benchmarking information and strength. So again, we can make use of that.
13:39	So the model's slightly different, I think, than a governor-governor in an ordinary school or a senior school.

Sarah Chung: 13:51	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So then, in your own words now, can you describe what is meant by a school's ethos?
Ewan: 14:04	I suppose ethos vision about what it's trying to be.
14:10	I mean, I would say that our schools are trying to be inclusive. So I mean, it's about a school when somebody comes in the school, they know what it's trying to do. You can look around the school and you can feel, "This is a learning environment and inclusive." So if you go into schools, you don't see pictures all along the wall, and they're all white faces and men.
14:40	You see that thing in dynamic, and you can see that it changes and the pupils are respected in terms of that. It makes the feel of the school.
Sarah Chung: 14:57	Okay. Lovely. So again, how did you develop the ethos? What made you?
Ewan: 15:06	Again, it's something that's been there.
15:11	I mean, the schools have picked up things like UNICEF over the last four or five years, and I think most of them are now at Gold Award. And you know having pupils that are what do you call the UNICEF person in that class or whatever it is.
15:38	But also giving a variety of the students roles of various sorts. They have a school council for pupils, also for staff to share those ideas and opinions so that you can try and use some of these external things as well as validation and getting the parents involved.
16:04	So there are, in fact, one of the schools which I was invited to was UNICEF are coming in to talk about online safety to parents and such like. So it's much more than just a tick in the box. Another school is now one of the sanctuary schools. Another one's a leading school on behaviour. So it looks to share its experience with others and develop and support each other as you know where staff needs support.
16:40	There can be cross-support between the schools and we identify where there are weaknesses.
Sarah Chung: 16:47	Okay. Lovely. So now in your own words again, can you describe what he's meant by vision?
Ewan: 16:55	Oh, gosh. Oh, yeah. I mean, the vision I do hate these hairy, fairy things.
17:04	You know The vision is they're all pupils will achieve their potential, I suppose, is a principal. And I'm sure they've got some smart words that say something else. And in fact, they all have on their websites because that's what required to do. Yeah And I think it's trying to consolidate that. I mean, again, I suppose that school development plan which goes behind that vision is, well, how do we make sure that these young people will achieve their development?

17:38	Bearing in mind, they may come in mid-year and know English, or they may have learning difficulties, autistic, or whatever. How do we ensure that we do that and that vision is done through and looking at the different levels in terms of making sure that we've got competent staff, a caring school, suitable resources, and clarity on how we monitor.
18:11	You know What are we actually measuring? Does it make sense what we measure to sort of make sure that do we know when we've well, in a sense, you never achieve it. But you know that's our direction of travel.
Sarah Chung: 18:24	Okay. Lovely. So now we'll look a little bit about pupil performance. So can you explain a little about how your governing body oversees pupil performance?
Ewan: 18:36	Well, we have a lot of data, which has been quite difficult, obviously, during COVID because the testing. And we do I mean, there's external testing. We've done NTS as well as school assessments and looking at phonics and English and maths.
19:05	So, I mean, that becomes part of the head teachers report. And I think because we get the comparisons elsewhere, we can identify there's a clarity of where our weaknesses are, which we know that are there. And it's seeing whether they're going in the right direction, improving.
19:34	But also, to understand what are the restrictions. Because when we get a in some schools, we've had quite big movements of pupils. And then you get the absence problem, which is a national thing. You know and people are now going off to Pakistan or whatever it is for long holidays because they can go there to the kids.
20:02	And they're maybe on the roll or off the roll. We don't know. But as far as we're concerned, then they're on the roll, and that throws away our figures out. But we try to get down to understand not to sort of think, "Oh, well, it's okay," but to get a clearer understanding, "Well, why are we at this percentage rather than this?" And we were always you know reasonable in terms of attendance, which is indicative of performance, to some degree.
20:38	But it's still quite hard getting you back, even though it's sort of into the normal world, so to speak.
Sarah Chung: 20:46	Okay. So do you feel quite comfortable understanding the data as it's presented to you?
Ewan: 20:54	Yeah. Yeah. Yes. And I mean, I know that you know there is well, and after the stats come out, you know you can then go and do benchmarking elsewhere as well, which we will do.
21:08	It's been a bit difficult of today. I mean, I know the benchmarking tools, both in performance and finance. So that's one of the advantages of being the academy. You've got that immediate cohort. And usually, you can get some

	feedback of general [redacted] City sort of data as well so that we can sort of say, "Well, yeah, we're in the right area.
21:37	We're not down. Yeah, you know we're in the right direction of whatever it is," which generally we are. You know Yeah. And we had one school which was in Special Measures [redacted]. It's now got through Ofsted, and it's now on the good. So, you know we can see the very practical things there. And we had another one which was good.
22:05	And Ofsted came in and no doubt about it. It was good. So again, we got the external validation in terms of our Ofsted about direction of travel as well, in terms of performance. You know they're comfortable with where we are.
Sarah Chung: 22:23	Okay. Thank you. So, thinking a little more generally, do you feel able to challenge or raise questions when necessary?
Ewan: 22:32	Yeah. Yes.
22:33	I mean, you know I've got a reasonable you know we have a relationship with both directors. I mean, I've talked to directors in terms of the academy as a whole, but also with the head teachers, I'm quite happy to do that and/or other governors you know quite happy to ask questions and clarity.
Sarah Chung: 22:59	Okay. So can you describe then, in your own words, a time that you have challenged?
Ewan: 23:19	It's difficult to think, really. Nothing that sort of stands out particularly. You know There are things like, you know yeah, we have COVID policies and all that, and then you sort of challenge, is that actually happening?
23:34	And that was part of COVID going into school and checking that that was there. Certainly, sort of safeguarding, you know I go and have a look at what's being recorded. I look at the audits that have been done there and seeing those things there. Yeah, you know we talk about the data, but the head teacher's always open about it.
24:04	You know If the figures aren't great, then they say that. You know I haven't sort of yeah, no, there's nothing that sort of nicely comes into a nice pattern, I'm afraid.
Sarah Chung: 24:21	No, no, not a problem at all. But generally, you feel that any challenges met well?
Ewan: 24:28	Oh, yes. Yeah.
24:29	I mean, it's a very open school because, again, they sort of have executive heads and sort of people moving around teaching level. Often, people are going into schools, mentoring, or they're going in for periods. So there's quite a lot of cross-fertilisation. So they're quite used to sharing.
24:57	It's not sort of, "Oh, we don't want to show you that." No, I don't feel that things have been hidden. And again, partly because, again, we have these deep dive externals on curriculum and safeguarding and health and safety. You know There's no

	point in trying to hide stuff. And you know I feel like it's not a blame culture.
Sarah Chung: 25:28	Okay.
Ewan: 25:29	And you know we've had some difficult you know we've had a couple of heads have gone through fairly stressful things and trying to support as part of the well-being and what have you. So yeah, there have been difficult times at various you know which have had to be dealt with.
Sarah Chung: 25:51	Okay.
25:52	So do you think because I know you've mentioned previously that there was quite a good relationship, do you think it's a balance of having that good relationship and the external justification?
Ewan: 26:07	Yeah. I mean, the external, I mean, you know because you know although I did train as a teacher millions of years ago, you know you know I'm way out in terms of the thing.
26:18	I can't go into the school and do an audit and look at and know what's going on without spending hours. I'm not going to do that, nor is any governor. So yeah, we depend on that external and I think that external validation gives us more confidence. Yes, we may go and look at something, you know a particular class, and you go in and you know they're all working, and you're seeing something on the curriculum, the science curriculum, and thinking, "Oh, well, that's all very good." But you know I'm seeing it in isolation.
26:53	You know I'm not an Ofsted inspector. And I always say to schools, "I'm not coming to inspect. I'm just coming to look and just understand the environment and what have you," you know just walking around. And I think you know my job is not to inspect. It's to understand and just get the feel or the vibe of the place because I think that gives you an indication if you felt then there was something you know it was very noisy or everyone was running around and then you begin to sort of, "Ooh, okay.
27:33	Maybe that's a sign or something.".
Sarah Chung: 27:34	Yeah. Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So have you ever during your four years, has there ever been a time when you have felt uncomfortable challenging?
Ewan: 27:48	We've had one or two disciplinary which are always difficult. We had an anonymous letter about a head teacher.
28:02	But again, that was strength of the academy. We got an external in to go and do a very detailed review. And then to look at some of the issues, we're comfortable that whatever it was, there wasn't a call that there was no validity in it. And that was sort of triangulated all over.

28:29	But it also gave some quite interesting sort of suggestions about how we could do some insect training and things which would help in that. So it's always those sort of things where you know somebody's asking for extra days leave and you say, "No, you can't." Or, "Yes, you can." Or somebody wants to have a so it tends to be those things that get more uncomfortable. In terms of the data or anything like that, well, no, I've got no problem about that at all.
29:02	But it's always the HR type stuff because you know it has an implication. And one person you know where he said, you know contract. You know So you know that's one of the joys that I don't want to have anything to do with. But it has to be done. You know I mean, I understand that's part of the role, the joy of being the chair that you get involved with.
Sarah Chung: 29:29	Yeah. Absolutely. Okay. Thanks.
29:32	So another area then of governance is holding the head teacher to account for the management of staff. And I think we've briefly touched on that, probably. How confident are you in that?
Ewan: 29:44	Yeah. I mean, we have the performance management. We have a performance management thing. You know Sort of yeah, yes. Most are sort of you know on the excellence, and then there are some which need a bit of support. And that figure changes, particularly with new teachers.
30:02	And then we've had teachers where they've tried and then they brought mentors in. So I mean, it's identified where a member of staff is struggling. Again, because you know the heads do these walkarounds and go into the you know they're not just sit in their office all day. They do. All heads are active in terms of going around the school. Again, it's getting that vibe.
30:32	And then it's sort of looking about how that support is. You know And there are systems in there for mentioning not only pupils, but also for staff. So yes, in terms of the quality of the staff and supporting those and I don't know what they're called, but you know the people who come in after training and things. Yet another initials draw me insane.
31:02	You know The appropriate support is in there. You know For each of the curriculum, so there will be a lead in French. There'll be a lead in science, which is sharing across the school. Also, then the leads of the five schools also get together again to share. So again, I think there's a very good support network to ensure the quality of the teaching of the pupils.
Sarah Chung: 31:32	Okay. Lovely. So now, could you explain the process of involved in appointing a new head teacher?
Ewan: 31:43	Right. Well, I almost was going to be in one because we've got one that's just resigned. But then one of the other heads is

	going to move into that one, and then they're going to put something it gets complicated.
32:00	But I'm not actually appointed a head teacher, but I would be involved in that. And I have been on an interview for an odd staff member for some obscure reason. But I have not done a head appointment. All of ours are relatively new-ish or were in place when I came.
Sarah Chung: 32:25	Okay. Do you think you would feel confident, though, if you were asked to?
Ewan: 32:29	Yeah.
32:29	I mean, I've done I mean, you know in previous roles, I was on interview panels and all sorts of things. So I've done all that sort of stuff before. You know And I did one with those staff members. They did it in the same sort of way. You know We got the questions. We know who's going to ask them. We know what we're looking at in terms of the job spec and all of those bits and pieces. So yes, I wouldn't feel uncomfortable with that at all.
Sarah Chung: 32:58	Okay.
32:59	Lovely. So now then, as well as setting strategic direction, ethos and vision, you've also got to ensure that there's a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing. But probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight of your school. How comfortable are you in this situation?
Ewan: 33:23	Right. Again, this is where it comes different for the academy.
33:28	The finance is done at the academy level. We don't do it as a governor, so we don't have the finance bit come to us and saying, "This is what the budget is and all that and have that discussion." There's a business officer, and there is a so that's done by the directors.
33:53	They're looking at the budget of the whole of the five schools because that obviously has implications in terms of where can we use resources from one to the other. As it happens, I am also on the finance risk and whatever it is committee. So I do get to know about that. And yes, we've got our five-year plan, and we know that there are some serious issues coming up because they're falling in numbers.
34:26	And there are some potential risks. We have a professional I don't know what his particular role is, but you know so it's a finance person who's looking at that all the time and also looking about external funding and what have you, which I think also relates to some you know I mean, obviously, they have the discussions with the head teachers in terms of the total budget and what have you.
34:54	And they have got that freedom within that budget. But he's the one who will challenge that rather than the governor's

because, again, it's quite a technical thing in terms of the balance. And you know it is about sort of doing the reviews of sort of you know do a health and safety while the Windows needs replacing. But yeah, where are we going to find 100,000 from and you know applying for whatever it is, the funds for academies.

35:22 And because our overall numbers are falling and I think we get under the magic figure of 3,000, that makes some issues for us as well. So we are actively looking to try and get another school into the trust to try and cover off that hole. But we are aware that and again, it's sort of trying to look at, well, where can we do some sort of resource use across the schools?

35:55 Because certainly, we've done something in looking at an age profile of staff and things. Yeah And are we going to get into a stage in two years' time where we need to be talking about redundancy? The costs of all of that. So you know we're sort of continually flagging in terms of that.

36:24 I mean, there's some broad stuff given to the governors in that. But it is quite specifically in an academy. And I think that was one of the things because I know one of the things we talked about with training. It is understanding that they actually are struck with a mat. And again, probably they're different mats as well. It's a different approach in many of these places.

36:51 But certainly, in terms of the direct finance, when I first started, I did because it was a city school, and I had all these figures, and I think we should never read through and all that stuff. But that's now done. And rather than it being an individual bursa in the school, you know we've got somebody perhaps slightly more qualified. And again, we have external financial audits as well. So the accounts and all of those things are externally and any issues that have come up there.

37:25 I see those just because I happen to be on the finance committee. So again, I have a sort of comfortable feel about that.

Sarah Chung: 37:32 Okay. So just for clarity, the finance committee you sit on, is that the local level, then, or is that?

Ewan: 37:40 No, no. That's an academy. So the academy has a board of directors, and then it has one or two subcommittees. And one of them is a finance. And I'm one of three.

37:54 And I think the other two are both accountants. I mean, it's only because I did procurements and stuff. That's my last role. So that's what I ended up on there.

Sarah Chung: 38:04 So are you there then as a representative of the governing body?

Ewan: 38:09 No. No. I'm there as somebody who's got experience in projects and procurement. I'm not a representative of the governors.

38:23	You know I think the other two are both directors, but they're not governors in the schools. So use it within the bodywork, but it's not the fact that I happen to be a governor is irrelevant almost. And we've got a new governor started who works for [redacted], I think. So possibly once he's finished his exams, we might make it to him as well.
38:54	Because again, you know going through all those exciting spreadsheets and what have you. You need somebody who understands you know so you're trying to look at people who have got sort of some knowledge in those particular areas. I'm more in the sort of purchasing and things because they would present data about sort of, "Well, here we are, the three quotes and this one." I said, "Well, that's not good enough for me.
39:22	You've got to define it." Because I used to do it for the council. I said, "No, I won't accept that." you know So I mean, I sent stuff back there and said, "No, I'm not prepared to approve." It's not clear. So you know it's a different role.
Sarah Chung: 39:41	Okay. Okay. Wonderful. So then I think, if I'm correct here, that from a local level, it's more about holding the head teacher to account for the resources in the school.
39:54	And then anything financial is dealt with by the head teacher.
Ewan: 39:58	Yeah, yeah, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 40:00	Okay. Lovely. So we'll talk now a little bit about the eight elements of effective governance. So the eight elements have been identified as essential to good governance by the NGA. So in your own words, can you explain what these mean to you? So what we're going to do now is I'm going to read you the element.
Ewan: 40:25	Otherwise, it'll be a very short conversation.
Sarah Chung: 40:29	So we'll begin with A, the right people around the table.
Ewan: 40:35	Yeah. I mean, I think to the degree we have that, it is difficult recruiting governors. And unfortunately, and again, with doing parent governors, you know we're not being terribly successful.
40:52	You know We keep on doing it, and then one of them goes, you know they get pregnant or you know there are other reasons why they can't do it. So that is probably a weakness. I mean, keep on doing it. Keep trying to recruit in a variety of ways. We have just recruited external ones. We've been fortunate. Somebody found another way of going through it. And again, that was through the support staff of the academy.
41:24	It sort of sourced something else. So we managed to get two or three new governors there, which is good. So yeah, you know but those people there do contribute. But yes, it would be nice to have a slightly bigger breadth.

41:47	And yes, I mean, you know and if you like, we do have a mix of people there, so it's not all white, middle-class, but probably quite a few. [inaudible] principally, are not.
Sarah Chung: 42:11	Okay. That's lovely. So B, understanding the roles and responsibilities.
Ewan: 42:17	Yeah. I think, yeah. I mean, I believe people do. We do try and we allocate a role at the beginning of the year and they will report back you know if it's particularly on pupil premium. And then we expect them to sort of read more detail than probably the rest of us you know because when you've got 200 pages to read. So yeah, I think so.
Sarah Chung: 42:46	Okay. Good chairing.
Ewan: 42:50	Oh, brilliant chair. No. I mean, it's been more difficult with Zoom, I think, just simply because of the dynamics sometimes you know cutting across people, not seeing what they're wanting to do.
43:09	I mean, I mean, I've done various chair training, and I mean, I hope I can do it reasonably well so that people feel they can contribute without sort of then going down some sort of wormhole about something. You know I try to keep the thing focused. You know I don't want the head teacher. No, you don't need to read your report.
43:37	You just give me one line about it. And then governors, you know do you want to question that? Because I take the assumption when you've read that, there's no point in the head teacher reading it back again. You know We've got better things to do with our lives.
Sarah Chung: 43:52	Okay. Lovely. Professional clerking?
Ewan: 43:56	Yes, yes. We have very good. There are two within the trust.
44:06	The original one you've gone is we increased the program and the one that deals with the governors in schools. She also is a governor somewhere else herself and seems very efficient. The quick turnaround, you know they'll answer questions and support you.
Sarah Chung: 44:28	And good relationships based on trust?
Ewan: 44:32	I believe so. Yes.
44:34	I think you know there's an understanding that what's in the room stays in the room something, you know that people can be honest. There are some issues that occasionally I've then had to go and ask, "Well, can I mention this?" And that's, again, a strength of being in an academy that I've got somebody to go to, so you know we've been told this in confidence.

45:07	Can I mention this you know and decide in one way how we deal with certain things, which is handy. But I think, yeah, the trust is there.
Sarah Chung: 45:19	Knowing the school?
Ewan: 45:22	Yeah. I think all governors go in at various bits of time. But it takes time to get to know. And again, it's sort of well, what do you mean by know a school?
45:39	Because again, to this academic year, and probably one of them I know less so. I know there's two which I know reasonably well. The other two less well. And I've got some visits arranged shortly. But yes, you know as far as you can, you've got that feel of the school and where the environment is.
46:08	It's got three buildings, so I'm still a little bit confused with it. Quite how it operates. But I think it's something you develop over time.
Sarah Chung: 46:19	Okay. G asking challenging questions.
Ewan: 46:24	Yeah. Yes. I mean, you know i mean questions are asked and you know what does this mean and how are we going to improve it?
46:34	Yes, I think governors are prepared to do that. They're recorded down in the minutes of the meeting. The questions that are being asked as a record. So yeah, I don't think people just sort of sit there and have that teacher just talk at us.
Sarah Chung: 46:56	Okay. And then H, having courageous conversations in the interests of children and young people?
Ewan: 47:08	Well, I don't know. That's a tricky one because I'm trying to understand what that actually means. I mean, yes, I mean, I've had that you know we had a kid who died at the school.
47:33	So you know you had that conversation with the head and various people about what was a school doing, as they say, and how do we deal with that within the school? Not the easiest of things to deal with and something you would hope that you would never meet. And as that's a result of, finally, now that their teacher decided she can't stay there any longer, it just feels it was just too much, too traumatic.
48:07	But you know having to go through the whole process with [redacted]'s reports and health and safety and all the other bits and pieces. I mean, there was no issues within the school. But I mean, it's one of those things that it takes those sort of dramatically about what you're doing.
48:30	And then looking at yourself and you know yeah, could we have done something? You know It's always only if we can all go through that process, and all you do is you beat your head around. So yes, I mean, and I had this anonymous letter, and

	fortunately that also went you know the academy level. So we have had those discussions and dealt with it.
48:58	You know And I think it's yeah, you know those discussions can be done on that sort of very, quite high level. And I think people do challenge at the you know ask questions and stuff. Don't ask me for the example off the top of my head. But I don't think any governor sort of feels you know restricted.
Sarah Chung: 49:25	Okay. Wonderful.
Ewan: 49:26	'Cos otherwise I don't think otherwise I've come, frankly.
49:28	Well, what's the point? You know And I've got better things to do in my life.
Sarah Chung: 49:33	Absolutely. Okay. Thank you. So we'll look now then at strategic and operational. So we know that the line between strategic and operational can be seen as quite a grey area for some. How confident are you in knowing where governance ends and SLT responsibility begins?
Ewan: 49:52	I think so. And I would hope somebody would tell me if I'm poking and if no, I think I'm reasonably comfortable.
50:00	And I think my colleagues on the governing body are you know maybe sometimes in the governor's thing, you know things may be a bit operational on passing. But I think on the whole, no, we're reasonably comfortable in terms of where the split is. You know No, we're not in there to come and see which reading books they bought. You know Yeah. They've got a reading program.
50:29	They've gone and analysed it, and this is the reading programme they're doing. Fine. You know You've got a reading program. That's a strategic thing from my point of view. Which one it is? That's your choice. You're the educationalist. So I don't think we have not that I've been aware of that I've felt we slipped.
Sarah Chung: 50:47	Okay. Lovely. So now the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, it was immense, wasn't it?
Ewan: 50:54	Yep.
Sarah Chung: 50:55	Can you describe your experience of governance during this time?
Ewan: 50:59	Well, we kept going through with Zoom so we could have those updates. But I also visited all the schools when they were open during COVID. Well, no, the two because I wasn't doing the other two at that time. Well, you know to the tail end of it anyway.
51:24	To check that we got these COVID, you know we've written a policy and then you know are we splitting them in the playground? So I actually physically went to see that the COVID you know the doors were open and all those sorts of things. You know We were getting regular things in terms of

the bubbles and the absence rate and how we're dealing with that.

51:54 On the second one, then it's the academy decided to fund a tablet for every child. So on the first one, there was a bit of again, you know the head teachers were very good about explaining how they were making contact each day. And if need be, you know they would go and knock on doors and all of that sort of stuff.

52:22 So again, you know because of this increasing sort of safeguarding, I think we talked about a lot of it around safeguarding in terms of you know these youngsters. You know And schools were helping to fund food banks and all sorts of other things. So doing a lot of sort of social support as well as the actual dealing with education.

52:46 As we went to sort of the second long one where we did making use of tablets or laptops or whatever it is and doing live lessons as well as purple mash and other things. And you know one of them did a teacher saying something and reported to the police in terms of a safeguarding issue that they saw by dealing with their pupils.

53:19 So again, showing that sort of quite positive thing there. And there was a support, again, through the school in terms of general well-being and what have you for staff and senior managers as well. So yeah, I mean, you know as far as anyone can have done, but you know yes, it's hit learning you know and particularly for youngsters, which English is not their first language, you know much more tricky online.

53:51 And the support at home. And again, you know because I don't think we bought internet. You know So again, it's sort of you know the amount of wave bandwidths and all that sort of thing. So you know there were issues, but we made sure you know each child so you know it's got three kids in school and now three units. It wasn't one. So there was a big investment. And that's seen as sort of an ongoing thing so that we won't ever close again for snow.

54:22 But also you know encouraging sort of doing you know suggestions of work on there, but also submitting homework or whatever it is through that because we recognise that that computer literacy is a requirement. You know This is the generation well, they're going to go into I can't even think what sort of computers they're going to have, you know but you know much more so.

54:49 So I think it probably you know rather than it sort of being a IT lesson, it's become more ingrained in the curriculum as a whole. I mean, we've got electronic whiteboards in the bits and pieces, but you know I think it is. So I think that's been quite useful.

Sarah Chung: 55:11 Okay. So during the pandemic then, did you find that there were any areas that you felt underqualified or undertrained for?

Ewan: 55:23	Well, yeah. I mean, I think it was understanding the implications about where children I was given you know it's how children became at risk because their parents were now out of work or on furlough or whatever it was. Therefore, the finance had gone down. Therefore, they were on benefits. And then they were trying to get the benefits and all the other bits and pieces.
55:51	So it was probably more of the social interactions. You know I'm a single guy. So I mean, again, it's sort of what happens to that family yeah when they're stuck in the house together and what that might and also that their income may drop and how do they deal with that and that implication on the youngster in terms of their well-being and their learning.
56:21	And I don't know whether they could have done anything else, to be honest. You sort of get that because I think everyone was sort of learning as we went along. But I think it was very, again, proactive in terms of what they were doing.
56:43	Understanding about trying to reduce social distancing, sort of trying to maximise the potential of being in school, and then trying to deal sympathetically with those that sort of say, "Well, I don't want my child coming in." And sort of how you have those discussions about, "Well, I just want to make a kid at home." you know Are they getting some learning at home and all that sort of thing?
57:07	And you know if one in the family gets COVID, then does the whole family you know not be able to get into school and all the other things? And I think the word sort of you know difficult dynamic you know could say, "Right, well, you know 2C is you can't come in this week because we got COVID in there.
57:31	And you know how do the families deal with that who may be trying to get you to work or whatever it is?" So yes, I mean, I was aware of things, but probably you know not at the sharp end.
Sarah Chung: 57:45	Okay. Okay. Wonderful. So now then I want you to think a little bit more generally about governance. If there was one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would you want it to be and why?
Ewan: 58:01	Oh, gosh. I mean, I suppose it's you know what the initial training I had is about what your role is. So you're very clear on what your role is. And I think it's understanding that role within that school framework that you're in.
58:30	So you may be in a county school, a single school academy. You may be in a MAT and understanding what you're and they will vary, which is difficult then to do that training. But it's sort of perhaps asking those say, "Well, right. These are questions you need to ask if you're in the academy.
58:57	Which is the audits?" Because I mean, I had to challenge a number of policies and said, "Look," because they do the three thing you know those three things said, "Well, look, we don't do

	the finance because you're picking these up from somewhere else," which I understand because, I mean, at that point, we invented the wheel with these policies and some of them with city council. But we don't do that. You know It's getting that clarity. And I think that also probably is for the academy as you know it's not that new, but it's probably also it defining itself.
59:33	And you know so you can understand in that training, what would you expect from the school as well as you know in supporting you as well. Again, I suppose I'm looking in the academy. Yeah, I mean, with the support you know because we see the city council training bits, I mean, I did the [redacted] trust thing.
01:00:00	And so we look at the you know we always do at the beginning of the year. We do safeguards training for the governors. You know It's done across the board. So yeah, I think it is just fundamentally about the role. So yes, and probably you know having that clarity of the strategic to the day-to-day type of thing and probably examples of where no, you don't need to interfere.
01:00:35	You know And how do you have those conversations to challenge you know in a positive way?
Sarah Chung: 01:00:41	Okay. That's wonderful. So then, excuse me. Firstly, what, in your opinion, is the least valuable piece of training for governors?
Ewan: 01:00:54	I don't think there is one. I think any training is good. I mean, I've done a fair amount over the time.
01:01:02	And some of it, I think, well, that's a rehash you know because I've done safeguarding and prevent. But you're always picking something up each time, I think. So I think all training is useful because you can pick something up from it. I mean, and you pick up more than others. And actually, I think now we've actually gone to the world of Zoom. So like with the council ones, you know you aren't going to the map and driving there and driving back, and it's done in an hour and a half.
01:01:36	I think you know I mean, and also from NGA and interest and all that sort of places. They're doing a lot more Zoom, which, to me, is a much more efficient way of doing that training, which you can then sort of take that stuff in and digest it, I think, is very positive.
Sarah Chung: 01:02:00	Okay. Lovely. So I'd like you to think back now to your initial error of governance.
01:02:06	Did you feel supported?
Ewan: 01:02:10	Yes. When I first joined, I was just a governor, if you like, of a primary of an infant school, which was a council run one there. At that time, we tended to get the paperwork on the day, and it was all printed, you know yeah which was a bit of a struggle because you know trying to read this.

01:02:42	And that's why I mean, the meetings got longer because you were sort of having to read through all this stuff, and then the head teacher was going through everything. Whereas now you know everything is done a week before and it's online and all the papers are there and you can go and read those, which I think is a much more efficient way. But you know that's the way of technology moving. But yes, I mean, again, I could ask the questions of the support officer there or the head teacher.
01:03:12	You know I was quite comfortable to speak to the head teacher.
Sarah Chung: 01:03:15	Okay. Lovely. Did you have a mentor or a governor buddy doing that?
Ewan: 01:03:21	Not that I can remember.
Sarah Chung: 01:03:23	Okay. So what are your thoughts on mentors for governors or chairs of governors or even clerks?
Ewan: 01:03:32	I'm sure there's a role for it, you know if you've got enough on. You know And if somebody feels they need it.
01:03:42	Yes. I mean, I think it's trying to work out what that role is. I'd have to have a think about you know what support they feel somebody feels they need. Yeah. You know I mean, I think it can have a role, but that's probably on an individual basis because it depends sometimes where the experience they come from.
Sarah Chung: 01:04:13	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now I'd like to think again. We're talking about induction training now. So the NGA have openly stated that they feel induction training should be mandatory within the first year. And in Wales, they already have something similar set up. In your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this and why?
Ewan: 01:04:36	Yeah. Yes.
01:04:37	I mean, because I think well, I mean, I think we do induction we've certainly done it in the thing, and it just seems to me a no-brainer, really, that one ought to go through that because whatever experience one's coming through, I think it's understanding what the role is and where the various documents come from, you know keeping children safe and all those sorts of things, and key documents.
01:05:08	I mean, there's so much paperwork, you know and I only read some of it. But no, I mean, I think to me, it would seem sensible that's what you sign up for, that you would do that, and you'd have that. And you'd have ongoing training. You know So if you've got a particular role and there's some induction training we can provide, then you know people premium or something, then that should be provided.
Sarah Chung: 01:05:38	Okay. Wonderful. So thinking now, if mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following? So content.

Ewan: 01:05:52 I mean, again, it's about, yeah, defining those three roles, obviously, within that, and understanding you know how I mean, it's always the difficulty is because you've got are you a primary school?

01:06:07 Are you a special school? Are you a secondary school? Are you an academy? I think you need to know there needs to be some sort of broad cover for that because there are so many bots for different people. So you know you know there's a clarity, sort of these are the questions you need to ask if you're in this sort of whether that's covered by your role.

01:06:38 Sort of then sort of going through those of understanding that the strategy and vision, you know what we mean by strategic overview. Performance and where you can go, you know showing where you can go and get that benchmarking material, which, of course, has not been available recently, but with stats and the national data.

01:07:01 So you know you've got national data sets and you've probably got local authority data sets which can give you some triangulation in terms of, "Well, yes, we're down there or you know we're okay in terms of that. Where do we come on that thing?" And similarly, you can get financial benchmarking and things. So I think it's probably giving links to various bits.

01:07:34 So you know you know the standard Keep Children Safe, which comes out every September. I mean, I know it's out at the moment. And there's the governance handbook and all the other bits and pieces. So you feel like you've got the set of email links to Department of Education, NGA and other bodies that support bodies that are out there.

01:08:01 So I think that's sort of probably, yeah, just in those areas, really.

Sarah Chung: 01:08:09 Okay. Lovely. So then how do you think the training should take place? So for example, a lot of the training at the moment is conducted either within LEAs or in-house in schools themselves. What are your thoughts on online training?

Ewan: 01:08:33 I think that's probably you know their initial training is probably going to be a bit longer. I think there are certain advantages in being face-to-face if possible. You know Maybe that's my old-fashioned way.

01:08:52 Whereas if it's a focused area, I can do you know quite happy to do that online. I think it's quite useful doing it sort of like a local authority because then you hear the experience of people in other schools, you know which people sort of have been there for how their approach is in their school and you know sort of, "Oh, that's interesting." That's what they do there.

01:09:21 You know This issue has arisen. And I think that probably is a little bit easier actually doing it face-to-face, sharing some experiences, good, bad, or indifferent. But certainly, if you like, the more specific training, then I think I'm quite happy doing it online.

Sarah Chung: 01:09:48	Okay. That's wonderful.
01:09:50	So just the final point is, what are your thoughts on a modulator course delivered online, for example, and resulting in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year?
Ewan: 01:10:04	Well, I've got so many certificates.
01:10:09	I mean, I mean, there can be a benefit in that, and it may well be that you decide, "Yes, it's better to do it online and do an hour, three, one-hour sessions because people are at work and the people who are coming to do the training, it makes it easier for them to do that because I'm retired." I mean, certificates are always nice.
01:10:40	You know I mean, you know some sort of validation, I suppose at the end of it. I mean, I did the interest training, you know which I did in a number of courses linking to that and what have you, which you know was of interest. And that was all done online.
01:11:02	I mean, you know you know I mean, yes, if the demand is, yeah, it's easy to do an hour and do three, one-hour sessions. And then that's it. And if you get certificate at the end, well, trolley good. You know it’s to be a validation.
01:11:32	And then do you say, "Well, has a life?" I don't know. You know Do you say, "Well, because you could be a governor for four years. Do you have to, after four years, do it again? Do you have to do a refresher course?" I don't know.
Sarah Chung: 01:11:43	Okay. Okay. So that was actually it. That's the final question. Thank you ever so much. I've just noticed we've gone over a little bit but thank you you know for taking the time. Is there anything else you'd like to add?
Ewan: 01:12:02	No, I don't think so. Nothing. Yeah, I've answered what I can.
Sarah Chung: 01:12:08	You've answered brilliantly. Thank you ever so much. I really do appreciate it. I do hope to try and get the findings out at some point. It's obviously part of this, and that's going to be written up over the next year. But hopefully, I'll start disseminating some of the findings a bit quicker than that.
Ewan: 01:12:25	Yeah, sure. Okay. I'll be interested. All right.
Sarah Chung: 01:12:29	All right.
01:12:30	Thanks, Ewan.
Ewan: 01:12:31	Bye. Bye.

Georgia

Sarah Chung: 00:00	Firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you'll be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. And during our interview, we will discuss whether the training you've received has helped you to achieve this.
00:57	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training. I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation you have signed, that you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date.
01:29	Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymised data destroyed after a period of 10 years. And should you wish a copy of the results, please do email and I'll happily send them out to you. Do you have any questions before we begin?
Georgia: 01:50	Nope.
Sarah Chung: 01:51	Wonderful. Okay. Should we jump in with something nice and easy? How long have you been a governor?
Georgia: 01:56	Well, so I became a governor in March of 2018. Sorry, bear with me. Things that are just starting out of nowhere. So yes, I was parent governor, February 2018. I then became chair of governors because my child started at a new school. So, she was one of 12.
02:27	Obviously, there wasn't a massive parent pool to pick from. And because it was a newly formed school, we didn't have a governing board at that point. In fact, we were also called an Academy Development Council or Committee. It was never defined what the C stood for. So, it wasn't until so that was chair of governors in March 2018.
02:55	It wasn't until about November 2019 where we actually referred to as a local governing board. That was because of an outgoing CEO who didn't want us to govern the board just to be involved in the development of the academy.
03:29	So, then we were a fully-fledged LGB, and then we moved into the pandemic. So that was a few months later. And then of September 2021, I stepped down from my role as chair of governors and took on a post on the trust board instead.

Sarah Chung: 03:50 Ah, okay. So, you've gone through quite a journey there.

Georgia: 03:54 Yes. Yes. Yes, I have.

Sarah Chung: 03:57 Do you find it very different then being as you've moved from parent governor to chair of governors to a trustee. Do you find all of those roles quite different, or?

Georgia: 04:09 Yes. I wasn't just parent governor for long enough to have a view because I became chair of governors pretty rapidly because I was the only one who put my hand up to do it. And then that was a chair of governor's role with I think we had two staff members, one other parent governor, and one community governor.

04:30 So it was a very small ADC, let's call it, not only then trying to get my head around the education system because it was my eldest that started at the school. So up until that point, the last time I had anything to do with primary education was when I was in primary school. Never been in the education sector. So getting my head around that plus not really have we didn't have the terms of reference. There was no school development policy.

05:00 There was nothing, really. And my role as chair of governance in the kind of first part of it was very much about being involved in teacher recruitment. So being on the interview panel for all of the teachers that were kind of starting in the following September.

05:29 So that was my kind of that was the first three months of my role there was interviewing staff, non-teaching staff and teaching staff. I was also involved in the recruitment of the CEO at the time. I was asked to do that because at this point, the school that I was a governor for was the second school of Educate Together Trust. So now we've got five schools, but at that point, we only had two.

05:59 So again, a very small pool of governors because we weren't called governors back then to kind of utilise in very different ways. So I only really felt like we were governing as of around yeah, September actually, it was September 2019, not November 2019.

06:24 So once the CEO departed, we were then referred to as a local governing board. And only at that point was like, "Right. I'm actually a governor now. What do I need to do?" you know I had to do all the training, obviously. And then it was very much about trying to build the governing board, so recruiting more governors.

06:56 And obviously, with the pandemic, I'd planned for our governors to start doing monitoring in term two of 2019, 2020. But obviously, the pandemic put paid to that because we couldn't go into the schools.

07:21	And I think at that point, I had then recruited about four more governors during the pandemic, so whilst virtually, and then also trying to bring people together virtually. You know A lot of people on my governing board had never used Zoom before, so trying to you know facilitate a virtual board versus an in-person board, that was a challenge.
07:46	So I think my experience of being a chair of governors was very unusual yeah more than anything else. So now I've moved into the trust. It's a much more established trust board. I've come in as just one person of very many that have been doing it for a number of years.
08:12	Whereas when I was chair of governors, it was like I was the most experienced and I had no experience. Yeah So from a learning perspective, it's been quite nice because I'm a newbie rather than trying to drive a ship that I had no idea which direction we were going in. So it's nice to be a passenger of a Trustee rather than to be a driver. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 08:40	That's a lovely way to sum that up, actually.
08:43	Yeah. I can imagine that was quite the journey for you. So thinking back over that, so it's four years. It seems like a long four years, doesn't it?
Georgia: 08:56	Oh, my goodness. Yes. Yes. Doesn't it?
Sarah Chung: 08:58	What's been your most enjoyable aspect of governance?
Georgia: 09:05	Well, not that I put too much emphasis on it, but my school I still call it my school because my kids go to the school.
09:13	Yeah But we've just recently had our first Ofsted, and it came out as good.
Sarah Chung: 09:22	Congratulations.
Georgia: 09:22	And the leadership aspect of it was good. Now, that's very much down to the chair of governors that took over after me. But I do quietly take some credit because you know I built the board.
09:43	I recruited all of those people. You know The chair of governors now was one of my parent governors when I was chair. I felt like I built a really good engaged, solid governing board. So I think that for me, that's what I've most enjoyed, is about building a team and building a really engaged team and leading that team.
10:17	So you know I think that's what I would say is what I've enjoyed the most, building a team.
Sarah Chung: 10:25	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. It does sound like you've laid the foundation there for a very short governing board.
Georgia: 10:31	Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 10:33	So thinking in the opposite sense now, what's been your least enjoyable aspect of governance?
Georgia: 10:42	Having to wear a number of hats.
10:44	So there's a couple of things, I guess. The first thing is having to disassociate myself from you know I'm a parent first and foremost. And you know we've had quite a journey at my school. Obviously, the pandemic, but there's been a significant amount of turnover in staff, including the head teacher.
11:18	The head teacher, while I was chair of governors, was off on stress. So I didn't enjoy being and you know our trust board at that point was kind of scrabbling around a bit to solve many, many issues across all of the schools.
11:45	As you can imagine, it was in the pandemic. It was in the February 2021. So it was that second lockdown in the winter that was dreadful. Oh, gosh. And I was working as well. In the first lockdown, I stepped away from the business, but in the second lockdown, I was very much working.
12:06	So trying to juggle work, yeah being a mum, being a wife, all my other commitments, but then also trying to keep the school on track yeah as much powerless but relied upon by so many people.
12:33	And you know trying to reach out to the rest of the staff when we weren't even being able to be in the school at that point. So remotely supporting the staff was very stressful. I can imagine. But again, I don't think that's you know I don't think that's the norm.
12:57	But I think you know to relate it to kind of normal world, certainly chair of governor and certainly trustee, I would say the thing I don't enjoy the most is the juggle, is the fact that it's a volunteer post, and you know I work full-time, the juggle is real yeah and try to fit it all in. Yeah, that's been the struggle as well.
13:27	So that's like the general struggle is trying to be a decent governor committing to you know there's a real responsibility there. I'm not one to do things by halves. But you know for example, I've now got to write a marketing strategy for the trust, and I'm working full-time. And there's a paid person in the central trust team who supposedly has marketing skills but don't.
13:57	So I'm having to do the work that should be a paid for job within the central trust, but that's another matter. Yeah So yeah, to sum it up, the juggle, yeah the commitment the time commitment, but the responsibility commitment is what I've struggled with.
Sarah Chung: 14:17	Yeah. I can see you know it must have been incredibly difficult. So you've started, effectively, a new school.
14:24	Then you've had the pandemic and all of that that came with that. So that must have been incredibly difficult. So you

	mentioned then briefly that you've been expected to do a marketing strategy when you've got a paid equivalent?
Georgia: 14:41	Well, I've exaggerated that somewhat. I have taken on the responsibility. No one's asked me to do it, but it needs to be done.
14:55	And the person who is in the central trust team has admitted that marketing is not something she does. Because business development manager, yeah she brings on new schools or project managers and new skills, but she's been added marketing as part of her job description, and she doesn't know the first thing about marketing. I've been a marketeer for 20 odd years. So you know it's something that I've offered my time to do.
Sarah Chung: 15:27	Okay. Okay.
Georgia: 15:29	Because if I don't do it, no one's going to do it. I think that's sometimes the case, isn't it? Did you feel then that there's an almost crossover between the strategic and operational there?
Georgia: 15:43	Good question. I know if you spoke to my other trust board colleagues, they would say that they've been dragged into more operational things than they should have done.
15:57	And as chair of government, I was drawn into more operational stuff than I should have done. Is that because we're not a fully established trust? You know We're growing. We're a growing trust. And with you know staff turnover, there has been operational stuff that the trust has had to be involved in.
16:28	And as chair of governors, I was having to be drawn into operational stuff that if I was there was blurred lines there. But you know you're in a situation where you can't just say, "I'm not going to get involved in that because you need my guidance and you need my help.".
Sarah Chung: 16:50	Yeah. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So we'll move on a little bit now.
16:56	We'll look at the three core functions. So we've got the NGA described governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction. So the following questions now are going to explore your understanding of all three of those. So in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?
Georgia: 17:19	I think it would be certainly from a trust perspective, we are trying to work out what our direction of travel is.
17:31	We've just hired a new CEO to take over from September. So that's been very much the focus. Now we've got a new CEO at the Tiller, so to speak. We need to ensure that our strategic direction is in the right way. Sorry, just seeing more people. More ministers gone. Anyway, sorry. Being distracted by my Team's messages pinging up and what is one of our ministers this time, so that's causing a problem.

18:01	So strategic direction is about what is our direction of travel? What do we want to do? So in our situation, we know we need given the white paper that came out, although that might all change now. But anyway, who knows? We might have a new government soon enough. We know we have to focus on our growth strategy.
18:26	So you know we have to grow our trust by five more schools in the next seven years, eight years. So making sure that we are going in the right direction to do that and how we're going to do that. It's not for us to determine the how. It's the why and what steps are going to be included to get to that point.
Sarah Chung: 18:58	Yeah. Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So now, in your own words, can you describe what is meant by a school's ethos?
Georgia: 19:09	It's what the schools live and breathe. And it's from the pupils through the non-teaching staff, the teaching staff, the cleaner, the caretaker, the parents, the staff, the parents, the governors, the trust.
19:29	We all have to live and breathe the same ethos. So what does it mean to us to be part of and educate together trust? What sets us apart from other schools? What we have to always keep in mind when we're doing anything, when we're setting direction, are we honouring our ethos? Is this going in the wrong direction? Yeah. That's what I think of as ethos.
Sarah Chung: 19:58	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So now, then final one. In your own words, what do you think of what is meant by vision?
Georgia: 20:08	Vision, to me, is about what our end goal is. Yeah, what our end goal is. What do we want out of building a trust like ours?
20:24	And what is our vision for all of the schools within that trust and ensuring that we all have the same vision. And every school that we take on believes in that same vision, what our end goal is.
Sarah Chung: 20:41	Okay. Lovely. So now we'll move on again a little bit, and we'll look at pupil performance. So can you explain a little bit about how you as a governing body oversee pupil performance?
Georgia: 20:57	So as a governor or as a trustee?
Sarah Chung: 21:04	Ah, well, both.
Georgia: 21:07	So as a governor, we were getting. Reports from the head teacher to look at progression. So we're very much about understanding whether a child has progressed, not to know where the child is. They're not failing.
21:25	But from term one to term six, regardless of how they've scored on tests doesn't matter. It's about seeing a progression that they've gone in the right direction. So yeah, so head teacher reports to show the quantitative data and monitoring as well.

21:56 Had the education, the curriculum monitoring. Remind me of your question again.

Sarah Chung: 22:03 So it's explaining a little bit about how your governing body oversees pupil performance.

Georgia: 22:08 That's right. Yes. So from a governing perspective, it was all about reporting quantitative and qualitative data from the curriculum leads, understanding how the pupils were doing, if there were any concerns.

22:26 And then from a Trustee perspective, we have a director of education who works part-time for the trust. And they're responsible for the line management of all the head teachers. And we have an education committee, which I'm not part of. But at then, the trust board, we have a report on how the schools are all doing with regards to pupil achievement.

Sarah Chung: 22:57 Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you for explaining both of those. That's really interesting. So the Director of Education is actually responsible for the performance management of the head teacher as well?

Georgia: 23:10 That's right. Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 23:11 Okay. And is that fed back to you then as trustees?

Georgia: 23:15 That's right. Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 23:17 Okay. Does it get fed down to the LGB?

Georgia: 23:22 Interesting question.

23:28 Well, the chair of governors are, as I remember, well, so it was different. So when I was a governor, there was no director of education. It was all managed by the CEO. So I haven't been on the receiving end of being an LGB and seeing what comes down.

23:48 But I believe that the chair of governors are also involved in the performance management or certainly part of the conversation about whether the head teachers have met their objectives.

Sarah Chung: 24:01 Okay. Okay. Thank you. So as a governor or a Trustee even, do you feel able to challenge or raise questions when necessary?

Georgia: 24:16 As my confidence has grown, I'm far more comfortable with challenging now I'm a Trustee than I was governor. Mainly because as chair of governors, like I explained, we were a very small board and nobody had education experience apart from the staff governors on the panel who were reporting into the head teacher who was also in the board.

24:46 And I think it's all very well having that as part of a governor's role challenge. But if you've never had experience of being a governor before, I believe it's hard to really understand what to

challenge head teachers on and how far to push it if you're being told by the head teacher there's nothing to worry about.

25:14 Well, what do you know as a volunteer who's turning up for you know a couple of hour meeting every term, you're only going by what you're being told. So you receive the head teacher's report. You have to believe that that is the truth. Yeah There's no real way of knowing whether what you're being presented with is truth.

25:48 You would hope it is. But I'm just trying to think if there's ever been I think it's about lack of confidence means that it's harder to challenge. Yeah Because now you know when I left chair of governors, I recruited somebody who was very data-driven.

26:17 The job was, I don't know, he's IT person. Anyway, but I put him in charge of data. And so because he had that skill set, he was able to interrogate that data and try and then was able to kind of ask more pertinent questions than I could have done just seeing some figures on a page and going, "Oh, well, that looks all right." Whereas he was able to go, "Well, hang on a minute.

26:47 Why is that particular class doing better than another class or you know what interventions?" you know That kind of thing, and understanding the data better. So again, I think yeah. So I think it's lack of confidence then results in a lack of challenge.

Sarah Chung: 27:08 Okay. And for you, it felt that having that external skill set that they had has really.

Georgia: 27:15 Yeah.

27:15 I think, yeah, massively helped, actually. You know For example, now being a trustee, yeah having a marketing background, I'm able to now I'm able to see what's happening at the trust level and identifying that we're not going to achieve our growth if we don't improve our marketing if we don't have a marketing strategy.

27:43 Now, the rest of them are all, you know I don't know, IT, legal, HR. We all have our different skill sets, and therefore, we all then can identify where the gaps are. If you don't have that skill set, you don't know where that you can't identify those gaps necessarily. Or place a value on those gaps. Do you think that even with the skill set, there's room for development? Yes.

28:13 Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Because I think even if you've got the skill set, it's knowing how to governing governor, I think i think there's a different skill set you need as a governor than as a trustee. As a trustee, you know I'm there with a parent. I'm one of the only parents on the trust board. So I can come from a parent perspective. And only a parent of one of the schools.

28:42 I'm not a parent of all the schools. I can certainly wear that hat when necessary. Yeah. But other than that, and apart from challenging the CEO on business decisions and you know there's the education committee there to challenge the director

	of education on staff, not necessarily for the trust to challenge the director of education.
29:08	As a governor, I think it's a whole different skill set because it is about ensuring that the school is on track to deliver against their school development program and see where things are not going right yeah and being able to ask the right questions to determine that.
29:35	I think, to be honest, there was something that I watched a program whilst I was chair of governor. I think in the early days, I watched a programme about some I can't remember all the details now, but there was some school that was failing. And it was because then all the staff left, the head teacher left, the governors were then pulled over the hot coals because they were the ones who didn't stop this free fall from happening.
30:10	And only at that point, I think I realised what a key role a governor has and what a responsibility it has. I think it was to do with fraudulent accounting or something where all the reserves had been spent on unnecessary things. The things that governors should be going, what's happening with the money? Where is it going? Why is it going there? What's the benefit to the children?
30:37	All of those kind of questions weren't being asked. And therefore, the whole kind of system fell apart, and it was all blamed on the governors. So yes, I was kind of at that point a bit, "Ooh, this is quite the responsibility.".
Sarah Chung: 30:55	I can imagine that must have been quite a shock.
Georgia: 30:59	Yeah. It was a bit of a wake-up moment.
Sarah Chung: 31:01	Yeah. Okay. That's fantastic. Thanks.
31:06	So I know that you mentioned the Director of Education is responsible for the head teacher's performance management and such forth with some involvement from chairs.
Georgia: 31:18	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 31:19	What about General staff performance management. So is that, again, with your director of education, or is that at a lower level with each?
Georgia: 31:30	No. So the [redacted] [redacted] Trust works, I believe, on the basis of the head teacher is responsible for the performance objectives of all of who they line manage.
31:40	So I think it's a very flat structure. The caretaker is managed by the head teacher. The receptionist is managed by the head teacher. Then maybe the senior leadership team might have you know the deputy head might now manage the newly qualified teachers or the teaching assistants. I don't know the

	full kind of management structure within the schools, but I would imagine that's the way that happens.
32:11	So the head teacher is kind of like a little pocket of their own having to manage these little schools. And then the director of education will manage the heads. And then the CEO will manage the central trust team.
Sarah Chung: 32:27	Right. Okay. So in that case, as in.
Georgia: 32:31	And we'll manage the Director of Education. Sorry. CEO line manages the director of education. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 32:37	Okay. Okay.
32:38	So as an LGB then, how would they take account for the performance management staff? How would they make sure that it's been done appropriately?
Georgia: 32:56	I don't think I could be wrong. And I've got a trust board meeting next week, so I'll ask the question.
33:05	But as far as I'm aware, performance management is not the LGB's responsibility.
33:17	The chair of governors will be involved in the process of the performance management of the heads yeah but not get involved in the performance management of all of the rest of the obviously, if there's a problem identified of one of the staff members and you know complaints or whatever, then I would think that the governing board would have license to say, "you know What are you doing about this teacher who's clearly not being effective?" So it would be a question of the head, but not getting involved in the performance management aspect of it.
Sarah Chung: 34:03	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. So as well as setting ethos and strategic direction of the school, I'm ensuring that there's a clear level of accountability in pupil performance and staffing, probity must clearly be displayed in financial oversight at the school. So how comfortable are you with that?
Georgia: 34:25	So as an LGB level, we don't have any probity of finances.
34:38	Well, so they do it in a way, but it's more about so at LGB level, you will get a finance report yeah which will identify spend the split of top slice and staff spend and you know I know pretty much every LGB I was chair of, we would always challenge the electricity bill of the school because it was going through the roof and you know anyway.
35:15	But there's no financial accountability on the LGBs. At the central trust team, we have a chief financial officer. At trust level, there's a finance committee. So the CFO reports into the finance committee, and it's for the finance committee to have property on all of the financial accounting of all the schools and central trust level.

35:44 That would then be if there's anything that needs to be reviewed or challenged, then at that point, it would be taken to the trust board.

Sarah Chung: 35:55 Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. That was a really clear explanation. So now we're going to do a little bit of a word association type activity. But the eight elements of effective governance have been identified as essential to good governance. So in your own words, can you explain what the following mean to you?

36:14 So we'll start with A, the right people around the table.

Georgia: 36:23 Having the right skill set and having the shared values.

Sarah Chung: 36:36 Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Understanding the role and responsibility.

Georgia: 36:44 Crucial.

Sarah Chung: 36:45 Okay. Good chairing.

Georgia: 36:53 Well, I chair myself. The importance of allowing everyone a voice.

Sarah Chung: 37:03 Okay. Lovely. Thank you. And professional clerking.

Georgia: 37:09 Essential.

37:10 We didn't have a clerk for years, it felt like. And my clerk that started during the pandemic was an absolute delight to have somebody else doing all of that stuff that I was having to chat and take minutes and send out the minutes of and set the agenda and all of that jazz. Yes. They're essential. Yeah. And worth their weight in gold.

Sarah Chung: 37:37 That's wonderful. Thank you.

37:39 So E, good relationships based on trust.

Georgia: 37:51 I would say that that was I don't want to keep using the same words. I'm trying to think of a different word. I'd probably say it's so important to trust what you are being told.

Sarah Chung: 38:13 Okay. F, knowing the school.

Georgia: 38:22 Hmm so a lot of my governors had never stepped into the school at all. All they were going on was our website and what they were being told at governing board meetings.

38:39 I think it's more important to believe in the ethos and values of the trust yeah more than knowing the school in any detail.

Sarah Chung: 38:53 Okay.

Georgia: 38:56 If you don't believe in the ethos, yeah then what you're bringing to the table is not irrelevant, but you know we're very much an

	equity-based, child-centered school. If we had a governor on the board who was more interested in profit, yeah then that's not the right fit for the governing board.
Sarah Chung: 39:28	Okay. Okay. That's fantastic. Thanks. Asking challenging questions.
Georgia: 39:43	See, I think that i think a lot of value is placed on that.
Sarah Chung: 39:48	Mm-hmm.
Georgia: 39:50	But that only comes with time and experience to be able to ask the right questions.
Sarah Chung: 40:03	Okay. Lovely. And in that case, final one, H, having courageous conversations in the interests of children and young people.
Georgia: 40:16	Courageous conversations. I mean, I'm not sure it's I'm not sure you should be needing to be courageous in having I mean, that should just come as the norm.
40:31	Should be normal to be child-led and you know at every point asking, "Is this the benefit of the children?" If not, don't do it. I don't think that's courageous. I think that's just a given.
Sarah Chung: 40:45	Yeah. Oh, that's wonderful. Thank you. So now we've briefly touched on the next point. The line between strategic and operational could be quite a grey area for some.
40:58	How confident are you that you know where governance ends and SLT responsibility begins?
Georgia: 41:12	I'm confident I know where that line is. However, I'm uncomfortable with not crossing that line.
41:29	If it's needed, if the running of a school is not going to plan yeah and it needs trustees or governors to step into you know all hands on the deck. I keep using shipping and sailing terms. I don't know why. It's of no interest to me whatsoever.
41:51	But then I think I've had a very different experience to many other people that you might be questioned because you know there's been too many times that I can care to mention how I've had to get involved in operational situations. For example, we've got a problem with our roof at [redacted], and I know that.
42:21	Please don't put that.
Sarah Chung: 42:22	I'll redact anything...
Georgia: 42:24	Redact that. Erm, there's a terrible problem with the roof. And erm I just kept hearing that there's problems with the roof and nobody was doing anything about it. And I took it to the trust board and said, "I can't stand by and let this thing play out or not play out. There are children at risk here.

42:51	We need to put forward a plan. I want it on the risk register. And I want to tell our head teacher that we will support him as a trust to take legal action if needs be, blah, blah, blah." Very much operational outside of our remit, potentially, but was necessary to get the ball rolling on it because it was too much, "you know Oh, it's not my job," or, "It's not my job." I don't care whose job it is.
43:24	Let's just get it in motion. So I think, going back to your question, yes, I know I'm comfortable with where that line is.
43:40	It's whether you know you're not a decent human being if you're going to put your hands up and go, "Well, that's not my job if it's needed." I mean, I think this might veer off into the wrong territory here, but I think governors as a whole, that's the biggest challenge that I saw within my especially parent governors, yeah not realizing what that line is yeah and not wanting to get you know they're wanting to get involved in the operational running of the school and trying to you know make them see that only when absolutely necessary, we don't get involved in operational issues.
Sarah Chung: 44:37	Okay. Okay.
Georgia: 44:38	But when your parents see it on the ground, it's hard for them to kind of detach themselves from, "Oh, no, this isn't a strategic decision. This is very much operational." But yeah.
Sarah Chung: 44:51	Okay. Thank you. So now then, we briefly mentioned COVID at the start with the difficulties with transitioning to online. The impact of COVID-19 was immense.
45:08	Can you describe your experience of governance during that time?
Georgia: 45:14	Well, I am very proud of the fact that we didn't miss one governing board meeting throughout the entire time. I'm very proud of the fact that I recruited four people onto the board during the pandemic virtually. .
45:32	I am very proud of my governing board for being of such support to the head teacher and to the rest of the staff. I couldn't have seen it differently. You know There was no I think being a parent governor hat on and chair governors, I could not...I saw car crashes happening in the far distance with the head teacher.
46:10	She was unstable at best and just trying desperately to keep her on the right path virtually. I mean, there was plenty of times that she cried on a call to me. I cried on a call to her just because of how dreadful the whole situation was. But from a governing perspective, we did the absolute very best that we could.
46:40	And that was more I mean, I would probably say 60% of our governing board meetings were about supporting the head teacher.

Sarah Chung: 46:52	Okay. So it became...
Georgia: 46:52	Giving her a platform to have you know a say about her woes and her challenges and this, that, and the other.
Sarah Chung: 46:59	So. It became less of a monitoring task, more of a supportive?
Georgia: 47:05	Absolutely. Absolutely. And is that the right approach? Probably not.
47:09	Because you know we're now in a position like the rest of the country where you know pupils haven't progressed as much as they should have done. But that's a worldwide issue, I believe. And it was not the governing board meetings that were held during the pandemic were not to beat a head teacher with yet another stick about pupil attainment.
47:36	It was about safeguarding, about you know children safeguarding, but also staff safeguarding. You know We focused on well-being yeah for the children and the staff far more than monitoring progress and attainment.
Sarah Chung: 47:54	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So now we're going to talk a little bit more generally about training as a whole for governors. If you were to have one essential piece of training for all governors in the UK, what would it be?
Georgia: 48:10	Do you know what? I probably have got a different view on this than most people that you'll speak to. But I think you can do all the training in the world. But until you get practical experience of it, you might as well be reading a blank piece of paper. I think, personally, there should be opportunities to shadow existing boards. Work shadowing opportunities.
48:37	That's what I think would be a practical you know what other governing boards, how they run, what kind of questions they ask in the real world. That's what I think would be preferable to all of the many, many, many, many, many training programmes I went on.
Sarah Chung: 48:57	It's quite a personalised approach to it then.
Georgia: 49:00	Yeah.
49:00	I just think real-world experience outweighs hours of watching presentations or watching training videos. So contextualising that training?
Sarah Chung: 49:15	Yeah. Yeah. Okay. So conversely, then, what, in your opinion, is the least valuable piece of training? And there's no right or wrong answer or any particular answer ever.
Georgia: 49:28	Well, I think what I think is tricky is that as a governing board within a trust, an academy trust, a lot of the training was specific to local authorities and also well-established schools

	and well-established governing boards. There's very little about new schools, new academy trusts.
49:59	So when I first started doing the training, it was hard to pick out what was most relevant to myself. And I'm absolutely sure I wasted hours of my life yeah doing training that beared no relation to my day-to-day governing.
Sarah Chung: 50:18	Okay. Okay. That's lovely. Thank you. So now thinking back to your initial year of governance, which was slightly different, I know the most because of the situation.
50:29	Did you feel supported?
Georgia: 50:32	No, because the CEO at the time had a very difficult relationship with governing boards, I think, generally, and parents. Specifically, parent governors. There was a real dislike of parent governors and always thinking that they were just meddling.
Sarah Chung: 50:59	Right. So it's quite a hostile situation?
Georgia:	Yes it was
Sarah Chung: 51:05	Okay.
Georgia: 51:08	Support from the head and the staff, governors. Yes. Absolutely. But when it came top-down and there were certain things that they just weren't able to support me and other governors on because of the feeling from up on high. Okay. So support from a lower level, but it was the level.
Sarah Chung: 51:29	Right. Okay. Thank you. So did you have any sort of mentor or governor buddy?
Georgia: 51:36	No. No. Okay. And do you think that mentors for not just governors, but for chairs of governors or even clerks would be an idea or.
Georgia: 51:48	Yes. And I think that kind of loops into my point about shadowing.
51:54	You know If you had a mentor that you could then also work shadow or governor shadow, whatever, that would be that would be the ultimate training.
Sarah Chung: 52:06	Okay. Do you think then that work shadowing situation, that mentoring situation, would it be better to have it internally within that governing body or externally from another governor?
Georgia: 52:21	Externally.
Sarah Chung: 52:22	Externally?
Georgia: 52:22	100%.

Sarah Chung: 52:24	Okay.
Georgia: 52:25	But it would still have to be like-for-like. You know If you're an academy trust, there's no point in then having a local authority mentor because they're whole different beasts.
Sarah Chung: 52:36	What do you think the benefit is then of having it externally?
Georgia: 52:43	Because you can have honest conversations that you might not be able to have internally.
Sarah Chung: 52:49	Okay. Wonderful. Okay.
52:53	So we're coming towards the end now.
Georgia: 52:58	I have got a meeting to go to, I think, in 5 or 10 minutes time.
Sarah Chung: 53:01	Oh, gosh. Okay. I will speed this up a little. Thank you...
Georgia: 53:03	That's alright. It's me talking.
Sarah Chung: 53:06	So the NGA have openly stated that they feel that induction training should be mandatory within the first year. And in Wales, it already is. So in your own words, can you explain whether you agree with that?
Georgia: 53:18	I didn't think it was I didn't realise it wasn't mandatory.
53:23	Certainly, when my new governor started, it was the first thing I got them to do, really, taking all of you know we work off of Governor Hub. So there's all of the and we work off of the key host governor hub, and therefore, we have all the access to the key governing training materials.
53:52	But we also because our first school was based in [redacted], we have access to [redacted] City Council Governing Services, yeah and they've done some wonderful training. So I didn't realise it wasn't mandatory. I mean, it absolutely should be mandatory to do some kind of induction. Funnily enough, I have not done any training since becoming a Trustee yeah mainly because I haven't found the time.
54:18	But there probably should have been some mandatory Trustee induction training that I should have done to start with.
Sarah Chung: 54:28	Okay. Okay. Thank you. So if mandatory training was introduced then, what would you like to see in relation to content?
Georgia: 54:48	I suppose things like really understanding how like if it's an academy trust, how that all operates and what devolved powers there are to LGBs. But obviously, that's quite trust-specific.
55:07	Probably things like monitoring, you know like idiot's guide to monitoring. Because I still find now monitoring is a difficult thing because unless you know maybe it's just because our

	school is particularly brilliant. But the monitoring reports I was either involved in or reviewed post-monitoring.
55:38	It was all like saying the school's doing great. However, now we've had a new head in. Turns out that there was an inconsistency of reading, for example, across the year groups. Now, that was never identified by our monitoring before because governors don't have the knowledge that there needs to be consistency across the school for reading.
56:13	I mean, it's obvious now, but at the time, it wouldn't have been either identified or been seen as a problem. But I don't know whether that's, again, school-specific, trust-specific, or whether you can teach that kind of thing. But I guess the kind of basics of monitoring and what to look out for, what questions to ask. And again, I don't mean to harp on about it, but real-world experience.
56:46	So you know shadowing. Being invited to other trust boards.
Sarah Chung: 56:55	Yeah. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So at the moment, training, a lot of training takes place either within an LEA or in-house, within Academy Trusts. What are your thoughts on online training?
Georgia: 57:11	It's all I've ever done.
Sarah Chung: 57:13	Is it? Okay. Yeah.
Georgia: 57:15	Well, I have been pushing for before when I was chair of governors and you know I'll be putting it back on the agenda at Trustee level is for trust-specific training. So we need to be delivering a session for trustees, sorry, for all the local governing boards on the ethos and values.
57:40	Or you know we have a specific [redacted] [redacted] curriculum, which sits alongside the national curriculum, but it's our own USP. It's our own curriculum. You know We should be doing we should train all our governors on what this curriculum is because what we haven't identified is how to measure, monitor, and measure that curriculum. That's still outstanding.
58:06	It happens, but we've got no way of measuring the impact on our children on that particular that's a key issue in my book. But again, so trust-specific training on the ethos and values and whatever else that might come along with that.
Sarah Chung: 58:24	Lovely. Thank you. So this is the final one now. What are your thoughts on a modulated course, whether it's delivered online, in-person, or hybrid, that resulted in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year?
Georgia: 58:43	I don't know whether I place that much value on that.
Sarah Chung: 58:46	Okay.
Georgia: 58:48	I don't think if you had you know a person had a million certificates doesn't make them a good governor.

Sarah Chung: 58:58	Right. Okay. It goes back to that context, doesn't it?
59:01	Yeah. Being able to place it. Okay. That's absolutely brilliant. Thank you ever so much, Georgia.
Georgia: 59:08	It's alright.
59:08	Is there anything you'd like to add quickly before we go?
Georgia: 59:12	No. I guess I would like to see what the outcome of this interview is. So you're writing a thesis, is that right?
Sarah Chung: 59:20	Yes. So my thesis won't be ready for about a year. I'm going to write it now for the next year. But what I am hoping to do is actually get some of the findings out, whether that's in small papers or just a general overview of the findings.
Georgia: 59:34	Oh, I'd love to. Yeah.
59:36	I'd love to see that because I'd like to then present it back to the trust board and the governing board as well you know because it's all part of one thing, isn't it? So if we can show that we've taken part in something like this to advance governing, then great. Sing about it. So yes, I would appreciate being kind of looped in on anything in the future.
Sarah Chung: 01:00:01	Lovely. Okay. So I've got your details.
01:00:04	And what I'll do is I'll just add you to the list and email you.
Georgia: 01:00:08	Perfect. Yeah. That'd be great. Thank you very much. Thank you. I'm going to let you go to your other meeting now. Thank you. Have a lovely day.

Jessie

Sarah Chung: 00:01	So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. During our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this.
00:29	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training. And I would like to remind you now that as stressed in the letter of participation that you've just signed, you're completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date.
01:02	Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years. Should you wish a copy of the results, please do email me. Any questions? Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So should we start with something nice and easy? How long have you been a governor?
Jessie: 01:31	Five years.
01:33	Four of those as chair.
Sarah Chung: 01:35	Okay. And what made you join?
Jessie: 01:40	I was a teacher. I taught for 18 years. And I had a son, and then I had sepsis. And so a bit of a life change of that. So I decided to give up teaching. But as lovely as my son is, you do still want that sort of adult mental stimulation, and it was something that I could do and work around him.
02:07	So yes, that's sort of how I went into it. It was still a very steep learning curve, considering I came from an education background. Not dealing with the management side was a, a bit of an issue because there was a lot of data and things that I never used to have to deal with. So it was yeah, still difficult in that respect.
Sarah Chung: 02:32	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.
Jessie: 02:38	Yeah, yeah, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 02:43	So thinking now, reflecting back on your five years, what has been the most enjoyable part of your governance?

Jessie: 02:56	Oh, gosh.
03:02	I suppose at the personal level, probably already teaching, it's something that I, I like to learn and I like to study. And that's something that I can do. You know, I can sort of learn more and find out more about what governance is and was.
03:21	It's nice to I suppose having that overview, I think that perhaps I didn't have as a teacher. So I mean, I was secondary, so primary is obviously a bit different to, to what I was used to.
03:47	But I suppose I was just at you know, I'd be a teacher in a classroom, and now I sort of see that overview a bit more. And I think it's nice to have for me to sort of have that wider understanding of so if I know a particular strategy is being used for handwriting, for example, that I can then go in.
04:18	So we're looking at the data, but actually I can go in and see the children doing it as well. And it is nice to sort of go in and, and see the children. And obviously, essentially, you're kind of checking up, aren't you? But it is nice to sort of go in and get to know the staff in a different way, which is an interesting one because I know certainly I used to view governors as a bit and I get that still.
04:49	But it's nice when you can sort of do you do get to know the staff a bit better. Obviously, that's been impeded by COVID, but obviously, we'll come on to that. So yes, it's nice to see that what you do does make a difference and also to understand a bit more about the pressures on I think senior management as well that I wasn't used to. I suppose everybody plays the part, really.
05:21	So, yeah, I found it personally sort of it's been quite fulfilling, really. So, yeah, it's nice to sort of have still have that chance to go and see what happened on, you know, on sort of right on the rock face, as it were, and then see how that's reflected and how that's looked at and approached and Yeah.
05:59	Yeah. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 06:02	Okay.
Jessie: 06:02	I was going to go onto something else, but I'm not quite sure.
Sarah Chung: 06:05	Please feel free.
Jessie: 06:07	No, I think it's that strategic view, that having that strategic I know you have to have to be quite hands-off. But it is having that awareness that what governors are doing strategically doesn't necessarily translate into it, but it does filter through.
06:32	So what we might have as you know, as a vision obviously, is taught or reflected or becomes part of the school life in a different way. But it's interesting that, that idea that's then followed through and how it's followed through. I suppose. So, yes, it's yeah. When you're discussing it, you don't think, "Oh,

	we're never going to get there." But then, actually, it might take it can take you know one or two years, but actually, you will see the difference in, "Oh, this is happening now in the classroom," and that's quite you know really lovely to see.
Sarah Chung: 07:07	So it's quite long-term overview, then, isn't it?
Jessie: 07:12	Yes. Yeah, it is. Yeah. I think it's I've had a couple of friends well, yeah, a couple of friends who were going to who tried being a governor, both from, I think, one from a business, one from an admin side. And I think they found that very frustrating that you don't see I think they got the impression that you're not really doing anything.
07:38	Nothing's happening. But from coming from an education background, I know that it's the long game. So perhaps that's not always visible to people unless they've been in it for a long time, I think. Yeah. So I think both of them didn't stay very long. I think they did a few months and thought, "Well, nothing's happening.
08:06	I'm not really doing anything." But yeah, yeah, I've got to pin it for the long call, I realise.
Sarah Chung: 08:13	Okay. Thank you. So, thinking now then, again, reflecting on your time as a governor, what would you say the least enjoyable part of your governance has been?
Jessie: 08:24	Staff disciplinaries.
Sarah Chung: 08:28	Yeah.
Jessie: 08:31	And things like we've had to due to budgets, we've had to cut staffing. We've had to do redundancies. That's difficult because, obviously, that's impacting on someone's life, isn't it? And it's Yeah. Yeah. Okay.
08:55	I mean, you're, you're supported through it, but it's, you know, you come down to that decision whether somebody stays or somebody goes. Yeah. Again, I suppose it is that bigger picture, isn't it? And I think that's I think what I've found is with good governors, that they understand that, that you're not just there to come in and enjoy the bits of the children. You have got to make these tough decisions as well. So they're not fun.
09:25	It's not great, but you have to do it too. It's meant to ensure that the life of the score runs smoothly and that people are going to say happy. Let's say order is maintained.
09:50	But I suppose it keeps everybody you know I think if people feel they're being treated fairly and that they see that where there's other issues they are dealt with, I think that helps with people's attitude to work then that we can see that fairness across the board.

Sarah Chung: 10:09	Okay. Okay. Thank you. So moving on now, the NGA has described governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity, vision, ethos, and strategic direction.
10:20	So the following questions will explore your understanding of all three. In your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?
Jessie: 10:46	So I think when Governor's first start, really emphasise that difference between what's strategic and what's operational.
10:56	And I think what I tend to find needs to explain is that basically, you're not going in to do what teach does. You are there to have that overview. You're not going in to observe. You're not going into assess or comment on what's going on because the school staff do that. And it's that again, it's that overview.
11:26	For us, because we have looked at our vision in particular, and we started with looking at, "Well, what do we want for our pupils?" And I think we've sort of worked for developing and celebrating pupils individual attributes, not particularly academic, but having that unique child vision.
11:55	And in having that strategic direction, it's been, first of all, a lot of discussion around, "This is our this is the endpoint that we want. How are we going to go about it?" And then it's sort of developing that into ensuring that the governors have an understanding and focus of what we've got to do, and then consulting with school staff about what we then need to do to sort of pass that down, pass that understanding down throughout the school so it becomes part of the culture and the ethos.
12:36	I mean, that's something in that where we've looked at vision. I suppose in terms of with strategic direction, we will tend to start with we'll have a look at things like the I presume you know the acronyms like the SIPP and the CEF and all that. But we sort of have that as a bit of a dynamic, really. So we aren't sort of dictating what the school are doing.
13:02	We're having that discussion in meetings about, "Well, what are the issues? What's the background? What's the community of the school like?" And then where are the issues that we can address? And then governors will sort of take that back and then look at how we can then also focus on what direction that we can take in terms of say, for example, we're a federation, and one of the schools is good.
13:40	One of the schools requires improvement. So we know that we need to develop our curriculum. As a governing board now, I know I need to make sure that the governing board needs to develop their understanding of the curriculum because we aren't necessarily able to hold the school to account. So we're now doing things like so we're changing focuses of meetings.
14:09	We're having meetings that are fully based on the curriculum rather than a general meeting. So I think while there's that I think there has to be that relationship there. We're not there to

	just decide. We've got to sort of work with the school and what their focus is. But it also means that in terms of curriculum strategies as far as governors, we've got to develop our understanding so that, that we can then say, "Well, why is this happening? Why isn't this happening? Why are you doing that?
14:39	Why haven't you done that?" And I think I keep coming back to the same words. I'm trying to think of different words. It is, again, sort of having that overview, that looking at the whole school, not just looking at the class.
15:08	I mean, it's looking at the data and it's looking at what the children are doing in school. And it's bringing all of those things together from visits and reports that you might get off with advisors or whatever, and sort of taking all that back, putting that together, and then seeing what that shows us, not just I think he's sort of developing that knowledge overview.
15:39	Must be another word. But, but pulling all the threads together, I think, having that understanding, and then being able to sort of come back and be able to question and be able to pursue something where, you know, if it's not working or if it is working. But then you've also got to bear in mind that, again, understanding that it's not just about children.
16:11	How is it affecting staff well-being? How is it impacting on sort of senior leadership? And then, obviously, whatever comes in from the government, what things have changed there. So it's having a lot of plates spinning all the time. Yeah I think for me as a chair, I'm not sure necessarily the board not all of the board that I work with perhaps have that awareness of all the things going on.
16:44	But as chair, I have to make sure that that is all there, that we are looking at what's going on in terms of what the DFE are providing and Office Dead. Also, bearing in mind the needs of our pupils and our staff. I'm just going to turn my pen down. That's a very rambly answer.
Sarah Chung: 17:09	It's qualitative research. We love all answers like that, so.
17:15	Thank you. Okay. Sorry.
Jessie: 17:18	Are you going to transcribe this, by the way?
Sarah Chung: 17:20	Oh, yes. Yeah. I'll make sure it's all anonymised and things, but yeah.
Jessie: 17:26	I'm just thinking it's going to be a lot to transcribe.
Sarah Chung: 17:30	Normally, one interview is about 10 hours, I think, so. Oh, wow. And it's good. It does help me understand things a little better. Okay.
17:40	So in terms then of your school's ethos, can you describe what we mean by that?

Jessie: 17:57	I would say in terms of our school, when we discuss the ethos, we discuss what it feels like when we walk around the school. And that, yes, we've got values and our vision statement and mission statement.
18:14	You've got all these different things. But for us, it's actually what it's like when you walk around and how the staff interact with the children and how children interact with the visitors and each other. And it's a bit of a feeling that you get when you go around, and it's how it's I wouldn't say it's necessarily how it's sort of perpetuated through the school.
18:49	It's kind of what you go in and experience when you go in the school, really. I think that's what we tend to view it as we go in, how we feel and how the relationships and respect or how consequences are dealt with or yeah.
19:20	Yeah. Yeah. I think I'm going to go with that.
Sarah Chung: 19:24	Thank you.
Jessie: 19:26	It's a feeling.
Sarah Chung: 19:27	Yeah. Okay. So can you tell me a little bit how you, as a governing body, developed your own school's ethos? And are you happy with it?
Jessie: 19:43	So it's a federation in one village, but one of the schools is a church school, and the other one isn't.
19:57	And so it became federated about five or six years ago or something like that. So it's trying to have that balance between, obviously, the section of the school that's Church of England sorry, Church of England School.
20:19	We've obviously got to work with the diocese and promote that God is relevant and part of the school life and that many of the lessons may well reflect Christian teachings. So we have the juniors and the infants because they aren't.
20:51	And this took a while for us to develop this vision because we wanted to be inclusive, but also we can't impose Christian-specific sort of culture in a school that isn't the Church of England school. And so for us, that's why we sort of went with looking at the child as that unique child.
21:21	And actually, our vision statement is to do with each child being unique child of God, whereas in the infants, it's a unique child. So it's already still developing that it's still providing sort of that understanding of each other and celebrating of what the differences are. But then, obviously, perhaps there's a bit more of a background. Not sorry. No.
21:50	There's another element added when they move up to the juniors that actually there's it's not just themselves and school community. There is a wider community out there that includes beyond where they live and the country. And, you know, it, it can include obviously people over the world. So I think it was

	starting with that. Celebrating the child is unique and then sort of expanding that back outwards.
22:22	That's sort of where we started, really, with when that, you know, when we were looking at the vision we were going to develop, it was already a really lovely, respectful and nice that you could see good relationships when you walk around school anyway. So I think we've built on that rather than created that ourselves.
22:52	Perhaps just perhaps giving something for, for people to hang it on Mm-hmm. to understand why they're doing it. This isn't just what teachers are saying. There is actually a bigger picture to, to this. So I think that's where that's what we've done. And it permeates for I mean, it permeates through our policies and it's for staff as well because it's not just about pupils.
23:21	It's everybody's a unique child.
Sarah Chung: 23:23	Mm-hmm.
Jessie: 23:25	And it's important, again, to have that. And what we encourage is that it's, it's pupils towards staff and staff towards other staff and, you know, considering all the roles that different staff are there to do. So I think just from taking that one little unique child, we've expanded it into something where it's something that even the youngest pupils can, can get you know understand that it's I'm fine as I am and it's fine that I do this and somebody else can do that.
24:00	And it can develop as they go throughout school and see the adults modelling it as well. So that's sort of how we did that.
Sarah Chung: 24:10	Okay. And do you feel then, as governors, that you were quite active in developing that ethos? I know you said you didn't create it, but more sort of built up the existing one. But do you feel that you were quite involved, or was it a separate SLT?
Jessie: 24:33	I think it was something that initiated with us. Yeah We were certainly there sort of starting to develop it. The head did sort of take it and run with it, and then we were there to sort of get involved with staff meetings and staff training sessions.
25:03	So yes, it was something that and again, it was something that took a while. So well, I suppose she's not relatively about five or six years old, and obviously had lots of things to sort out first. And so we were trying to get vision going for a while.
25:29	But then, yes, I think we kind of had to wait for because she had a lot of other things to deal with as well. But I think it meant that we could, I suppose, refine it and put more discussion into it.
25:46	And actually, because we have foundation governors actually have that input and a focus in which to sort of hang the Christian aspect of it on. So I think it was useful that we started the idea and understood what we meant by it.

26:15	But I think it was the head and senior leadership that then developed that more into how it was going to be through school with some input from governors. But obviously, she then had to sort of filter it down through the staff and onto the peoples.
Sarah Chung: 26:33	Okay. Thank you. Do you think the governors would benefit from a specific training around developing an ethos?
Jessie: 26:50	Yeah. I mean, I don't know if I don't know if this is sort of going off a bit of a tangent, but most governors from other schools that I talk to, I'm well aware, that you have governors that do want to get involved and will do training, and you have governors who are just there.
27:24	Those governors who do take on you know understand that it isn't just a case of turning up to meeting, listening, not contributing, going home, and saying you're a governor. It's a bit different to actually taking part, getting involved in a discussion, getting involved in a working group.
27:46	And it tends to be from what I've found because I've sat on a few different boards and people that governors tend to go on two or three boards. And from what I hear, it's quite similar. You'll have a core of a few governors who will do that training. So you have some more active governors who will do it, and then governors who are much more passive.
28:10	And whilst attending training that's imposed, but. So we always do half an hour before each meeting. Governors expect to turn up for that half an hour. I know not all schools do that. And governors do turn up for that half an hour. Whether that's then used and becomes part of their broader knowledge, I'm not sure.
28:42	But certainly, those who want to do it will use it as professional development. So yes, governors should have this training. I understand it's more difficult for people who have other commitments to give up that time.
29:15	But it's a difficult one, really. You either have governors or you have an incomplete board.
29:44	So yes. Yes, all governors should be trained. All governors should do that. Actually getting them to take part, engage, use it to sort of become more involved is, yeah, an aspect that, unfortunately, it's yeah, I don't know the answer.
30:19	It's that whole I know we talk a lot about you can lead the horse to water. You can't make it drink. So yeah, we often get them there, but I don't want to drink, so. But yes, yes, they should be trained. Thank you. They just don't all engage with it. That's the only thing. Yeah Sorry, that was a bit of a rant. Yeah. As professional as I was trying to make it, but yeah.
Sarah Chung: 30:48	So I gather then that training might have been a bit of an issue for your board?

Jessie: 30:56	For our board. From what I talk to, a lot of people I think the governance role has changed. Oh, I don't think. The governance role has changed quite drastically, I think, over the years.
31:10	And there are governors who, with the very best will in the world, are very happy to give up their time, but perhaps lack the understanding, the experience, the expertise, the willingness, dare I say it, sometimes the capacity to deal with what some of the training needs are.
31:40	And I think every governor I've ever spoke to and I've been to NGA events. I've talked to governors on other boards in our local area. It's the same everywhere. Yeah. So I don't think it's just our board.
32:08	If anything, I would say I think having because we have that extra half an hour at the start and we do six meetings a year, not three. I think that we probably are better more aware than other governing boards I've sat on and other governing boards that I know other people are on.
Sarah Chung: 32:34	Okay.
32:36	In terms of the half an hour training session that you do before, who leads that normally? Or can that depend.
Jessie: 32:45	It tends to be me that organises. It's not necessarily always me. So if you have a focus on people premium, we'll get the pupil premium champion to come and give a session. We had like the early years changes. So we had the early years staff come and talk to us. I tend to organise it. I do lead some.
33:09	And so yeah, so often we'll go back to the three core areas and you know sort of having that strategic overview. And also, I think encouraging and prompting people and you know expecting them to take part.
33:29	It's a bit of a constant thing. But yeah, it tends to be because, again, I plan. I do an annual development plan each year. And I know not a lot of schools do that. So I know which areas working with the school that, as a governing board, we need to work on. But also, in terms of the school, we need to focus on that.
34:00	And that will sort of drive what we're going to do for that next year in terms of training.
Sarah Chung: 34:05	So that annual review, is that based on the skills audit?
Jessie: 34:13	No. It will be I tend to use the Skills Audit as oh, no. Sorry. No. Yes. Sorry. The skills audit will yeah, if there's sort of some glaring areas, yes.
34:31	Yeah. Yes, I would use the skills already. But yes, I will use that. And it will also be to look at improving our understanding of areas that if the school are a bit weaker on, that's what we

	as governors need to focus on to really better understanding so we can. So it's a bit of a looking at the SIP and the SEF as well.
Sarah Chung: 34:54	Ah, okay. Yeah. I think I've got you now. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you.
34:59	So thinking now about the vision of your school, can you describe what you think the vision means or?
Jessie: 35:10	Vision is we've used, as a basis, a parable of the Good Samaritan.
35:24	And I mean, our vision is to do with being a unique child, whether it's a unique child of God or a unique child. So it's celebrating that individual attributes, the ones that aren't I mean, in our vision, we don't include anything to do with academics.
35:51	It's about making them the best person you know and allowing them that chance to develop into the best person that they can be.
Sarah Chung: 36:05	Thank you. So can you explain now a little bit about so we're moving on from the three core functions, sorry. So can you explain a little bit about how your governing body oversees pupil performance?
Jessie: 36:19	Yeah.
36:20	a link Governor who meets regularly with the what are you calling? Well, he sort of deals with the data or the data collection. So they meet quite regularly. But that data then does come to full governors where we would look at it. I mean, we do see keep a check on progress throughout the year. And it is all we have aspirate to be.
36:52	We do look at send. We look at pupil premium. I'm just thinking I don't have a great deal of looked after children, but I think we do consider that as well. So yeah, we would sort of keep going back to that throughout the year, each meeting.
Sarah Chung: 37:15	Okay. So that's on your regular agenda then, too?
Jessie: 37:19	Yes.
37:19	Yeah. So I mean, it comes through as part of the head teacher's report. It's sort of but yeah. So we have got that. Personally goes in. But yeah.
Sarah Chung: 37:34	And I think you said you meet six times a year. So are you following the circle model of governance then?
Jessie: 37:42	The circle model?
Sarah Chung: 37:45	Well, the circle model is basically roughly six meetings a year, but then you don't need to have the smaller committee meetings.

Jessie: 37:54	Oh, yes. Right. Yes. This happened before I joined. So apparently there was a curriculum committee and so yeah. I think essentially the governing board were in a bit of a state. And I think the head kind of took the lead, really, when she joined. And so yeah, she moved them to six meetings because apparently it's just becoming quite repetitive.
38:21	So we do have finance a separate, although the minutes of the finance and details do come to fore governance as well.
Sarah Chung: 38:30	Okay. Okay. And do you feel that the six meetings are better for your governing body in terms of understanding? Does it give you a more holistic viewpoint?
Jessie: 38:45	Well, I mean, we're going to change it because it's been difficult because obviously, we've done a lot of meetings through lockdown.
38:55	We've had quite a change in who's on the board now. And we've lost, I think, a lot of experience and understanding. And so what we're doing, we're going to three usual meetings. And then three of those the other three meetings will be based on the curriculum.
39:26	It will be looking at that data much more closely in developing that understanding for governors and having the chance to explore because I think with the six meetings, you would go through everything. But actually, what we want is that time to explore and go in depth. And I think we were just sort of skimming things a lot of the time.
Sarah Chung: 39:51	Right, ok...
Jessie: 39:52	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 39:53	So do you think it's more of a hybrid version sort of between the circle model and the more traditional model?
Jessie: 40:03	I suppose it is. I suppose it's rather than having a separate committee or separate curriculum, hopefully, because at the end of the day, it's the board's responsibility, isn't it? And it should be the full board.
40:18	So I think i think having perhaps the standalone curriculum training wasn't working as well. Having these I mean, see how we're going to try and start this from next year. So it'll be one meeting and one curriculum meeting a term, but then all governors will take part in that.
40:40	And so hopefully, that's going to develop that understanding and that will have better in-depth questioning and holding to account because I think what's coming out is that it's not giving us time, the meeting to hold people sorry, to hold the school to account because we have so much to get through.
Sarah Chung: 41:08	Yeah. Okay.

41:10	That's wonderful. Thanks. So thinking now about the data, again, for pupil performance, how comfortable are you understanding the data as it's presented to you?
Jessie: 41:32	Okay. I understand the data, how it's presented. I don't think the governors certainly not all governors do.
41:42	We have had training sessions in the past. We haven't had one for a couple of years. And like I said, we've changed quite a few members have changed. To be fair to the school, I don't think there is another way that they could present.
41:59	I think it is as simplistic as the score can present it and in representing all the things that we wanted to we wanted to explore, to have a separate so I think we've got each year we've got girls, boys, send, pupil premium. And actually, we can see the thing is I think how it's presented, if you don't have that understanding of I'm not going to say statistics, actually.
42:38	I think, really, it probably needs, again, a bit I think rather than a whole board session, I think it needs some more bespoke sessions for perhaps two or three governors working closely with staff. So for me, I do, but I think a lot of people who haven't had experience of it don't really get what's happening with the data.
Sarah Chung: 43:10	Okay. Okay. Thank you. So now thinking more generally in terms of all the aspects of governing, do you feel able to challenge or raise questions when necessary?
Jessie: 43:25	Yes. Yes. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 43:29	And can you describe a time, in your own words, where you have challenged?
Jessie: 43:48	The thing is, I quite regularly do. Obviously, we get the documents and we go through the I mean, the head teacher's report is probably the main one that we'll look at.
44:02	And there'll certainly be I mean, there'll be people that will focus on things like staff absences. And we'll question a bit more thoroughly about why what's happening, you know is the support needed, or people attendance. I think probably the it was pulled up in our office about our writing.
44:39	And probably the last thing that and it wasn't I mean, I'd say it was probably about two or three of us, really, that because of the way that they're doing the writing, it's more sections. And so actually, we aren't seeing progress. What we're seeing is that section, that section, that section.
45:08	And so until the end of the year, when all the sections are put together, we can't see other children making progress or not. And so that's something that we've like, probably about two or three of us, and that we have basically, we can't monitor it. We can't watch what's happening.
45:34	And we're not happy with the you know, with the fact that I think it will be our last meeting, and then we'll be able to they

	can put all the slots together. And for us, that's, that's too long and too late, and we can't I think we can't hold them to account because we don't know what they're doing until it's too late or whatever.
46:04	So that, that's something that we raised at the last session. We've had explanations. I mean, we have an advisor that goes in and he'll do a report, so we've used that as well. And he sort of seems quite happy well, I'll say in some classes, he'll seem quite happy with the watch machine books.
46:29	But so probably it's that at the moment, and that's something that I will if we're not happy with the answers, it will generously, right, and I'll ask the clerk, "Well, that has to go on the next meeting's agenda.".
Sarah Chung: 46:45	Okay.
Jessie: 46:45	So we can see what's happening there. So we don't just leave it. It might be that I mean, at the moment, I think the explanation at the time is, obviously, we can't see until it's all finished. And it's like, "Well, we're not happy with that, so it will come on to the next meeting.
47:02	It will be more of a focus for us. Go on.
Sarah Chung: 47:08	I was just going to say, and do you feel when you do challenge, do you feel how do you feel it's met?
Jessie: 47:29	On the whole, I think I do tend to find the senior management quite they do seem very transparent about what's happening.
47:53	We don't get the feeling that they're hiding things when we go and we haven't I think what we're presented with at governor meetings is what we see when we go into school. So yeah, on the whole.
48:17	I mean, sometimes, yeah. Might be a bit defensive. We don't ever make it personal. It's not a personal thing. I suppose if it's something that they're perhaps feel more responsible for, that it might be taken a bit more personally, and I think perhaps that sometimes comes out, but it's not meant like that.
48:47	On the whole, what we've found is they have welcomed. I think like I said before, I joined, the board was not really holding this call to account anyway. And I think they have welcomed that. They have been quite grateful for the I think the better involvement and the better understanding, really. And I think it's been better engagement from governors.
49:19	So yeah, on the whole, yeah. Yeah. We've never been able to fight, like, pick holes in anything. Yeah. So they've always prepared. They've always got an explanation of why they're doing what they're doing, so.
Sarah Chung: 49:37	Okay. That's great. Thank you. Just a little time check. Are you still okay for time?

Jessie: 49:45	I am, yes. Yeah. I've got to be somewhere at half past 12:00, but I don't imagine we'll be here then.
Sarah Chung: 49:52	So another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for the management of staff. How confident are you to do that?
Jessie: 50:10	Yes. I mean, that's happened. Again, she is very transparent about what's going on.
50:20	And we do go in and talk to staff. There was an issue. If we felt certain things weren't matching up, yeah then yes, we would have that discussion. On the whole, what I get from the head is always what is sort of being you know what I see and hear and experience when I go into school anyway.
Sarah Chung: 50:46	Okay. So you feel quite confident then?
Jessie: 50:51	Yeah. Yeah. And there are anonymous questionnaires that go out as well. So we do yeah sort of have those, so.
Sarah Chung: 51:09	Wonderful. Thank you. So just thinking about your staff, what are the developmental and reward arrangements in your setting?
Jessie: 51:32	I think certainly those staff who are certainly for something that they want to further themselves, whether it's research or career development, professional development, that is very much welcomed.
51:57	We've certainly got a few staff who have brought experience with them. And rather than perhaps it wasn't something that we didn't want, we've actually embraced that and allowed them to continue with that. And obviously, there's another sort of facet to our school. There are those that want to go into always want to progress further.
52:20	And whilst it may not be at our school, the head's very good at allowing them to do that, to have the opportunity to whether it's sort of looking at middle management or senior leadership, there is the opportunity to develop that and progress because it does mean that staff feel happier, feel more valued.
52:49	Ultimately, it does mean that you're paying and I might probably take that experience elsewhere. But it does seem to you know I mean, we are getting a good deal. I don't mean the front there. But we are getting the benefits from offering you know if that's something that I want to do, then generally it's a case that that's great.
53:20	Yes, by all means. You know Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 53:24	Okay. Fantastic. Thank you. So as well as setting the ethos and strategic direction of the school and also ensuring there's a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing, probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight of your school. How confident are you in that area?

Jessie: 53:58	I would say because we do have a finance committee specifically with the chair of finance who does have a business background. I think that we've only got that one business person.
54:21	And having that experience has really added to the finance committee because I think a lot of the time before gets taken at face value, and we have to trust in what the school business manager and head are presenting with us, which we do.
54:53	I mean, we have everything that is you know we do look through it, but as to whether all the governors on the finance committee would I suppose I mean, yeah, it's probably an area that and we've had training on it on the more general aspects.
55:20	But I think when it comes down to the actual finance bit, we do rely heavily on people with that background because, yeah, there could be stuff going on and we wouldn't know. Obviously the you know external audits and things that will come back. But I mean, we do sort of rely on, like I say, the transparency of what's presented to us really.
55:52	So yeah.
Sarah Chung: 55:54	Thank you. So can you briefly explain how, as a governing body, then, you manage your school budget?
Jessie: 56:11	So obviously, we do have I think. So yeah, it's been quite recently.
56:20	So yeah, when we do look at it, we have, again, six finance meetings a year. Small business manager is very good at explaining it. She does sort of put things in layman's terms for us. And she will explain her reasoning for it. So she will often do a worst-case scenario. And so that by the end, hopefully, where we thought it might have been in a deficit, it might not be as bad a deficit, or we might even not be a deficit at all.
56:53	And actually, she's really good at explaining where all these things you know why this might be if it's pensions or if... it's sorry.
Sarah Chung: 57:11	No, it's all right. You froze then.
Jessie: 57:12	Oh, did I? Oh right, sorry. Yeah. So yeah, School Business is very good at sort of explaining and going through things.
57:22	You will provide an explanation of some of the things that we're going to talk about. So that's really helpful. We do look at the budget quite regularly. The chair of finance who's got that business background is very good at working with the school business manager in terms of procurement as well.
57:49	And again, this is the head's quite transparent where we because we maintained and having that local authority involvement as well that we have also got those with the people that we can certainly have their knowledge that we can work with and yeah, learn about.

58:17	Kind of lost track of where the question's going now. You think about the school budget?
Sarah Chung: 58:22	Yeah. It's how you manage it as a governing body.
Jessie: 58:25	Right. Yeah. We sort of keep regular checks on it. I mean, we do look at it. We have the SFBS, SBFS.
Sarah Chung: 58:36	Oh, yes, yeah. Yeah.
Jessie: 58:41	Erm, and so you know that is on a cycle.
58:45	We are sort of constantly keeping a check on things. So actually, I mean, particularly having the six meetings a year, I do think we do keep a good understanding of what's going on. And we can because it's only sort of six to seven weeks between each meeting, we can keep a good idea of what's ticking over with it.
Sarah Chung: 59:09	Okay. Thank you. So now we'll move on again. And this time, we're going to look at the eight elements of effective governance.
59:17	And we're going to do a little bit of a words association almost. So I'm going to read you the element of effective governance. And if you tell me what that means, that would be All right, then. So we'll start with A, the right people around the table.
Jessie: 59:36	Do you want some words or?
Sarah Chung: 59:38	Yeah. Absolutely.
Jessie: 59:42	[Inaudible] associated would that be one?
Sarah Chung: 59:45	You can phrase it as a sentence if it helps.
Jessie: 59:47	Oh, good. Right, people around the table. I suppose breadth of skills, knowledge, and experience. Willingness to participate.
Sarah Chung: 01:00:10	Okay. Thank you. So B, understanding the roles and responsibilities.
Jessie: 01:00:32	I don't know how to say it without, isn't it? I suppose making sure that governors understand the role of things like the link governors that they're strategic, what the school does, and what governors do, and if they're a link governor, what they should be doing and how they're triangulating information.
Sarah Chung: 01:00:59	Okay. Thank you. C, good chairing.
Jessie: 01:01:14	There's a 360-degree review.
01:01:23	Also supporting modelling.
Sarah Chung: 01:01:39	Okay. And D, professional clerking.

Jessie: 01:01:50	Invaluable. Essential.
Sarah Chung: 01:01:58	Okay. E, good relationships based on trust. Yeah.
Jessie: 01:02:15	Essential as well.
Sarah Chung: 01:02:17	Okay. And F, knowing the school.
Jessie: 01:02:34	Important.
Sarah Chung: 01:02:39	Okay.
Jessie: 01:02:47	I'm just saying that's where governors who can't always come in.
Sarah Chung: 01:02:50	Right. Okay. And G, asking challenging questions.
Jessie: 01:03:00	Expected.
Sarah Chung: 01:03:02	Okay.
01:03:09	H, having courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people?
Jessie: 01:03:21	Uncomfortable but necessary at times. Okay.
Sarah Chung: 01:03:33	Wonderful. Thank you. So the line between strategic and operational can be seen as quite a grey area for some, and I think we've already touched on that a little bit, haven't we? How confident are you knowing where governance ends and head teacher SLT responsibility begins?
Jessie: 01:03:59	I would say that I am fairly confident.
01:04:01	I know. I'll be honest. Occasionally, the clerk has reminded me, or, in fact, another governor has reminded me if I've strayed. But we do do that, and we will do that within the board. I think it's difficult to define for people who are new.
01:04:30	I think it's sort of gained more by experience and guidance.
Sarah Chung: 01:04:36	Okay. So the impact of COVID-19 now, it was immense, wasn't it? You know Can you describe the experience of your experience, sorry, of governance, during this time?
Jessie: 01:05:02	I think you felt useless. You felt a distance. Didn't feel you could do your role. You were so amazed by what the school did, what staff did, and the lengths that they went to, and you didn't feel that there was anything that you could do or in fact were doing to support them.
01:05:41	It was yeah, it was really hard. We can have conversations and texts and emails and video calls, but you just yeah.
01:06:00	I think you know we just felt for the staff and the school and that actually yeah. I think Yeah. I don't feel that we were governing, really, properly.

01:06:26	You know We could have the information and the data and the reports and things, but actually, you just felt so distanced or you didn't feel like you were doing it.
Sarah Chung: 01:06:40	Okay. Sounds to have been quite, quite hard for you as a governing body then?
Jessie: 01:06:47	It was.
01:06:48	And we had some new governors, and we were able to feel they were getting the right experience. We didn't feel that we couldn't train them. I don't think, from what I've talked to them since, they probably didn't feel a proper part, really. Couldn't get to know people. Couldn't get to know the school. Yeah And so it became quite disjointed, I'd say.
01:07:16	I think with having online sessions, it's less of a discussion. Yeah And so I do think we lost that. I don't think there was as much challenge.
01:07:37	And also, I don't think we felt comfortable in challenging people who were going through you know working ridiculous hours through you know these unique impossible times, really, that they were doing the better. They were just keeping going. And actually, you didn't want to sort of focus on the fact that I mean, not that there was the data or anything like that, but you didn't particularly want to sort of look at what they were doing. What wasn't being done because it was just a day-to-day getting through it.
01:08:09	And so perhaps I don't think well, I don't think we did. We didn't sort of you know weren't holding them to account because they're having a difficult time of it all. But I think having new governors in, they haven't seen that either.
Sarah Chung: 01:08:27	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Did governing during the pandemic highlight any areas that you felt underqualified or undertrained for?
Jessie: 01:08:47	No, I don't think so. I think it was more. I suppose the skills and experience you sort of acquire as a governor. They just couldn't use them.
Sarah Chung: 01:09:01	Yeah. Okay. And were you generally kept up to date by your SLT?
Jessie: 01:09:06	Oh, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:09:07	Yeah. Okay. So if you were to have one essential piece of training so this is in general now for every governor in the UK, what would it be? And why do you think it's essential?
Jessie: 01:09:25	Oh, I think it would be that that that difference between strategic and operational and developing that understanding and ways to practise and demonstrate having that strategic overview.
Sarah Chung: 01:09:45	Okay. Lovely.

Jessie: 01:09:46	It's so woolly, it's, it's quite hard to define.
Sarah Chung: 01:09:51	Okay. So conversely, then, what, in your opinion, is the least valuable piece of training for governess and why?
Jessie: 01:10:16	I suppose when I think back, I suppose I know you've got to do an introduction to governance, but it doesn't in any way prepare you.
01:10:29	It sort of skates like, "Oh, well, you look at this and you look at this," but actually, there's a whole lot of steps needed. If anything, I feel that governors perhaps do need to focus on the fact that you do need to question and develop an understanding.
Sarah Chung: 01:10:55	Wonderful. Thank you.
01:10:57	So thinking back now on your first year of governance, did you feel supported? Sorry?
Jessie: 01:11:04	No.
Sarah Chung: 01:11:04	No? Okay. Did you have a mentor or a governing buddy?
Jessie: 01:11:10	No.
Sarah Chung: 01:11:11	Okay. Why didn't you feel supported?
Jessie: 01:11:20	I think a particular school, like I said, the governing board was in quite a sort of very established board that were very old-school.
Sarah Chung: 01:11:36	Mm-hmm.
Jessie: 01:11:39	But I have to say, I found this on other boards that I've sat on. It's almost like nobody really knows what governance is, and so nobody's there to support you through what governance is. Right. Nobody really knows well, nobody really knew what trained the was. I had to go and find it myself.
Sarah Chung: 01:12:04	Mm-hmm.
Jessie: 01:12:04	Nobody really You just didn't know what, what you should know. It's like you don't know what you don't know. And I think I, I joined a board that didn't know what they didn't know. Right. But I think this, unfortunately, happens quite a lot. And it's I suppose in terms of things like NGA events because I, I started going to those and I learned a lot of those governors that don't.
01:12:38	And so, the NGA probably see the governors that are the ones that have that knowledge and that understanding. And actually, there's these hundreds of thousands of governors that just don't make the effort and don't think about the training and don't know that there's a training out there.

01:12:59	And so yeah, it's, unfortunately, those that don't have that motivation, that impetus to go out and do it because I had to go, "I often found it myself." yeah That's meant that I can then now you know, sort of disperse. Anyway, you know, make sure that, that goes through the rest of the board.
01:13:24	So I've put those things in place because I don't want anyone to go through what I had to go through because I became chair after a year. Yeah. No idea what I was doing. It was just I wanted something to be chair. Nobody else wanted to do it. Couldn't sit there and enter the school. So I wouldn't ever not fair to put somebody through that.
Sarah Chung: 01:13:46	Okay. So what are your thoughts in on mentors for new governors or chairs of governors and even clerks?
Jessie: 01:13:58	I think they're essential, really, to keep it going, to keep good well, to begin and then continue good practice.
Sarah Chung: 01:14:12	Would you have a mentor within the governing body, or do you think it should be external?
Jessie: 01:14:18	I think either.
Sarah Chung: 01:14:20	Okay. So we're on the last couple now, if that's Okay.
Jessie: 01:14:26	So sorry.
01:14:27	I've taken up all your time.
Sarah Chung: 01:14:28	No, no. I'm really, really enjoying listening. I was just a bit worried in case you needed to be somewhere. So the NGA have openly stated that they feel that induction training should be mandatory within the first year. And indeed, in Wales, it actually is. In your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this and why?
Jessie: 01:14:48	I do agree. I think people have an idea about governance and what it is, and when actually they start to experience it, I think someone will leave.
01:15:00	I think it should be mandatory before you even get onto a board. So you have that understanding before you join or you join as you join the board, and then it's not for you. . You're not spending all that time training people.
Sarah Chung: 01:15:20	Okay. Wonderful. So final one now. If mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following?
01:15:29	So we'll start with content.
Jessie: 01:15:37	I think the role of the governor. I think it's, it's I think often what people see are the three core areas, but actually, how you put that in practice. Okay. What that actually means to hold people to account on a practical level that you can go in and do visits, but also with the sources of information you can use for that.

Sarah Chung: 01:16:04	Okay. So that relates back to your point on questioning, really, doesn't it, with the holding to account and making sure governors can...
Jessie: 01:16:18	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:16:19	Question. Okay.
Jessie: 01:16:20	Mm-hmm.
Sarah Chung: 01:16:21	Wonderful. Thank you. So how do you think this training should take place? So for example, most training is conducted within the LEA or in-house within schools.
01:16:35	What are your thoughts on maybe online?
Jessie: 01:16:41	In terms of convenience, online is great. I think it's better to be face-to-face, whether that's in-house or whether that's that I don't know. It's like a particular sense, you know, whether it's different governors from schools coming together or whether it's an in-school one.
Sarah Chung: 01:17:06	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So in that case, what are your thoughts on a modulated course delivered online and resulting in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year?
Jessie: 01:17:21	I think while that's good as basis and I think that would give you some basic knowledge.
01:17:31	I think without that backup of whether it's being mentored, whether it's having training within school or being able to sort of talk to like, for example, it was somebody in the NGA or you know to have that ability to perhaps a more in-depth discussion.
01:18:01	I think it's fine as a start. I think I need that more developed approach as well.
Sarah Chung: 01:18:11	Okay. That was absolutely wonderful. Thank you. We've reached the end.
Jessie: 01:18:16	Oh right. So sorry it took so...
Sarah Chung: 01:18:19	No. No, no....It's a wealth of information here, and that's always a good thing for me, so. Okay.
Jessie: 01:18:28	Sorry, you've got to type it all up.
Sarah Chung: 01:18:30	Oh, no, no. Not at all. No. I really do appreciate it. Thank you. And as I said, thank you for taking the time out. Is there anything you think I've missed or that you'd like to add?
Jessie: 01:18:44	No, I don't think so. Are you doing this for the NGA then?
Sarah Chung: 01:18:49	No, no. This is actually for my PhD thesis.
Jessie: 01:18:53	Right.

Sarah Chung: 01:18:54	So I'm in the middle of the data collection at the moment, but within the next year, it will be written up into a thesis and submitted to the University of Birmingham.
Jessie: 01:19:04	I actually think it's really good. I think there should be more work, more work like yours then on governance. I think it's not understood.

Libby

Sarah Chung: 00:02	There we go. Okay. So I'll just run through a little bit of housekeeping with you first, if that's okay.
Libby: 00:08	Yeah, that's fine.
Sarah Chung: 00:10	So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. During our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this.
00:31	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel you have received appropriate training to address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training. And I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation you've signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date.
01:06	Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years. And should you wish a copy of the results, please do feel free to email me and I can forward those on to you. Do you have any questions?
Libby: 01:29	No, that's fine.
Sarah Chung: 01:30	Oh, wonderful. Okay. Fantastic. So shall we jump in with something nice and easy?
01:37	How long have you been a governor?
Libby: 01:40	Probably, I think, over 20 years.
Sarah Chung: 01:43	Wow. Okay. That's a long time.
Libby: 01:46	It certainly is. I keep trying to escape, but all I do is find new ones.
Sarah Chung: 01:54	So what made you begin your governance journey? I was a teacher. I'm retired now, but I was a teacher.
02:02	So as part of basically becoming a member of senior leadership, I wanted to know more about how governance worked. Also, because I'm a Catholic, we have two primary schools in our parish. And you know it's useful to have teachers on the primary school board so that they were able to help. So that's how, initially, I got kind of volunteered by the

parish priest because you will be a governor, won't you, Libby, you know that sort of conversation.

02:33 And then so that was interesting because that was the parish school. It's the school I went to. It was also the school that my mom was involved in in having rebuilt in the 1970s. So there's like a parish connection and a family connection there. Which is lovely. So it's nice to have that connection. And then over time, I was a staff governor in the school that I worked in. So I was the staff governor there.

03:04 And also, I was a local authority governor in a secondary school. And at the moment, I'm on three governing bodies. So I chair two of them. We do our two parish primary schools. I chair both of those. And then the other one is one of our feed of secondaries, a foundation member on that one.

Sarah Chung: 03:25 Wow. That's quite the governance career.

Libby: 03:28 Yeah.

03:29 It is interesting because you see stuff, obviously, from different perspectives, but it also allows you to do what you can to help, which is always nice. And now that I'm retired, it's great that I can still be involved with you know the children and be able to go in and you know do those trips. I went on a trip with year five the other day, which was just a delight. It was so lovely. So you know as a governor, you can also still keep that sort of connection, which is nice.

Sarah Chung: 04:01 Oh, wonderful. Wonderful. So over those 20 years, then, what would you say your most enjoyable part of governance has been?

Libby: 04:10 It's always being with the children and you know connecting with the children and also working with the you know staff teams in school and with the other governor team. So it keeps you very much involved in education, and it keeps you very much involved in you know doing your bit, I suppose, in many ways, to help.

04:33 you know Our parish serves a quite a poor area. So it's very important. You know It's important for every child, but for those children. Education, in many ways, is their way out of what is quite a, for some of them, challenging circumstances. So if we can get them to a good standard, we can get them onto secondary, they can get their GCSEs and their A-levels, go to university, then they have that route to a better life in many ways.

05:03 So as a governor, you can be part of that. You can be helping with that, which is important. Wow. So it is that playing a part of the bigger experience. Kind of bigger picture, really, isn't it? Looking at the impact of education on those young people and watching them from you know when they come into school in nursery, how they do anything in nursing reception is beyond me because it's like herding cats.

05:33 It's just delightful to be able to walk around you know in a primary school because I was a secondary teacher. So in a primary school and seeing what the children do. And the children are you know happy, they're content. And one of the lovely things is standing on the gate with the head or with one of his staff. And you can just see the children as they come into school, the smile you know because they're greeted.

06:01 The staff are brilliant. They're greeted by name. You know They say hello to every single child that comes through that gate is greeted by name. And sometimes you see them coming up the road and you know it's like they've got the weight of the world on their shoulders. Bless them. And then they get to the grave. Somebody says hello to them and smiles at them. And suddenly, you know the smile is back, and they're happy and content. It's just wonderful to watch that. And being part of that is obviously you know an experience that's really nice to be able to be involved in that.

Sarah Chung: 06:34 Oh, that's lovely. It sounds really lovely. So I mean, over the 20 years, it sounds like you've had quite a positive experience. Reflecting on that, were there any possibly less enjoyable aspects of governance?

Libby: 06:51 Yeah. We had a situation. We had a new head who came into we'd had a very experienced charismatic head who had decided to retire.

07:06 And she was replaced with a new head. He'd been a deputy for a long time in another school in a very different school. And I don't think he realized that children like ours existed, to be honest. So he came as head, and for some reason, he had the idea that we didn't know anything, and he knew everything, which was a little bit irritating. You know So we tried. We worked with him, and we you know did what we could with him, but he didn't really want to engage with us.

07:36 He just wanted to tell us what to do, basically. And he didn't tell us kind of what he was doing. He didn't discuss it with us. He just went ahead and did stuff. To such an extent, unfortunately, that by the end of the year, the results, which had always been very good, dropped quite remarkably. And somehow or other, it became our fault as governors, even though it wasn't. And the local authority and the diocese to a certain extent sided with him rather than listen to.

08:07 Which was then a very experienced governing body you know because we'd all been governors on that board for a long time. So we actually did know what we were talking about. But unfortunately, local authority and the diocese sided with the head. And then that tends to be what happens. And we had a period of you know people saying, "Well, actually, this is what it's going to be like. I don't want to be a governor anymore." Some of our governors some of our governors left.

08:38 Others of them were quite upset for quite a while. And you know eventually, we kind of worked our way through it and

found a way to come out on the other side with success. But that was probably the lowest point we ever got to where we were just very, very frustrated with the head and with the local authority and with the diocese because there was that lack of listening that was going on there and a lack of a lack of respect, I suppose, for the experience of the governing body.

09:12 You know They didn't really want to know what we said. They just wanted to know what the head was saying. And you know it was frustrating because they just wouldn't listen, which was a bit annoying. And to be honest, all of us were along the lines of, "Well, if you don't want us, we have got other things to do. We have got lives. You know We're quite happy to go." But if we had done that, there wouldn't have been anybody else.

09:41 And that would have been unfair on the children. I'm unfair on the staff because it wasn't the staff. It was just him as the head, which was difficult because I think he had come in with this perception, for whatever reason, that you know he was going to change everything. But he didn't need changing. It worked as it was. And, okay, he wanted to tweak stuff. That was fine. But he just changed the whole way that he did things, and it just didn't work.

10:14 you know But because he didn't discuss it with us and he didn't tell us what he was going to do, he just did it. You know In meetings with him, it was like eggshells. I was allocated an hour as chair. I was allocated an hour a week. And it was like I had to watch every single word I said because it was just like walking on eggshells. I had to be you know you'd get emails from him that just said, "Ah, that was it. No, hello.

10:44 Are you okay?" Or, "Hi," or anything like it was just Libby. And then whatever he wanted, and then his name at the bottom. He was a strange man. He didn't stay long, thanks. Thankfully, he went away.

Sarah Chung: 10:58 Oh, he moved on. He moved on quite quickly.

Libby: 11:00 He did. Yeah. He only stayed, well, three years. And then a bigger school came up. Yeah So he moved on, thankfully.

11:11 And the head we've got now is just delightful, wonderful man who knows exactly what he's doing, but he actually works very closely with the governors yeah and is very transparent in what he does and wants the governors in school and wants us to be involved in a very, very, very, very different way of doing things. Yeah And you know the school has come back to the happy place that it was, really. So we have that little hiatus, if you like.

Sarah Chung: 11:38 Yeah. Wow.

11:40 Do you think I know you're saying there's a lack of listening. Do you think there's a lack of understanding of what the governing body was there for?

Libby: 11:49 From his perspective, yes. Definitely. Yeah. I mean, i mean all he ever said to me was, "you know I'm the lead professional. My job is to explain things to you." And I would say that I've been a teacher longer than you have and a senior leader longer than you have.

12:07 So I think I probably know how to do it. You know And I've been the chair of governors longer than you've been a teacher. He didn't see it that way. From his point of view, he was the lead professional. We were subservient to him. And therefore, his job was to basically tell us what to do. And if we objected or you know we challenged not objected because you know we were always very professional about what we did. And you know half of the board were teachers.

12:39 So you know when it came to explaining data to us, it was a fairly pointless exercise, really, because we could have explained it to him. But we behaved and we were professional. But it was just that he had a very different idea of governance. And I think part of the problem was the people who were there was a particular advisor who was our school advisor.

13:09 And she basically sided with him. And that obviously gave him then what he considered to be the authority to do these things. But at that time, it was before academies. We were a voluntary aid school. And so we were sort of subject to the diocese as well. And unfortunately, the diocese was, again, they didn't really it wasn't part of their culture to come into schools very often.

13:39 So they relied on what they were told by the local authority rather than listening to governors and listening to you know I mean, even things like the I mean, our parish priest was a governor. And even though he told the diocese what was going on, they just didn't want to know. It was really frustrating at that point because you've got then, effectively, the two arms of you know support that should be backing you up and helping you who then decide that you're the problem.

14:10 And you know when we offered, we had a meeting with the diocese. We had a meeting with the local authority. And we said, "Well, look, if we're the problem, we'll go. That's not a problem. You know If you don't want us to be here, if we're causing a problem, then we will go. But who are you going to replace us with? Because that's the problem. It's very, very difficult to get governors. And to get committed governors is even harder.

14:34 So that was a period of I mean, by the time he got to the second sort of halfway through the second year, I think the penny dropped with him and we weren't with the enemy. We were actually there to help. And you know we weren't trying to make life difficult for him, but we just had experience that actually would have been helpful to him if he had listened to us. And you know so the penny did drop you know before he left us, we got him trained to the point where he did realize that the governors were not there to be his enemy.

15:08	But the interesting thing, I think, is that the school he went to after us, most of his governors resigned.
Sarah Chung: 15:15	Really?
Libby: 15:17	A little bit of a flavour.
Sarah Chung: 15:20	Gosh, so it would seem the problem followed, didn't it?
Libby: 15:23	Yeah. Unfortunately, yeah. His chair of governors, I think, lasted a couple of months. And then quite a few of the board resigned as well because they just couldn't get on with him blessing. So it's sad.
15:39	And I think that's an issue that I mean, I think it's more to do with sometimes with the training of heads and the understanding of heads of what governors are there to do yeah rather than you know the other way around sometimes because when you get an experienced board who are used to working with a head who was you know she was very, very charismatic head. You know The staff loved her. The parents loved her. The children loved her, and she got the results.
16:07	But she did it in a way that was very gentle. You know She very, very rarely would raise a voice because she didn't need to. It wasn't necessary in that school. And she was very you know clever about how she spent the money, very, very, very good with understanding how to get the best out of these children. We were outstanding at that point. We were an outstanding school because of her more than any other reason.
16:36	When the new head came in, our outstanding status, we didn't get inspected for I think it was about over 10 years between the point where we got the outstanding and the next inspection was over 10 years. But you know when our new head came in, within a few months of him coming in, the local authority was telling me that Ofsted would be on the doorstep because things weren't going well. And I was saying to them, "No, they won't." Because as far as Ofsted are concerned, they've done their risk assessments.
17:05	There isn't a problem here. If all you need to do is listen rather than coming in on these snaps. You know I mean, we had different advisors coming in and telling us diametrically different stuff. So for example, we had an advisor who came into nursery who told us to get rid of all the stuff that was in nursery and bring in all this new furniture. So we did that.
17:30	And six months later, another advisor came in and said, "Oh, no, that's no good." It was just ridiculous because you know two advisors from the same authority telling us totally different things. And the poor teacher who was in there was just shaking her head, saying, "you know What do you want me to do? Because you're telling me to do this. She told me to do this. Somebody needs to make your mind up. Tell me what you

	want me to do." And that's where you end up with that situation.
18:00	As governors, we listen to these people. We take on board what they say. We made the money available. We did the changes they asked us to do. Yeah But really, it was totally unnecessary. It was just one particular advisor's sort of little hobby horse that they wanted. And then another advisor came in with a totally different hobby horse. And you know it becomes an issue then for staff welfare and for staff well-being in many ways because you're putting them under totally unnecessary pressure yeah because you're listening to these people who really have no clue what they're all about.
18:38	Yeah, such is life.
Sarah Chung: 18:40	Gosh. Yeah, that sounds quite an experience out of the 20 years. Yeah. Do you think, then, challenging those advisors that are coming in, is that something that will come naturally to the governing body, or is that something that would be supported by training?
Libby: 19:03	It's got to be supported by training, but because it all decides, I suppose, on the makeup of the governing body.
19:09	So if you've got a governing body which is experienced, which has got quite a few educationalists on it, who are listening to what these people are saying and thinking, "Well, actually, based on my own knowledge and understanding, I know that won't work." And based on my experience of the school, I know that won't work. So you know there is that challenge there. But when you challenge these people because of their status, I suppose, within the educational authority, they always assume that they know more than you do.
19:43	And there is always that in many ways, you know education is like that hierarchical belief in education that you know if an advisor comes in and tells you to do something, then it's akin to a papal proclamation and therefore has to be done. Even though in your heart of heart, you know it's not going to make a blind bit of difference because that's not the problem. What they've identified is not the problem.
20:10	They've just identified something that doesn't fit in with their particular view of how you should do something yeah rather than actually hit the nail on the head and solve the problem for the children. So sometimes that can be annoying.
Sarah Chung: 20:25	I can imagine. Yeah. Okay. So moving on a little bit now.
20:35	So the NGA have described governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction. So the following questions that we're going to talk right now will explore your understanding of all three of those. So if we begin by looking at in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?

Libby: 20:59	I think the whole thing with strategic direction is looking at I mean, it's the non-operational side.
21:05	It's what is happening above that operational side, that looking, if you like, into the future of how you want the school to go, where you want the school to go, how you want the school to actually serve the community that we're looking after. And it's the ability to come up with a recognition of, "This is where we need to be in three years' time or five years' time, but I'm not going to tell you how to do that because that's operational.
21:36	This is where I would like you to be heading. So when you do your operational plan, this is where we want you to be looking to go.
Sarah Chung: 21:45	Okay. So it fits almost together.
Libby: 21:49	Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 21:51	Okay. Okay. Lovely. So using your own experience now as a governor, can you explain how you have shaped your school's strategic direction?
Libby: 22:02	These days, we're part of a MAC. We're part of a multi-academy company.
22:07	So in many ways, governors now are there's an overarching board on top of us. And we are responsible for ensuring that the vision of the board translates to the school. So we don't have that you know we don't have that freedom that we used to have anymore because we're obviously constrained by what the MAC, what the multi-academy company wants us to do.
22:35	And our job is to make sure that the vision that they express and that it really is put into place in the school and to monitor that the school is doing what they've been asked to do by the board rather than by the governors. So we're seen basically as a committee of the board of directors rather than a so we don't have the same freedom of manoeuvre as we used to have before we joined the map.
Sarah Chung: 23:04	Okay.
23:05	And how are you finding that then? As somebody who had the freedom before that, how are you finding it then?
Libby: 23:13	I mean, the strange thing is because I sit on three different governors and they belong to two different MACs. So one of the MACs, the one that I've been where I've been chair the longest, we were very much involved in shaping that Mac. And part of what we said when we started that Mac was that we wanted it to be transparent and we didn't want it to be top-down.
23:40	We wanted it to be much more a shared experience. And so part of when we set that MAC up, the head teachers are part of the executive on that MAC and have a much bigger say than

they would perhaps. In the other Mac that I belong to, it's a different setup. So in the sort of, if you like, the original school that I chair, because we were involved in shaping that map, the vision is what we were always going to be looking at anyway for all of the schools across the MAC.

24:17 And because it's a Catholic it's a Catholic MAC anyway. So you know we are always going to be looking down those sort of gospel values and looking at the Jesuit values and virtues and those sorts of aspects for our shared vision. On the other Mac, it's a different setup. We weren't involved in setting that one up, and that's a more top-down model. And basically, the board decide what the strategic vision is.

24:45 And then they tell us as governors what they want us to be monitoring as far as the school is concerned. So it's interesting that there's a very, very different way of doing it in two neighbouring maps, which is an interesting experience to be involved in both. I have to sometimes remember where I am.

Sarah Chung: 25:13 It sounds like a really, really interesting experience, like you said, to be able to compare and contrast.

Libby: 25:20 Yeah. It's a fascinating thing because I mean, within Coventry, there are 19 Catholic primary schools and three Catholic secondaries. And the older of the two MACs was set up, really, in order to protect one of the secondaries, which was in danger of going into special measures. And so to protect it, very quickly, they set up a Mac, and it became part of that Mac.

25:49 And because they did it so quickly, then they did it under a different set of articles than the newer MAC. It's much more of a top-down model where the Catholic senior executive leader in the board are very much in charge, and everybody else works kind of to their direction. And although as governors, we were called local academy committees. We weren't called governors. We were called local academy committees.

26:17 And that kind of emphasised our role as being subordinate to the board of directors. And so we were basically there to do what we were told by the board of directors without a huge amount of room to manoeuvre. But over the years, because that map's been in place now, I think, for eight years, over the years, they've changed the way they do things because they're kind of I suppose they're more comfortable and confident in their role now.

26:47 And so they have three what they call core committees which governors are allowed to sit on. And that allows you if you sit on those core committees, you do have some say in how the MAC is shaped and how the MAC works. So I sit on two of those committees. One which is to do with sort of policies and quality of education.

27:15 And the other one is to do with HR and well-being and stuff like that. So you can have a role there in shaping how the Mac is moving forward on that side. On the newer Mac, all of the chairs are a committee of the directors, as are all of the heads.

	So we meet on a regular basis every half-term with the chair of the board and with the senior executive leader.
27:45	And we have that opportunity at those meetings to shape what's going on within the board and to look at the way the board is working. And so it's a slightly different way of doing things, but it does give us a little bit more, I suppose, influence on the way the board is working than was there in the past.
Sarah Chung: 28:11	Okay.
28:11	And do you think that has come about as a result of the oh, sorry. I think you've frozen. Oh, you're still there? Can you hear me?
Libby: 28:24	Yeah. Yeah. I can hear you.
Sarah Chung: 28:25	It's all right. Frozen for a minute. I was saying, do you think that's come about then? The initial period was to set expectations, and then they've relaxed into it a little bit.
Libby: 28:38	I think certainly with the original MAC, I think that was what the problem was because it had to be set up in a hurry.
28:45	And it was set up under a different set of articles that were negotiated by the diocese with the DFE for that particular secondary school to protect it. So when they were set up, it was very much a top-down model of the board says this, and you do it effectively. Whereas with the other MAC, the second MAC, because we all chose to be part of that one yeah and we were all very much involved, I mean, it took us about two years from the original discussion to actually the MAC becoming operational.
29:23	And we took the time to look at all the various aspects. And we had working parties and governors very much involved in how we're going to do this and how we're going to get to this point. So it's a much more, I suppose you could say, governor-friendly model, the second MAC because it's more about there's more of a parity, I suppose, between the directors and the governors. We know each other better you know because we've met each other on a sort of two-year journey, so we know each other.
29:55	And also, the CSEL, the Catholic Senior Executive Leader of the Second MAC, is, I suppose, more open to governor involvement than the one who heads up the first MAC. So it's a different perspective there as well.
Sarah Chung: 30:12	Okay. That's lovely. Thank you. So now then, in your own words, can you describe what is meant by school's ethos?
Libby: 30:21	Again, as Catholic schools, it's very much laid down that you know we follow gospel values, and we are there really so that the children can achieve the best that they possibly can. And so our ethos is always about how we're going to get to that point. You know Our endpoint is these children will be given the opportunity to be the best they can.

30:46	And our ethos is about how we get to that point, how we you know expect that character, resilience, behaviour, attitudes, personal development. They're all part of that ethos for our schools. Okay. That's lovely. Thank you. And again, do you think as with the strategic direction, do you think that's come top-down, or?
31:14	I think that one, because we're all Catholic schools, we all operate the same way anyway. So that was always part and parcel of what each school did. Just kind of subsumed into the expectations of the board and the MAC when it was formed.
Sarah Chung: 31:32	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So now, in your own words, can you describe what is meant by vision?
Libby: 31:40	Vision, really, I suppose, in many ways, is where are we going to be it's similar, I suppose, to the strategic side of things, but it's perhaps more looking at the day-to-day of how we're going to get to the strategic idea. But also you know in one year, in three years, in five years, where are we going to be? What's our school going to look like?
32:06	Are we going to be able to provide the education that we need to provide? And also considering that we all serve communities which are changing all the time. The communities that my school serves, they are very much we're in the middle of Coventry. So we are one of the poorest wards in Coventry. And we're also an area where there's a lot of refugees who come in here.
32:36	We're a dispersal area for refugees. So you know we will have children who come, they stay with us for a couple of years, and then they go because they're dispersed by the local authority somewhere else. So you know I suppose about 75% of our community would be settled. But then we've got coming and going you know all the time because of these little ones who are joining us and then the movie gone.
33:03	And it's part of the life that they lead, unfortunately, as refugees. So you know our vision for every child who comes through the door is that they will be the best that they can be, and that our job is to provide the education to get them to that point. Yeah So it's along those. They're all very much joined up, you know those three aspects.
Sarah Chung: 33:28	Okay. That's really wonderful. Thank you. So now then, we'll look at sort of pupil performance.
33:35	Can you explain a little bit about how your governing body oversees pupil performance?
Libby: 33:40	It's part of the monitoring that we do. Head teacher reports to us every term. We use a system called you're probably aware of Pixel. So we use Pixel for our assessment system across the Mac. And we get that data reported to us on a termly basis on the head teachers report.

34:00 We also have the opportunity to go in and do visits to school, to do visits to lessons, to look at books, to talk to the children, to talk to staff. So we've got that kind of it'd be like that rounded picture of not just the data itself, but also looking at the books and talking to the children about what they do or what's your favourite bit of this book? You know What can you tell me about this particular aspect? How did you get to that point?

34:30 What are you doing now? You know And that's part of the joy of being a governor that you can go in and have these conversations with the children. And you know they're always so happy to talk to you about their work and to show you examples of their work and to you know in a slightly pitying way explained to you as a big idiot adult. When you ask them, "What are you doing?" And they look at you, shake the red and say, "Can't you see?".

Sarah Chung: 35:05 Oh, children are very forthright aren't they...

Libby: 35:08 It is so funny, yeah. I mean, we did it. We actually had a governor's day up at [redacted]'s there about a month ago. We had four of us who were able to go in for the day. And the head had put us into sort of two teams and given us a little program. And off we went round to look at the various classes. And we went into year one. And it was just so funny because they were doing some English.

35:36 So you know when we kind of knelt down beside him and said, "What are you doing?" One of the little fellas thought, "Well, this is what I'm doing. How can you not know sort of pity and look in the shake of his head. Where do you get these adults from?".

Sarah Chung: 35:56 Oh, that's wonderful. That is wonderful. So I think then from your background, you're quite comfortable with understanding the performance data?

Libby: 36:07 Yeah. Yeah. I mean, part of I was a senior leader in a secondary school, so data doesn't really hold any fears. But I mean, there are you know unfortunately, both governing bodies that I'm on, there are people on there who understand data. So it's easy when you get that data. The two heads are also very good at explaining data and explaining the context of the data, which is obviously sometimes more important than the data itself.

36:38 So the pixel data is quite easy to the way it's laid out, and it's quite easy to understand what's going on there. And the heads then put it into context. And you've got that opportunity then to talk to them about challenges that may be happening in particular classes or in particular groups of children, obviously, with you know all the stuff with COVID and how that's working its way through.

37:07 And also looking at, you know is there anything that we can do as governors to help in that respect? Is there a need for more

money? Do we need more staff? Do we need more resources for staff? You know Have we got what we need to or staff got what they need to be able to deliver on that curriculum and to get those children to the level that they need. Especially those children who are you know the children, for example, with higher needs.

37:38 We have quite a lot of EAL children in the schools. So it's making sure that we've got the provision is there for them. Those children who are special educational needs, sufficient provision is in place for them so that they can achieve you know their best and get to the point where they need to be, really. And also making sure that we've got those children who are those high-flyer children that they're achieving as well.

38:07 So we're not just sort of going for the middle. We're looking at both ends as well to make sure that each child is treated as an individual and has that opportunity.

Sarah Chung: 38:19 Yeah. Absolutely. So reflecting now on something you said a moment ago about having somebody who understands educational data on each of the boards.

38:31 Do you think it's important then when you have a governing body to have somebody who does understand educational data as opposed to more general data?

Libby: 38:44 Yeah, because I mean, as teachers, we're terrible at talking jargon. We're dreadful, are we at jargon? And because we do it all the time, we don't realize that we're doing it sometimes. And you look across somebody else on the board who isn't a teacher, and they clearly haven't got a clue what you're on about.

39:03 So you have to say, "Hang on, hang on. Let's go back. Let's just explain what this means." And you know then they're fine. But I think it is very important that you can actually have those informed discussions with the head and that you can you know challenge because that's obviously part of the role is you can say to the head, "Well, you know explain to me why year four are at this level and why haven't we got a sufficient number of children there who are achieving at greater depth and what's going on in that class that's allowing that to happen.

39:37 Whereas you look at year two and you've got a totally different set of results in year two. So what's going on there? So you can look at those results in a bit more, I suppose, forensic detail. And also going down to you know the level of individual children. Obviously, you know the data we deal with is anonymised. But you can pick out those children who are clearly struggling and just get some context as to why they're struggling.

40:07 Maybe you know that perhaps there's an issue with attendance or an issue with you know those particular little ones, something going on at home, maybe that's stopping them from learning. So you can get that understanding. But it's not about us telling the head what to do because he knows what to do.

	You know It's really about us saying, "Well, have you got the tools that you need to do the job?
40:33	You know Do we need to go and get do we need to go and get under the TA who can work with this little group of children while the teacher deals with these children who are struggling?" you know So it's those operational decisions that are not ours to make, and it's making the difference there between the strategic and the operational. Not telling him how to do his job, but just making sure he's got the tools that he needs to do you know to allow those children to be successful.
Sarah Chung: 41:05	Okay. That's really wonderful. Thank you. So in general now, how do you feel about challenging? Are you able to challenge or raise questions when necessary?
Libby: 41:18	Yeah. With all three heads that I work with, they're all more than happy to be challenged. They're very open to challenge, and there's an expectation that they will be challenged you know because you know they recognise that that's the role of governance.
41:38	And you know they're quite happy. You know What we sometimes do is we say to governors, if you go through the paperwork, we try and get the paperwork out a week in advance. And we say to governors, if you can go through, if there's any questions, if you could email those questions in advance, yeah it then allows the head to make sure that they've got what they need in order to be able to answer you. But we also make sure that any questions asked are in the minutes so that when people like Ofsted come in, they can see that there's challenge.
42:11	When they read the minutes, they can see that the governors are challenging and that that level of engagement is there. So it's important. It's not about catching the head out in any way. It's about you know the opportunity for, "I don't understand why this is like this. Can you just explain it to me or along those lines?" And it's all you know we're fortunate on both governing bodies that we have very experienced governors or three governing bodies, actually, that we have very experienced governors who can look at the data or can look at the head teacher's report and pick out those aspects that need to be elaborated a bit more.
Sarah Chung: 42:52	Okay. Wonderful. So another area of governance now is holding the head teacher to account for my team of staff. How confident are you in that area?
Libby: 43:05	Again, I mean, the system that we work is that as chair involved in the head teacher's performance management, but I will also be part of the pay committee when the head brings the results of performance management to me at the end of the end of the year when he's looking at pay review and all the rest of it.
43:27	So you know we don't get involved in the performance management of individual staff, although we know the broader,

	I suppose, the areas that they're going to be looking at in terms because there's always a whole school performance management target as well as personal targets. Yeah But I mean, part of my role as chair is with the Catholic senior executive leader to set the targets for the head.
44:01	Yeah So perhaps more involved at that level than at the individual member of staff level. But we do get reports back, obviously, at the end of the process yeah about you know which staff have achieved their performance management targets and which staff are therefore eligible for pay progression.
Sarah Chung: 44:22	Okay. Okay. Within your school then, are you aware of any developmental or reward arrangements for developing staff?
Libby: 44:34	Well, all three schools, actually, because it's kind of more at a MAC level than a school level. And both Macs are very conscious of aspects of well-being and taking some of the pressure off staff. But both Macs are also very concerned to ensure that staff are able to develop their own expertise and to move up through the various management stages if that's what they want to do.
45:05	And as part of our meeting with the MAC, then you know we look at that and we're involved in discussing that with the board.
Sarah Chung: 45:15	Okay. So thinking back to a little bit earlier, and you mentioned the head teacher that moved on after three years. I'm assuming then that you were involved in the process of appointing the new head teacher.
Libby: 45:30	Yes. Yeah. Yeah.
Libby: 45:32	How confident did you feel doing that?
Sarah Chung: 45:36	Well, he would be the third one that I was involved in. So it's part of a I suppose because clearly, it's not you. We also have the local authority are there, the diocese are there. There's usually between three and five governors involved. So it becomes more of a discussion of maybe between five and seven people who are appointing this new head teacher.
46:06	I mean, as chair of governors, I tend to see my role as being a little bit of a devil's advocate. So you know I will perhaps I tend to I let the others speak first rather than me saying, "I think this," because I think that was a danger of influencing there, so I tend to always speak last.
46:30	But you know when we're setting up the challenge, whatever activities we want the head to do, you know that's an important aspect of seeing who they are and what they're about. So I'm always involved in that. And also discussions, individual discussions with the candidates and you know looking at the when you get to that point, looking at the references, and looking at what that's telling us about the candidate.

47:03 Yeah So you know because it's I suppose it's very much a joint decision which requires a joint solution because it's not something you can impose on anybody. You've got five or seven people there who have to agree. So although the local authority in the diocese turn up a vote, yeah their influence because of who they are and who they're representing is obviously quite strong.

47:28 So you know you're kind of confident that if the diocese and the local authority are happy that this is the right person, then you're kind of heading in the right direction because they are very good at saying no if they don't think the candidate can do it. So you've got that sort of support, if you like, from external agencies as well.

Sarah Chung: 47:49 Okay. Wonderful.

47:51 So as well as setting the ethos and strategic direction of the school and also ensuring that there's a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing, probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight of your school. How comfortable are you within that situation?

Libby: 48:14 Again, it's changed since we joined the MAC because, obviously, under the Articles of Association, it's the board of directors who decide on, really, the money that goes into schools and what that money is going to be used for. And our job as governors is to really just ensure that the money is spent responsibly, if you like. But we don't have as much influence as we used to have on how the money is spent.

48:44 And we're fortunate because we both Macs have a finance team. And the finance team comes out, spends time in school, goes through all of the data with the office manager or the business manager so that we've got that confidence that it's all been checked and it's all accurate and it's all within the rules of the financial scheme of delegation, which is obviously what controls what we're allowed to do now.

49:11 But as chair, I'm involved in setting the budget. So I go to I have a budget setting meeting with the head, with the senior finance person, and with the office manager. And then I also have a meeting with one of the directors who's kind of the finance director. So we meet with him as well. So you know the areas that they want us to cover and the areas that we say we need to cover, they will sort of [inaudible].

49:44 So sometimes you get a little bit of a hiccup where we say, "Actually, we need another member of staff here." So I've got to go and justify that to this person from the board who maybe doesn't know the school as well as I would know the school, for example. So you've got that opportunity to do that. But with both Macs, the financial teams are very, very good. So you've got that confidence that they know what they're doing.

50:13 They know that what you're doing is legal because that's obviously with max these days. There's more of a little bit of a

concern there that you're fulfilling this massive document that you've said you'll follow, but they know it. So that I suppose makes life a little bit easier than it used to be when we were just individual schools. Although we had the local authority finance people were very, very good. Yeah They would come I think we had them about five times a year.

50:43 She was great. She would come in and go through it with the office manager and make sure that everything was balanced and everything was in place. And obviously, then you've got audit every couple of years who come in and check it as well. So you know just making sure that governance doesn't have such a big role in finance under the MAC system as it did as individual schools.

51:08 But still, we're lucky in that the people on the board, we do have two or three people on the board who understand finance in the wider world as well as financing in the educational world. So we've got that ability to use their expertise as well. One of my governors works for HMRC as a tax inspector. So he's a useful person.

Sarah Chung: 51:33 Okay. Yes, I can imagine.

Libby: 51:36 Straight away, he was involved.

51:38 He was in charge of finance. Off you go.

Sarah Chung: 51:42 So again, it's looking back to our conversation about the importance of having somebody with an educational data background. It's important to have that financial background represented as well.

Libby: 51:55 It is very much so. I think it's good that although you know we have the experts at the centre who are part of the finance team, it's good that you can reassure yourself as governors that what we're doing here is what we need to do.

52:10 And although it's not as you know as in-depth as it was when we were a single school, we don't have to do that anymore. A lot of it is dealt with by the board. We still have pupil premium and you know the school sports premium. That really is more of a school decision of how we spend that and what we use that for. And the same with COVID capture at the moment. Yeah That's, again, more of a school decision. We're given a sum of money in how we spend that is a discussion for the governors and the head.

52:42 The MAC doesn't tell us what we have to do with that. It just tells basically how much we've got, and we have to report back to them what we've spent it on and how it's been used. So there's still that level of experience, if you like.

Sarah Chung: 52:57 Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now, the next question is going to look at the eight elements of effective governance. Are you okay with time, by the way?

Libby: 53:08 Yeah, you're fine. You're fine.

Sarah Chung: 53:10	So it's a little bit like a word association, almost. I'm going to read you the element of effective governance. And if you, in your own words, could explain what that means to you, that would be great. Does that sound okay?
Libby: 53:25	That's fine.
Sarah Chung: 53:26	Okay. So the right people around the table.
Libby: 53:31	Ensuring we have, I suppose, a breadth of knowledge. We're not just limited to the sometimes governance can just be educationalists if you're not careful.
53:43	Yeah You need, really, to have people from other backgrounds and other trades and professions so you get a much wider experience of the real world in many ways. Education can be a little bit of a world of its own, can't it? Yeah. Absolutely. We do sometimes need to let the real world in so that we understand that we do operate as part of that as well.
Sarah Chung: 54:07	Okay. Lovely. Understanding the role and responsibilities?
Libby: 54:13	Again, that's part of the training that we do. It's also part of the expectation of governors. So when we sign up to be governors, there's quite a detailed document that people have to read through and agree to with things like the Nolan principles and those aspects of how we conduct ourselves as a code of conduct for governors that we have to read and agree to to make sure that we behave in a professional way and we don't interfere in any way with the operational side, which isn't ours.
Sarah Chung: 54:48	Okay. Lovely. Good chairing.
Libby: 54:52	Yeah. I mean, I suppose it's difficult as a chair to tell you if I'm any good or not. That's the problem. I do keep trying to escape, but I can't. So I suggest perhaps that I'm doing something that's acceptable to people. So I think it is about making sure the meetings run effectively. They don't overrun.
55:18	And we don't allow people to wander off on a hobby horse and dominate the meeting because that's, obviously, you know death by paperwork is no good. And we don't do that. We don't read out documents anymore. There is an expectation that governors will have read the documents in advance, and therefore you know we're more involved in looking at the impact rather than you know death by PowerPoint and boring everybody to death by reading a document that all the people are reading themselves.
55:51	And my role in meetings is very much about keeping the meeting on track, making sure that we're hearing from everybody. So involving everybody in there. So those people who are happy to talk, great. But there's also one or two who are quieter. But they'll say, "If you ask them specifically, you'll

	get an answer out of them." So it's giving everybody an opportunity to pull forward their point of view.
56:18	And then making sure that by the end of the meeting, we've covered the business, and we've actually made the decisions that we need to have made so the head can then move forward and do what he needs to do.
Sarah Chung: 56:29	Okay. Wonderful. Professional clerking.
Libby: 56:33	Again, we're very fortunate in that we use local authority clerks, and they are brilliant. They are very, very good. They know their stuff. They know the law. They will tell us if we're doing anything that you know is not our remit to do.
56:49	Their minutes are very good. Both clerks, which are interesting because when one clerk is a [redacted] Clark, the other one is a [redacted] clerk, but both of them are well-trained and very helpful in the role as chair as well as in the general role as governors because you know being part of that clerking service means that there is somebody that I can phone up if I'm not sure.
57:19	You know Something that has come across maybe the head's away. I'm not sure what I should do. I can ring them, and I know that I'll get the right answer from them, and I'll get steerage you know direction from them. So it is a very, very important role, that one.
Sarah Chung: 57:37	Okay. Good relationships based on trust.
Libby: 57:42	Crucial. Absolutely crucial. It doesn't work otherwise. Yeah.
57:48	It will not work if the head doesn't trust you and you don't trust the head, then there's no way you can do the job.
Sarah Chung: 57:57	Okay. And knowing the school?
Libby: 58:02	Again, crucial. You have to know the context. Know and understand the context. You have to get into the school to make sure that you know what the head is telling you is accurate.
58:15	So it's very important to go and look for yourself and to see what's actually happening on the ground so that you can then you know when the head tells you something in a meeting, you can say, "Oh, well, actually, yeah, I saw that when I was in the other day." That was obvious. So it's very important. And the context of the school is crucial. If you don't know the context of the school, then very little what it's going to tell you makes any great sense. Okay. Lovely. Asking challenging questions.
58:44	It's part of the role, isn't it? You know It's too easy to just say, "Okay, thanks. That's fine. We'll go along with that." You have to understand where he's coming from and make sure that there isn't anything really that he I suppose in some ways, it's

	maybe little reminders to make sure that he's looked at it from all angles. I mean, nine times out of 10, he will have done.
59:10	Yeah Occasionally, there might be something that you have from your own experience that he might not have thought of that might be useful to him. And you know that ability to allow him to explain why he's come to a decision and why he wants to go that way reinforces for him as well as for you why he's doing what he's doing.
Sarah Chung: 59:35	Okay. And having courageous conversations in the interests of children and young people.
Libby: 59:42	Yeah, that's an interesting one, isn't it? I think that links in with the challenging questions in many ways, doesn't it? And it also links to trust and confidence. Because if you have a head teacher that you trust, that you have confidence in who is open and transparent, then really, you know those challenging, courageous questions are not necessary. But as we found a few years ago, sometimes that's not the case.
01:00:09	And then you do have to have those conversations. And you know they're difficult, but you're a professional, and he's a professional, then you approach it from that perspective. So occasionally, it has to be that it shouldn't need to be done often because if you have to do it too often, then something's wrong somewhere.
Sarah Chung: 01:00:31	Yeah. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.
01:00:35	So from our conversation so far, it seems like you're quite comfortable with strategic and operational, and that divide is quite clear for you?
Libby: 01:00:48	Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:00:51	Okay. So now we're going to move on to COVID and the impact. So we know that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was immense. Can you describe your experience of governance during this time?
Libby: 01:01:08	We moved very quickly to do it online. So we did it through either Teams or Zoom online. So we kept in touch with the school. I had lots and lots of conversations with the heads, you know sort of either teams, Zoom links, or just phone calls with the heads. So they were still able to talk to me, and I was still able to talk to them. And they were very good.
01:01:36	Again, being part of the multi-academy company was immense because they worked together. The local authority were very good. We had meetings every month with the local authority. So all chairs had Zoom team meetings with the local authority leads to keep us informed about what was going on across the city and what they were doing across the city.
01:02:02	We had meetings every couple of weeks with the Catholic senior executive leader of both boards who were telling us what they were doing in order to support the schools and the

work that was going on to get as many children as possible engaged kind of online. You know So we were able to bid for extra machines. We were able to look at how those machines were being used.

01:02:32 I'm the safeguarding governor on both schools. So I was talking to the safeguarding leads in the schools about their work, which was very much about delivering food from the food bank, going and doing those safe and well checks on those vulnerable children, making sure they were okay, having conversations with parents. Obviously, not all of the vulnerable children were in school. The opportunity was there for some of them, but not all of them were there.

01:03:00 So the safeguarding leads were spending a lot of their time visiting, you know talking to children at the door, making sure they're okay. So keeping in touch with that was an important aspect to it. So you've got that I think we were lucky, very lucky in commentary, and you know the local authority is very, very good here. And they stepped up very quickly you know with all of their schools.

01:03:29 They took ownership of every school, not just the local authority schools, but everybody worked with the local authority kind of from day one, really. It was very it was very gratifying to see how people just laid their own territory aside, if you like. And we're quite happy to go and work with the local authority and help each other across the city. And it was really, really good to see that.

01:03:56 And also, I suppose the maxim anyway came into their own as far as bringing schools together as a community to work with each other and to help each other. So you know things like joint planning of lessons to take the stress off stuff you know and looking at how we could deliver lessons if we've got members of staff who were off with COVID.

01:04:21 What can we do to make sure that those children who were in school were still being taught as well as those children who were online. And you know looking at the innovative practice that developed very, very quickly in how you do how you teach online, you know something that most schools hadn't even thought of in March 2020. They're all experts over now. It's quite incredible, really, when you think about it.

01:04:49 I mean, I was a teacher for 38 years, and the idea of teaching you know 30 youngsters online is something that would never have I would never have even thought about. Yeah But you know these teachers, they stepped up. I mean, and the younger ones, it's great to see how the younger ones with the younger staff with I suppose their familiarity with computers and with online organizations, how they stepped up to train the older staff who were a little bit more hesitant you know about if I touch this, I'll break it.

01:05:24 You know People like me, I'm not pressing that button because I'll break it guaranteed. But you know the younger staff had they were brilliant how they stepped up to be able to do that

	and to help each other and to support each other was really good.
Sarah Chung: 01:05:43	It sounds like everybody was working really well as a team together.
Libby: 01:05:48	I feel very lucky.
Sarah Chung: 01:05:49	Yeah. Do you think your role then as a governor and as a chair of governors, do you think it evolved?
01:05:57	Do you think it changed from that monitoring aspect to a more pastoral, possibly?
Libby: 01:06:06	I think so because I think because we couldn't get in to do the monitoring. And although you know we were still getting reports about what was going on and what the children were doing, you know what provision was there for them.
01:06:22	But we couldn't actually get into school to do that monitoring role you know except you know I would go in on you know after school when there were no children around. We were allowed to you know go in and talk to the head from about four foot away from wearing masks and gloves.
01:06:44	You know So you could still go in yeah on that very limited way to and I mean, I think perhaps one of the biggest things was really the stress and the strain on heads was phenomenal, really, because they were you know trying to be all things to all people. And it was all about firefighting all the time and to actually you know the idea of them coming in and doing the same thing two days running was you know and they were being called into meetings.
01:07:15	So they were in their office on Teams meetings followed by another teams meeting you know and then another one in the evening. The stress on heads and senior leaders during COVID was quite phenomenal. It wasn't helped by the DFE issuing everything at the last minute yeah and then changing their minds you know within a day of doing stuff and you know that little game they would play of putting that information at 25 past 7:00 on a Sunday evening, which they then wanted implemented on Monday morning.
01:07:45	You know The stress that caused staff was ridiculous, really, because they would have done their risk assessment and had everything in place. And then suddenly, these clowns would come up with something totally different, which just blew the whole thing out of the water, and they wanted it done on Monday. You know It's crazy. And that more than anything, I think, was the biggest pressure on staff.
01:08:12	And you know talking to the talking to people like you know the head and to the senior people at the MAC who are you know working till 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning, trying to come up with a solution to something that somebody at the DFE has dreamt up on the back of a cigarette packet down the pub on Friday night. "Oh, this is a good idea. We'll do this on Monday." you

know And that just makes life so much more challenging for them than it needed to be.

01:08:40 But you know typical, unfortunately, of what was going on at the DFE at the time. So then did you feel that you had to support your head teacher? I mean, you know I think part of our role as governors was to ensure that there was somebody for them. And I think being part of a MAC, there was always somebody for him to talk to because he could always talk to the you know chief execs.

01:09:10 It wasn't like he was operating in isolation, but sometimes the chief exec was the one who was doing his edits. Somebody else he needed to talk to. So you know he would ring me, or I would ring him, and we would have a conversation. And then he could say what he liked to me. There wasn't a you know sort of blow off steam, and then he was fine. Then he could go and get on with what he was doing.

01:09:32 So it is important for a head and a chair to have enough trust in that respect that you know if the head is having a bad day, you can pick up the phone to the chair and say what he needs to say. And the chair is there to listen. You can't necessarily fix it, but it's just somebody there to listen on the other end of the phone or to pop in and talk to you from one side of the hall to the other.

01:09:59 So you've got that opportunity just to talk to somebody and to you know think about your response or even just about ideas of somebody before you go and talk to the person who's you know causing you a problem or challenging you or what have you. Yeah And also, you know it was interesting, I suppose, from the point of view of seeing because although the churches were closed from sort of March to July, once the church is reopened in July, we were back at Matts again.

01:10:35 And so we were able to see parents and see children in church. Yeah And because with being parish schools and you know schools within the parish, they know me. I know them. And I have a role in the parish as well as you know a sacrifice. So people know who I am from that perspective as well as from the government's perspective. So at least you can talk to people on a Sunday morning when they come to church and just say, "How are you doing?

01:11:06 How's it going? Is there anything you need? Is everything okay?" you know So there's that additional support that's there. And then if you did pick up something, you could then report that back to the school yeah so that they would then pick it up on the Monday and you know necessarily send somebody around or you know send a food pass around or what have you you know from that perspective. So I suppose from the point of view of being Catholic schools and governors in Catholic schools, we also have a parish aspect that comes into it.

01:11:40 So it's not just the school we're looking at. So there's a very strong connection between the school and the parish. So you

	find that you will be able to talk to people in a slightly different way when you're talking to them at Maths on a Sunday. But you know you've still got that understanding of what's going on in school as well as you know to a certain extent what they're concerned about.
01:12:09	And sometimes when they'll talk to you on a Sunday and then you can flag that up with the school and they can then intervene because it may well be that for whatever reason, they don't want to talk to the school, but they want to talk to somebody. Yeah So you know that connection that's there between parish schools and you know the parish itself is very helpful to us. Okay. That's really helpful. Thank you. Wonderful.
Sarah Chung: 01:12:37	So now we're going to think a little bit more generally about training for governors. So if you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be and why?
Libby: 01:12:52	The crucial one is safe, darling. It's you know that understanding and that recognition that it could happen here.
01:13:01	I think that's what's most important for all governors to have received that training and to understand why we're doing the training, not just you know because we're ticking a box here, but because as governors, we have a huge role to play in ensuring that every child in the school is safe and that every child in our community is looked after.
01:13:27	So safeguarding would be number one priority to make sure every you know unfortunately, that's the way it is anyway. But that's the crucial one that has to be done.
Sarah Chung: 01:13:40	Okay. Lovely. So conversely, then, what in your opinion is the least valuable piece of governor training?
Libby: 01:13:50	It's hard to answer, really, because every governing body has different levels of training need.
01:13:55	You know So you know we do training. We do the safeguarding training. We do the prevent training. Yeah We do the safer recruitment training. We also do a certain amount of finance training if governors want that because all governors, obviously, they like to feel that they have that understanding. We don't do a huge amount of data training because we've got enough people who understand that, so we don't have to do that very often.
01:14:26	But we'll lay it on if somebody wants it, if somebody wants an understanding. We also look at training to do with curriculum and you know how the curriculum is structured and why we do that particular curriculum within school. We don't really do, I suppose I wouldn't say that any of the training that we do would be pointless or unnecessary because a lot of the training comes from what governors want rather than being imposed on us from above.

01:15:02	So you know if you're doing something which even one or two governors want, then it's going to be useful to those governors, even if you've done it before. You can always refresh what you know and understand. So there's always a you know sometimes you will sit in meetings and think you know there's another hour of my life that I'm never going to get back. There may well be somebody else in the room. It was the first time they'd heard about that.
01:15:31	So it's hard to say on that one, I think.
Sarah Chung: 01:15:33	Okay. That's great. Thanks. So I'd like you to think back now, 20 years to your initial year of governance. Did you feel supported?
Libby: 01:15:47	Yeah, because I think when I joined that governing body, I knew everybody on it because they were all people in the parish.
01:15:59	So it was all people that I was working with. And you know strange as it may seem, for the first few meetings, I didn't say huge amount because I was just kind of getting used to what was going on. But then once but if I had any questions, you know the head was very good. She was very approachable, so I could have you know I could go and knock on her door and ask her any questions that I had. And the chair at that time was also the parish priest.
01:16:28	So any questions, I could talk to him about those. I think for the first few meetings, it was more of a listening exercise and reading the information and listening and getting used to because it was a primary school and I'm secondary school. It was kind of getting used to the nuances of what goes on in a primary school as opposed to what you would know from a secondary school.
01:16:57	So that was interesting to do it that way. Yeah But you know there was lots of support there. If I don't needed support, there was lots of support available. It wasn't you know sit down. Shut up. Get on with it. Don't ask tough questions.
Sarah Chung: 01:17:17	Well, that's great to hear. Did you have a mentor or a governing buddy specifically, or?
Libby: 01:17:25	No, not at that time.
01:17:27	I think it's something perhaps we do more now than was done at that time. I think at that time it was just an expectation. If you didn't understand, you'd just ask. And also, I think the role of governors 20 years ago was very different to the way it is now. It was much more of a, "You go to your six meetings a year. The head tells you what's going on, and you don't need to do anything else." And then you might want to pop in every now and again just to say hello to the children.
01:17:56	But it was a very different role then to the role that is envisaged now, I think.

Sarah Chung: 01:18:03 Okay. So what are your thoughts on mentors for clerks, governors, or even chairs of governors?

Libby: 01:18:16 I think it's a very good idea to have somebody there that you can ask questions of or somebody there who you know I suppose it's about knowing somebody that you can pick your phone up to if you don't understand something or you want a bit of advice or you want to do I mean, within the diocese, we've developed a system called Diocese and Leaders of Governance.

01:18:44 What that is about is if you have a new chair of governors who isn't sure how to do something, yeah they contact the diocese, and then the diocese puts one of the diocese and leaders of governments in touch with that person to be there as a support, as a mentor. So I did it for a lady down in [redacted] who was a new chair of governors who just wanted some advice about how to handle a particular situation.

01:19:14 And you know she sent me through some details of what the situation was, and we had a conversation, you know a Zoom conversation about what she wanted to do and how she wanted to do it. And maybe it's another way of doing this. And it just gave that additional support to somebody who was a little bit concerned in a new situation yeah you know somebody who maybe had experience and had done something similar before.

01:19:45 So that's a system that we set up across the diocese a few years ago, which is useful because it means that you know what used to happen in that situation is they would contact the diocese. There's only one lady at the diocese who looks after governance and you know over 200 schools. So it could be they thought it might be an idea just to get some experienced chairs, train them up as sort of diocese and leaders, and then it would make life easier for everybody that way.

01:20:17 So I think perhaps because of COVID, it didn't take off the way that it was envisaged. Yeah But I mean, I've done it once for this lady in [redacted] and I know that there are others who've done it for other new chairs.

Sarah Chung: 01:20:34 Okay. Wonderful. So do you think then the fact that you're mentoring somebody externally to your own governing body is better than having somebody internally mentoring you?

Libby: 01:20:50 I think it works both ways, to be honest, because I think if you're working with somebody who's a new chair of a governing body that you really don't know anything about, you can't really I don't know if I want a better word be interfering in how they run their meetings or how they do stuff.

01:21:08 Yeah If you're doing it with somebody with an internal person, the danger is always that you're going to do, "Well, this is what I do, so this is what you should do." You have to always be careful of you know seeing yourself, as we like, as the font of all knowledge telling somebody how to do something rather than the role of the mentor, which is more to do with listening

and you know letting that person talk through what they want to do and maybe pointing out obvious flaws that wouldn't work.

01:21:42 But really, it's that person who's going to do it, and they need to be confident in doing what they're doing because that's right for them rather than telling somebody how to do it because that's what you would do. You just need to be, I suppose, careful in that situation.

Sarah Chung: 01:21:58 Absolutely. Okay. Wonderful. So we're on the last couple of questions, if that's okay.

Libby: 01:22:03 No worries. Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 01:22:05 So the NGA have openly stated that they feel induction training should be mandatory within the first year.

01:22:13 In Wales, it already is. In your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this and why?

Libby: 01:22:20 Yeah. I think it is really important that governors have a level of understanding of the role. And you know induction training when it's done well is crucial. And the sooner you do it, the better, really, because then you know if you wait for I mean, if it was up to me, I would do it in the first half term.

01:22:44 So when you join the governing body, you understand things like terminology because I've said before, we're dreadful as teachers. We taught jargon all the time. We just assume everybody knows what we're on about. And if you're not a teacher, most of it's just golden goals really because we're on about Pixel and we're on about this, and they're looking at you. What are you talking about? Speak English. So I think it's really, really, really important that if you're going to be a governor, you have to understand the role.

01:23:13 You have to understand how schools work. Because I mean, sometimes we forget that, especially with parent governors, they may not understand how schools work because the only experience they'll have is the school that their own child goes to. And they will see it from the outside rather than from the inside. So it's really important that you know new governors are brought into school. They spend time with the senior leaders. They get the tour of the school. They understand the context of the school.

01:23:44 They understand how the school is organized. You know That's really important. You know They watch what happens at break time. They watch what happens at lunchtime. So they have that overview of the school, and that could be done at the school level, but they also need somebody to talk to them about you know where does school finance comes from? Where does all this money come from? You know It doesn't just come on the magic tree that's in the back garden of the school. Where does it come from?

01:24:13 How do you decide how much money to spend on your staffing? How do you decide what sort of a curriculum you're going to have? Where is the you know who's responsible for

what? You know Whose job is it to do this? Why is it their job rather than somebody else's job? So you know the understanding of the whole way schools work allows you then as a governor to ask those challenging questions because you can't really ask questions about things that you don't know anything about.

01:24:43 So you know if it was up to me, I would say that you know assuming that within the first half term of being appointed as a governor, there should be at least one session of training to bring that governor to an understanding of what their role is because I think that's otherwise, I don't think that you can really be part of a meaningful part of a meeting.

01:25:12 And I think that's you know one of the things you don't want to do is when you look at governors and you recognise that the vast majority of governors are busy people, you don't want to be wasting their time yeah because if they feel their time is wasted, they won't come again. And they've got to be they've got to feel that they're part of the discussion and they're part of the whole body, if you like, and that they're equal to everybody else.

01:25:41 It's not about you know I'm a new governor, so I'm not going to say anything because I don't know anything. There's no point in that. Everybody has to feel that they have a role, that they are equally as important as everybody else. Yeah And if they you know make a comment or they ask a question, that that is just as important as the comment or the question from somebody who's been there for 10 or 15 years. So everybody has to have that equal role.

01:26:10 And then you can only do that if you understand what you're all about. Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 01:26:15 Okay. Thank you. So if mandatory training was introduced then, what would you like to see in relation to the following? So content?

Libby: 01:26:28 Starting off, I think, with an understanding of how schools in this country operate. Because increasingly, a lot of our governors are people who've come from outside of the UK.

01:26:41 Especially, for example, within the schools where I'm in now, because of the community that we serve, a lot of the children we have are African. And so we are very keen to have members of that community on our governing body because they will understand the children a lot more than we do, if that makes sense. But a lot of those, because they've come from countries where maybe education is paid for, so they don't understand how education works.

01:27:12 They don't understand how the curriculum works. They don't understand why we teach certain things at certain times. So it's really important that for new governors, that training about how schools actually work, how schools are organized, where the money comes from, how that money is spent, who appoints the teachers.

01:27:36	There's always with us a Catholic ethos, a Catholic aspect to it as well because of the purpose of Catholic education in ensuring that each child is able to achieve and be the best that they can be. So we also have parallel training, if you like, that runs alongside that that's delivered by the diocese for new governors. So there's sort of a local authority induction training.
01:28:06	And then there's the diocese induction training, and they tend to run parallel in this area. So we're fortunate there. And we would expect our governors to attend both of those, our new governors to attend both of those. So they have an understanding of the Catholic aspect, but also you know the sort of state aspect as well.
Sarah Chung: 01:28:27	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So training then, if it was to go ahead, how should the training take place?
01:28:36	So for example, most training is either within the LEA or in-house in schools themselves. What are your thoughts on online training, for example?
Libby: 01:28:50	Personally, I prefer face-to-face personally because I think you get more opportunity to allow people to engage. It's too easy with online training for you to switch the camera off and go and do something useful and come back an hour later and put the camera back on again.
01:29:12	You know And it's difficult sometimes, especially if you're delivering the training yeah to get everybody to take part, to get everybody involved, especially if there's a big group of people. So you end up and I mean, I've done some training, online training as a governor yeah where they've been delivering it to 40 or 50 people. And really, it just becomes a monologue.
01:29:41	It must be so destroying for the trainer because you're basically talking to the ether and nothing is coming back. So you don't get that ability to have those conversations with online training. It's better than nothing. Definitely better than nothing. But I personally much prefer face-to-face training because I think it's better and allows people to be more open and to engage in the discussion more.
01:30:12	And also, I think for the trainer themselves, I think it's better for them, to be honest, than talking to a screen of blanks.
Sarah Chung: 01:30:23	Absolutely. Yeah. So then what are your thoughts on a modulated course either delivered face-to-face or online or hybrid that would result in a certificate confirming successful completion of an induction year?
Libby: 01:30:42	I would say it's a good idea. But again, it's about making sure that if you're going to get people to be governors, most of them are busy people. They may be parents. It's finding the time to...the best possible time, the optimum time, if you like, when those people are actually available to do that training and not

making it too onerous for them, not making it too difficult for them.

01:31:11 So for example, you know if you were going to do that sort of induction training with governors, then I would say two, two-hour sessions is sufficient. I think everything that you need to get across in those two hours, I think that's more than enough. I think if you extend it beyond that, I think people will just say, "Oh, well, I've got time to do that." yeah And you'll lose people doing that.

Sarah Chung: 01:31:37 Yeah. Absolutely. Okay.

Sarah Chung: 01:31:39 Well, Libby that's the end of it. Thank you so much. It's been wonderful talking to you. Is there anything I've missed or that you'd like to add before?

Libby: 01:31:51 No. I mean, the only thing, perhaps, is training for chairs. I mean, I've done the national training for chairs. I did that a few years ago, which was interesting. And that was face-to-face. It was part of you know being part of a group.

01:32:09 And it was very useful to do that. And I think perhaps that's something that we should say if you want to be a chair, then you really should do that national training and be a there's an element, really, of being qualified in that if you do that training, you get that qualification, then at least you then know what's expected of you as a chair.

01:32:35 And you know really how to run the meetings because you know without being arrogant, I think there's nothing worse than being in a meeting where the chair isn't running the meeting and it just drifts. And you're just looking at your watch all the day thinking, "Oh, Lord, I've got 47 million other things to do while I'm sitting there for the last three hours." But I think it is important that chairs are trained.

01:33:05 And also, if you have a specialist role, so for example, the safeguarding governor, yeah then there is training about that role because I think it's important that, again, if you're the safeguarding governor, you know what you're supposed to be asking. You know what you're supposed to be looking for. And that you have an understanding of the training that the safeguarding leaders had so you know where they're coming from and you understand what their role is in school rather than just somebody who you know I've got a gap here for a safeguarding governor, so you're going to be the safeguarding governor.

01:33:43 If you don't know the questions to ask, you're not really going to know that they're doing the job properly. I mean, and that's not to say that the vast majority of staff who are in that role are absolutely wonderful. And they do you know an incredible job, an incredibly difficult job, and they do it very well. But you know if you're not asking the right questions, then there is always that possibility that something might slip and you know some child might be hurt or worse.

01:34:13	So I think those two roles are absolutely crucial. The chair's role and the safeguarding governor, I think specific training for those would be really helpful.
Sarah Chung: 01:34:24	Okay. Well, that's been absolutely fantastic. Wonderful. So thank you so much.
Libby: 01:34:31	You're very welcome. Good luck with writing your thesis. Thank you. I'm sure. Have you got much longer to do it? Have you?
Sarah Chung: 01:34:42	I'll be writing up now over the next year.
01:34:45	And then I'm hoping to submit it around May next year.
Libby: 01:34:50	Fingers crossed that it goes well.
Sarah Chung: 01:34:52	I am hoping, though, to try and get some of the findings out a little before that because it's quite a long time to wait to release it.
Libby: 01:35:00	Yeah. I mean, I'd be certainly interested to read if you're putting out anything. I'd be interested to read your conclusions.
Sarah Chung: 01:35:08	Oh, wonderful. I'll add you to my list.
Libby: 01:35:11	Yeah, please do. And if I can help again, then you know feel free to get in touch in any way if I can help.
01:35:16	Just give us a shout.
Sarah Chung: 01:35:17	Oh, lovely. Thanks ever so much, Libby.

Louis

Sarah Chung: 00:00	Okay. There we go. Okay. So I'll just read through some of the blurb first. Firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in the study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. During our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this.
00:31	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training.
00:54	I would again like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation that you've just signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years.
01:20	Should you wish a copy of the results, then please do email me at [redacted]. As a precaution oh, no. I was going to tell you where the fire exits were then, but we're not on campus, so. Do you have any questions before we begin?
Louis: 01:40	No, no, no. All fine.
Sarah Chung: 01:42	Oh, absolutely wonderful. Thank you. So shall we jump in and start with how long have you been a governor?
Louis: 01:51	12 years.
Sarah Chung: 01:52	12 years. Are you enjoying it? I'm sure after 12 years?
Louis: 01:57	Yeah. So I mean, I should really give you the story because I think it matters to the rest of the interview. So I became a parent governor in 2010, primary school. And I am now chair of governors at primary school. I'm also chair of trustees at a multi-academy trust, and I run a governor training business.
02:21	And I'm a national leader of governance. So kind of you probably might want to, I guess, for the interview, ask me what hat I'm wearing because I think for your research or for your records, I don't suppose you want it blurring, if that makes sense. You want to be clear what hat I'm wearing, I suppose. I know it's not perfect, but.

Sarah Chung: 02:45	Yeah. No, that's absolutely wonderful. I mean, all of your experience is going to be helpful to the study.
02:51	But yes, I think in terms of the training you've received, probably more from your own stand as a governor.
Louis: 02:59	Okay. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 03:00	Okay. That's wonderful. So just briefly, what has been the most enjoyable part of your governance?
Louis: 03:07	I think consistently, the most enjoyable bit is when you're in school. I think there's nothing more life-affirming than being in a class of primary school children when they're just doing what they do.
03:23	That is far and away the most enjoyable thing. You know It doesn't have to be anything significant or fancy. But yeah, just being in there is just a delight.
Sarah Chung: 03:37	That's lovely to hear. So can I ask your reasons for becoming a governor?
Louis: 03:44	Yeah. For me, I always imagine that if I ever had children, I would become a governor because maybe it's a deeply philosophical perspective.
03:55	But I thought it's important that my children go to a good school. However, what I really rail against is this idea that I send my kids to you and you educate them. It's co-working, co-creating, and it's what role am I playing? I can't just sit back and expect that skill to be good in my community. That's pathetic. The idea should be that I contribute to that school being a good school and to the fullest extent that I possibly can.
04:27	And I figured that the best way I could do that is to be a governor. Absolutely. Very much from a community perspective. If I want a good school, the onus is on me to help create a good school. There's nothing worse than people sitting on the sidelines moaning.
Sarah Chung: 04:45	Yeah. Absolutely. So you mentioned there that actually was that before you had children, you'd even considered the idea.
Louis: 04:52	Yeah. It was kind of like you know you don't know whether you're going to have kids, whereas if I did, it's just.
05:04	I can't think of an analogy, but I suppose if you want your community to go, what the hell are you doing to contribute to that community? You can't just sit there and expect everyone else to fix it, or you can't be an individual.
Sarah Chung: 05:15	Yeah. Oh, wonderful. Thank you, Louis. That's a lovely explanation. So conversely, what's the least enjoyable part of governance?
Louis: 05:28	I think there's a few, and it's grown.

05:31	The role is getting bigger and bigger and bigger, and more and more duties are being thrown at governors. And ultimately, the volunteers, you know the latest thing is that they're increasing the role of governors in exclusions. Now, that is a very technical, emotive, difficult, complex subject. And it's not that I suggest for a minute that governors shouldn't have a role.
06:02	But this idea that you can constantly give very significant responsibilities and just keep pushing it. And it mirrors the criminal increase in workload for teachers. You know It's kind of as their workload increases, everybody in the educational systems workload increases. So there's that. And then alongside that, excuse me, you know there are unpleasant things you have to do.
06:32	As a governor, you've got to run a school with a balanced budget. And if it doesn't, ultimately, the only way to fix it is restructuring which equals redundancy. Making teachers redundant is repulsive, but has to be done. So you know on average, staffing costs are roughly 80% to 85% of your budget. You're never going to despite what the myths are, you can't run a balanced budget by saving on supplies and estate costs because it's 15% of your budget to drop in the ocean.
07:10	So that is deeply unpleasant, but has to be done occasionally. So things like that. I think as well, I would also say there's been a very rapid rising complaints for schools in the last since the start of the pandemic, it was growing before that where it's escalated significantly. And some of the complainants are just vile you know in their behaviour and their attitude towards schools and school staff.
07:46	And it's just yeah, things like that. They're the nasty bits that I don't like.
Sarah Chung: 07:52	Okay. Okay. That sounds like it's been quite traumatic at times for you then.
Louis: 07:59	I'm pretty fairly resilient and so on, but I have seen it take a horrible toll on other governors.
08:07	You know I can remember a school I was involved with, probably the best word it that way, where the former chair ended up with quite significant health problems as a result of having to suspend the head teacher and allegations of fraud and misconduct and so on. And it pits the local papers. And you know that can be quite you know deeply upsetting. And it had a long-term impact on their health, physical and mental.
08:36	You know And that's not I wouldn't say that's common, but it's not unusual for it to take that toll.
Sarah Chung: 08:43	Of course. Of course. And did the chair that you're referring to, did they have any support at the time?
Louis: 08:51	Interesting. So it was about [redacted] years ago. So to the extent that the local authority could, they tried to put some support in place. But of course, they were being hollowed out.

09:06 And when it happens now, there is no support for governors and chairs of governors because particularly maintained schools, there is absolutely no support in most local authorities for maintained school governors because it's not a statutory duty for local authorities to support governors in that way. So there's no one to provide that support. In multi-academy trusts, I guess it varies.

09:34 You know It depends on the scale of the trust, culture of the trust, and things like that. So I would say that there isn't any systemic support for governors in those difficult situations.

Sarah Chung: 09:47 Okay. Okay. Thank you. So moving on now briefly, the NGA described governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction. The following questions will explore your understanding of vision, ethos, and strategic direction.

10:07 So in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?

Louis: 10:13 Yeah. Vision, where are we going as a school? Ethos, how does it feel, both along the way and when we get there? And strategic direction or strategic plan, what's the plan to achieve the vision and the ethos? So where are we going? Are we going to get there and what will it feel like?

Sarah Chung: 10:32 Okay. That's absolutely wonderful. Thank you.

10:36 And are you happy with your own school's vision, ethos, and strategic direction?

Louis: 10:44 Broadly, yeah. It's a moving feast. So the maintained school that I'm chair of governor's at, we've got a Friday evening and Saturday morning session off-site this weekend to revisit the strategic vision values ethos and then spend some time thinking about the white paper.

11:04 So we're lucky that we've got some money in the budget to do that and then the wherewithal. So notwithstanding pandemics. We try to do that every two years. Staff and governors together. So yeah, broadly happy, yeah. Just at the beginning, you said that the NGA say that that's the role. I would say it's actually DFE's definition. It's in the governance handbook, the framework, the offspring inspection handbook as well. Those three core roles.

11:35 But NGA, obviously, do support that.

Sarah Chung: 11:39 Okay. That's fantastic. Thank you. So you seem quite confident in your understanding of those three particular functions. Do you think for other governors coming in, there might be any training that could help them become as confident?

Louis: 11:55 So obviously, I've got a vested interest in this because it's you know but I think it is very hit and miss.

12:05 There are some local authorities that still and I don't know how they've managed to find the resources and the wherewithal that offer a coordinator or governor services type role. And that they're able to put on training and support. You know They run a clerking service. And most of my trade, if you like, comes from formal or informal contracts with local authorities where they will contract with me to provide governor training that they offer to all their schools.

12:38 And most of them offer it to academies and maintain schools, by the way. The take-up from academies is very patchy. Some play nice with everybody else. Some refuse to play with anyone. And another white paper tries to address a little bit of that. So what was your question again? Because I'm conscious of going off track.

Sarah Chung: 13:03 It was whether you felt there would be training available to support newer governors or governors that are less confident in their understanding.

Louis: 13:13 I think it varies by local authority. So I know that there are some who have a very effective and comprehensive schedule, and they run dozens of courses per year covering the whole competency framework. You know Whether that's induction, complaints training, finance training, understanding the curriculum, you name it. You know Ofsted preparation, everything.

13:39 And there are other local authorities that simply don't have the resources internally to be able to afford someone to coordinate it. Now, they have different models. So some local authorities will ask schools to buy in to a service. Call it, 1,000 pounds a year. I don't know. And then for that, you get access to as many courses as you like for your governors. Others offer it as a pay-as-you-go.

14:08 You know So you get access to governor training, but it costs 40 quid per governor, per training course. What's interesting is that those that offer that pay-as-you-go model are able to if they're able to get plenty of governors on, it means that the training courses become self-funding at a reasonable price for the school, so then they can put more on. So I think there's lots of different models.

14:36 When answering the question, I think it varies by local authority. And what's really interesting is the school system is splintering you know into multi-academy trust, single academy trusts. Some of the better multi-academy trusts are very happy to access training from wherever it comes and they're not precious. Some academy trusts, and it's not a scale thing, think they know everything and don't want their governors to be trained for whatever reason.

15:09 And others offer it internally. So I think there's a real mix. You know And the more the systems get splintered, the more difficult it's going to be for governors to get access to the training they need. You know As more move into MATS, do

	they look to the MATS? They really should, legally. The MATS should be providing that training. But governance in a multi-academy trust and local accountability and democracy is completely eliminated.
15:40	You know There is no legal duty in a multi-academy trust to have local governors for a school at all. Many of them choose not to. Many of them choose to do so, by the way. So I think it really I don't think you can make assumptions across the system anymore.
Sarah Chung: 15:57	Okay. Okay. That's a wonderful answer. Thank you. Really detailed. So that's really helpful. Looking now at pupil performance, so can you explain a little bit about how your governing body oversees pupil performance?
Louis: 16:12	Yeah. So the number one source of information, as you'd expect, is from the head teacher and the senior team. We get regular reports on progress and attainment. And I think it's important to differentiate the two. Progress and attainment on pupils, people groups, you know whether that's SCM, people premium, boys, girls, key stage, year group, you name it. And then that's usually red, amber, green rated, as well as the absolute numbers and compared to local and national.
16:43	So we get a lot of data that we can track quite clearly what's going on in progress and entertainment across the school. Sitting alongside that, obviously, we do governor visits. We've got different governors allocated to core roles. So we allocate our link governor roles to the school improvement plan. So for example, boys reading across the school isn't where we want it to be. That's on the school improvement plan.
17:12	So a governor is allocated to that school improvement plan area. And then their governor visits are focused on boys reading, for example. We also have we work well with a couple of local schools. So I'm talking about the maintained school here. And so, for example, the head of the local school might come and do, I don't know, Girls Mats and Key Stage 1 might be another area of focus for the school.
17:40	So there'll be a learning focusing on girls maths led by a local head teacher from another school, maybe their head of maths, our head of maths and a couple of our teachers. Governors come in on that, do that learning work, and then therefore, as governors, we get the benefit of that learning work. Also, that external person that's come in, whether it's our school improvements, advisor, a consultant, the local head, does their report and governors get a copy of that.
18:09	So we can triangulate that against what the head's telling us and what the data's saying. The school, wherever they use a scheme, for example, you know we use a particular phonics scheme or a particular math scheme or whatever. There's usually an accreditation process that goes hand-in-hand with that scheme. So we get a report on that accreditation process,

	which, again, is an external perspective on that. So they're the main areas, I guess.
Sarah Chung: 18:33	Okay. That's fantastic. So there's quite a few avenues available to you then to monitor the data.
18:41	And all governors, how do you feel, for example, for yourself, when the data's presented to you? Do you feel you're quite comfortable with understanding that data, or?
Louis: 18:53	So broadly, yeah. It is a lot of data. It's complex data at times. Yeah I think governors should have freer I don't mean freer as in no cost. I mean free access to training to help them understand that data.
19:13	The training is available. And you know as I mentioned earlier, some local authorities will make that available. Some multi-academy trust may, but it is very fragmented and by no means universal. So in many schools, I could imagine a lot of governors go, "I don't understand this data." Well, I know that happens, and they don't know where to go to get that information. They don't even know the training exists.
Sarah Chung: 19:42	Okay.
19:42	And how do you feel how would you, in your role, encourage the governors to find that training? How would you?
Louis: 19:53	Yeah. It's a persistent challenge. So I'm lucky. Again, in that school, the local authority do put on a programme of training, and they publicize that schedule, and they publicise it to heads, they publicize it to chairs, they publicise it through their Clark's network. So it's always on our agenda, and I'm always encouraging my governors to access that training.
20:15	Interesting is that they don't always do so. And cause and effect is challenging, but perhaps they see a competent, comfortable chair. And you know we may have well, we have got you know a secondary head on the board and another teacher who tends to take the lead for school curriculum and data issues. So they go, "Well, I'll leave it to them guys.
20:40	They know what they're all about." So yeah, even if the training exists, sometimes getting governance to go on it is a challenge because, and as I mentioned at the beginning, the role's so big and growing. I think a common experience is a lot of governors go, "Geez, I didn't know this was I didn't know what this was. I didn't know this was involved." And the proposition wasn't made clear to them when they became a governor that, "You know what? Roughly, this is the amount of hours you're going to have to spend on this, including training, and it's important.".
Sarah Chung: 21:12	Okay.
21:13	That's wonderful. Thank you. So in terms of challenge now, as a governor, do you feel able to challenge or raise questions when necessary?

Louis: 21:28	I would say yes, but I think it is more difficult than many people imagine to do that. I think there's different ways of doing it.
21:43	So you know well-thought-through, properly research questions are the heart of challenge. And I think it's easy to misinterpret challenge as being a negative connotations. And actually, you know if you use that curiosity or that appreciative inquiry approach and things like that, so I think I would never underestimate it.
22:15	I would also say to be a head teacher, you have to be a very skilled, confident professional. And how can I put this? You need an ego to run a school, and rightly so. You know To be the head of a community institution like that, it takes a bit of ego, and that's right and appropriate. But the flip side of that is then you're probably quite a big personality, and that can be difficult to challenge them.
22:41	So I think every governor and every chair has to find a way of working with their head that keeps the show on the road, doesn't rock the boat too much, but provides appropriate challenge. That said, you know I have been in a school, as I say, where we suspended the head and things like that. So you know I like to think that when push comes to shove, we will take that in difficult decisions. But yeah, it's deceptively difficult, I would say.
Sarah Chung: 23:10	Okay. Wonderful.
23:11	Thank you. So I know you've mentioned there that you've had quite a tricky time you know having to suspend a head. Can you describe in your own words a time that you have challenged and whether you felt that response received was adequate and if it resolved your concerns?
Louis: 23:33	Yeah. There's lots of examples.
23:39	You know I'm just trying to think of a particular example because there's so many in that you know we might be looking at the school data. We might be looking at boys reading, writing, or in fact, their combined scores in year one. You might be looking at that. And I'll be saying to the head, "Can you just tell me a little bit more about this because you know what's going on with the year one boys that they're not making the progress we would want?" you know And for that, then it depends on what the answer coming back is.
24:12	It's like, "Yeah, we've spotted that. Yeah, you're right. This is what we're doing." you know So it very much depends on that for your next question around, "Okay. Well, what did we do last year? What are this year's year two doing? What were they like in year one?" So in terms of in-year operational level, there's those sorts of things. I don't want to oversell it and say that that happens all the time, but you know I like to think it does.

24:39	And then it becomes more of a professional conversation rather than I'm challenging you over this kind of thing. There are other times and I think there's a constant source of friction is the wrong word. It probably over sounds it, but I am probably a little bit more flexible and forgiving towards teachers wanting a bit of time off during the school week you know to attend the child's class assembly or take the mother to an appointment or whatever it might be.
25:16	Whereas historically in schools, you just don't, if you see what I mean. Yeah So I think that's a constant area of difficulty. So you know in that, I just think it's a long-term process to try and I can't change the head's style and approach, but I can over time nudge to be a more sympathetic. And I think we've made progress with that.
25:41	And I think there's a big thing about picking your battles because I could go, "No, we must have a provision where all teachers can take up to three or four occurrences in the academic year where they take time out, they make the time back up, but you know to have a social life, to have a family life, to see the or over time, I can keep chipping away. Yeah I'm just trying it rather than thinking of the big-ticket examples of you know oh yeah we suspended ahead and this is what we did.
26:12	They're kind of one in a million. More relevant is those day-to-day things and about how you get sustained change over time.
Sarah Chung: 26:23	Okay. And it sounds like you're quite passionate about that work-life balance and the governor's role in it.
Louis: 26:30	Yeah. It's funny. My wife just popped in to get some stuff, and she works with me now on the governor training business. But she used to be a teacher and had to leave because it was utterly incompatible with family life.
26:41	For the life of me, I can't work out how anyone has small children and teaches full-time. I'm amazed that they keep mind, body, and soul together.
Sarah Chung: 26:51	Yeah. Absolutely. Okay. Thank you. That's great. So again, in opposite to that, can you describe a time when you have maybe challenged but felt quite uncomfortable challenging? And if possible, explain why.
Louis: 27:12	Yeah. So in terms of so the school that we run, you know again, I'm thinking about the maintained school rather than the multi-academy trust simply because I've only been chair of trustees for a few months. So if I go back to the you know successful school, consistently oversubscribed, the most oversubscribed in the town and always has been.
27:39	Consistently held up as a good school. You know But what makes me uncomfortable, I guess, is when we're challenging the head you know over or when we're talking to the head around what the priorities for the school and you know we need to get the progress and attainment up for the next year

and so on. So we're pushing that direction. And I know that the outcome is more work for the teachers, and I can't get away from that.

28:12 And therefore, I'm thinking, "I'm part of the problem here, not the solution." So that's a constant concern that we ask so much of the teachers, and it makes me very uncomfortable.

Sarah Chung: 28:28 Okay. Okay. And did you feel able to express that discomfort?

Louis: 28:33 To a degree, yeah. To a degree, yeah. You know I don't know what the answer is, but yeah, to a degree.

Sarah Chung: 28:42 Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now we're going to look at holding head teachers to account. So as we both know, you know another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for the management of staff. How confident are you in this area?

Louis: 29:01 Reasonably. So I used to be head of workforce for an [redacted] Trust, so I'm fairly relaxed about such matters. And I'm fairly relaxed about every now and again, people will lose the job.

29:13 Every now and again, people will be performance-managed and possibly leave the organisation. Individual cases are uncomfortable and painful, but I'm fairly relaxed about it. And I know absolutely that the head does a very rigorous job of holding their teachers to account on the performance management.

29:38 You know And we've got a case at the moment where there was a member of staff on a performance management plan having not hit the standards that the head was expecting. And the support gone in place, but it was always based on the premise of, "Here is the support. You've got to hit this standard. There is no alternative." And unfortunately, that member of staff has chosen to resign and will be leaving at the end of summer. You know And that does happen every couple of years.

30:10 So I know that the head is performance managing. So I suppose, in a way, it's easy for us because the head is doing all those difficult things. Yeah Again, it can be a source of you know what if we're wrong? Because I'm not a million percent convinced on anything. You know So today is you know Wednesday, but I'm only 99% certain it's Wednesday, if you know what I mean. I'm not 100% convinced of anything.

30:40 So there are times when I'm thinking, "Oh, you know are we doing the right thing? Is it fair?" I'm sure these teachers that are leaving the organisation are out there going, "Oh, you know it's a nightmare. It's a nightmare to work for." The governors could have supported me better, those sorts of things. So does that answer your question? I'm not sure.

Sarah Chung: 30:56	Yeah, it really does, actually. And it's quite interesting that you were saying that you're never 100% sure of everything.
31:08	Thinking of that, do you ever follow up with those sort of, for example, that teacher that's leaving with exit interviews, or?
Louis: 31:16	Do you know? No, we don't. And I know exit interviews are generally considered to be a good thing, and I'm okay with that concept. My problem is I've seen them in place in lots of organisations, and I've not seen them make any difference.
31:37	You can give a leaving person the chance to vent for good or bad. And that's fine, and they get a sense of satisfaction from that. The person conducting the interview, what do they do with that information? And how do they then embed that into the organisation's life? And what do we do about it?
31:58	So for me, I think I'm balanced to have the interview would be disingenuous because I'm not entirely convinced any organisation no, I'm sure there are organisations that hold exit interviews and genuinely do something with them. But having gone through a couple of exit interviews myself in previous roles and jobs, yeah okay, I get the opportunity to mount. It doesn't go anywhere. Nothing changes. Yeah And also, everything's relative.
32:28	So I'm not against them. I think they have a place, but they're not a panacea either.
Sarah Chung: 32:37	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So thinking again then about the head teacher management stuff, are you all monitoring it via her teacher reports of that, or?
Louis: 32:53	Generally, yeah.
32:54	So as I mentioned, we've got embedded systems where external people come into the school. So you know the skill improvement advisor. So we use a consultant that we appoint for the head teacher's performance management who is completely independent of the school in the LA. And they do the head teacher's performance management, and roughly every half-term hold a learning walk to look into a particular aspect of the school improvement plan, often in partnership with a local head from a local school that we work with, and there's a couple of local schools we work with.
33:28	And as part of that, they may well identify that maybe some of the teaching was less than good or some of the teaching was outstanding or whatever. So that gives us and although rightly it's anonymous, it is identifiable down to a key stage.
33:47	So that gives us triangulation to be able to go, "Okay, every year the head gives us teacher one through to teacher 21 yeah to standard exceeds a standard below the standard." So we can do some triangulation so that rightly, governors don't get involved or identify you know the year two teacher in a particular class, their teaching is less than good.

34:14	But we've got not just a head teacher but other ways of identifying with whether teaching is good or not. Does that make sense?
Sarah Chung: 34:24	Yeah, it absolutely does. Thank you. So keep on this theme again with the staff, do you have any involvement with or are you aware of any developmental and reward arrangements for your staff in your setting?
Louis: 34:43	So there are lots of development opportunities. Usually, you know I mentioned that we use accredited schemes for all aspects of the curriculum and beyond the curriculum as well. So for example, we've managed to establish a forest school, and there's quite a very significant and detailed and lengthy training course that comes along with that for a number of staff. So there's things like that.
35:11	So we regularly get told about all those sorts of development and training opportunities. Every governor meeting, we ask a member of staff to do a presentation to us on usually a subject leader, whether it's art or religious or religion or geography or math or wherever it might be. That in itself, I think, is a development opportunity for a member of staff to present to the board of governors. So you know there are lots of training and development opportunities.
35:44	And then we have in the past you know our deputy head had a two-year supplement to run a school in another town. We've loaned out a day a week to another school that had just received an inadequate Ofsted judgment. So there are those development opportunities available in the broadest sense as well. You know We've got a couple of I think we've got three subject or specialist leaders in education. I can never remember.
36:12	Anyway, SLEs. You know Yeah. So I think there are, across the piece, lots of opportunities for development in the school, for teachers. In terms of reward because you specifically asked about reward, didn't you? So we carefully follow we have a pay policy that we try and mirror and match local schools because I see no benefit to the community and we as a board see no benefit to the community competing with other schools on pay because that undermines ultimately, all that does is leads to pay inflation in the community and therefore impacts on school budgets.
36:56	So actually, I think teachers are underpaid, but I can't fix that by giving them budget busting pay rises.
Sarah Chung: 37:06	Yeah. Okay. That's brilliant. Thank you. That makes a lot of sense. So as well as setting out ethos and strategic direction that we talked about earlier, and also ensuring that there's a level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing.
37:29	probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight of your school. How comfortable are you within that situation?

Louis: 37:40	Very, actually. Because you know for example, you know everyone has to do the declarations of interest, you know. And then, obviously, declare an interest on every governor meeting. So you know there's those basics.
37:57	We have the code of conduct that we expect everyone to sign up to, and I made some amendments to tighten that a little as well. I think sometimes the Nolan principles can be motherhood and apple pie, and you want something a bit tighter and specific. So we've got that, which I know the teachers have to sign up to. It's part of their employment contract as well. Then over and above that, you know we've got things like the school financial value standard that we've just completed for our school that the lead for finance, the lead governor for finance takes a lead on the vice chair.
38:30	And we go through that every year. And then that report comes to governors. So that gives us an oversight of how the financial arrangements are working generally. And then on top of that, we've got the school business manager who gives us reports on that. And we get regular updates on the budget. And we've got the scheme of delegation so that we know who can sign off at what level and audits of that.
38:55	Beyond that, because you were talking about financial probability, one of the things that and I think so they're all things that you would expect to be in place. But I think over and above that, there's the culture and ethos of the school. So for example, previously, one of the things we suspended the head for a few years ago was financial misconduct.
39:23	And we still regularly refer to that. And there are governors that are around now that are around then. So that is kind of burned into the consciousness of the board that we've been there and we don't want to go back there. You know So one of the things that is getting clarity over information, you know little things like, "What's our staffing structure? How many hours of teaching have we got? How many TAs have we got?
39:52	And where are they deployed?" So that staffing deployment and staff list that comes to board regularly means that we know because that's the biggest area of the budget. So we know so long as we know with absolute clarity where all that is, then keeping an eye on the other 15% becomes easier, if that makes sense.
Sarah Chung: 40:13	Yeah, it does. Yeah.
Louis: 40:14	You know So it's about those risk areas.
40:17	One of the things that triggered the previous head teacher's suspension was a whistle-blower. And what myself and the chair at the time felt is that it's important to act on this whistleblowing and be seen to act on it.
40:39	And what you can't do is stand on the top of the hill with a trumpet going, "We've had a whistle-blower because you can

	demonstrate that you've took action and you're taking it seriously." Because obviously, the kickback you get is, "This is anonymous. Why are you making this song?" And that's about it. And it's like, "Because we have to." yeah you know And being absolutely clear that we're acting on it because I'm fairly sure whistle-blowers talk to other of their peers.
41:11	And if they see that the organisation is acting honourably and objectively, I think it sends a message through the organisation that you know we do things properly around here, if that makes sense. It's kind of a cultural thing, isn't it? It is. There's some other things as well. I know that in some schools, the rules are applied consistently.
41:37	So for example, governing boards, and frankly, the guidance often encourages them to give head teachers pay rises when they're at the top of the scale when the rest of the staff don't. And schools do that. But what we've said is, "No, absolutely not. We won't do that." Because why should we give the head a pay rise over and above the pay scales when the rest of the staff don't? If we do it for him, we have to do it for them. If we can't do it for everyone, then we're not doing it at all.
42:07	And I think little things like that reinforce the property and the culture.
Sarah Chung: 42:12	Yeah. It sounds then that the board as a whole has got quite a wide view and really wants to ensure fairness across the board?
Louis: 42:23	Try to. Again, fairness can be relative because people interpret fairness to their situation. I'm sure. Absolutely sure that there are some teachers who know it's not fair. You know The head was allowed to work from home last week, but the head doesn't have a classroom.
Sarah Chung: 42:39	Absolutely. Yeah. Okay. So I mean, we've talked about the head teacher that was suspended partly to do with financial misconduct. Is that correct?
Louis: 42:49	Predominantly, to be quite true.
Sarah Chung: 42:50	Predominantly. Okay. And that all came about because of a whistle-blower?
Louis: 42:55	It did, but it just felt like it was gathering momentum. And when the whistle-blower come in, it was almost well, we've got to act now. We would have had to act anyway, I think.
Sarah Chung: 43:06	Yeah. So had you as a board began to notice issues or?
Louis: 43:11	Absolutely, yeah. Absolutely. You know And it was interesting that myself and a couple of other governors were asking the challenging difficult questions, and that led to a rapid deterioration in relations with the head. It was split amongst the board because other governors thought he was brilliant. And we were asking questions and not getting the answers that we were looking for, so we kept asking.

43:34	you know And you know the most bizarre thing where the head resigned from the governing body. And I remember saying to him, "But you're still going to have to come to the meetings." And you know it was kind of like so you've just eliminated your vote, and at the same time, you still have to come. What was the point of that? Yeah. Did you get a response or? Not a coherent one.
44:06	Because obviously, relations had started to get quite bad, so.
Sarah Chung: 44:09	Yeah. Oh, gosh. That must have been quite a difficult situation for you then?
Louis: 44:15	It was more difficult for the chair. I was vice chair at the time. I don't know. I found it quite bizarre.
Sarah Chung: 44:20	Yeah. And did the head teacher, were they reinstated, or was it?
Louis: 44:26	It was very odd. We felt very let down by the local authority in the end.
44:30	It was agreed that he could retire because he was coming close to retirement and keep his pension on the premise that he paid back about 8,000 pounds, which he never did. So he left when he was planning to retire with his pension and an agreement that he would pay the money back, and he never did. And you know he was going round trumpeting in the community that he was exonerated on all charges, and he wasn't.
45:00	But you know we just took the view that, "You know what? It might be newspaper headlines today, but it's tomorrow's chip paper, and it's extremely blew over." We knew. We were very strongly convinced that what we were doing was right. The new head that we put in was right. And over time, it would be demonstrated that the school would improve rapidly as a result. And it did. And you know that was difficult.
45:28	It's just a case of keeping the faith, I suppose, and just you know trying to be objective and evidence-based wherever possible.
Sarah Chung: 45:37	Yeah. Absolutely. So as a governing body, then, what you see is the failure of the local authority to act. Did that, in any way, damage the dynamics in the governing body?
Louis: 45:53	It just made it difficult because he'd been suspended over allegations.
45:59	It had been proven that he had paid himself more than he was entitled to pay himself. I suppose is the best way of describing it. Basically, he employed himself as a midday for two hours per day, every day, on a head teacher's pay scale over and above. So we had two contracts. And there was a little quiet deal between him and the previous chair.
Sarah Chung: 46:22	Ah. Oh, right. Okay. So the previous chair had been aware of it?

Louis: 46:27	The previous chair had signed it all off and approved it, yeah, and had since moved to Spain.
Sarah Chung: 46:33	Oh, okay.
Louis: 46:35	Honestly, it's just yeah, we'd be here all day if I told you the full story. And what we felt was that local authority HR teams are traditionally very risk-averse. And therefore, we felt that they weren't strong enough and challenging enough in the proceedings.
46:56	I get it you know because their HR team is probably supporting you know they've got two HR people that are supporting 70 schools or whatever. So we'll get completely overstretched.
Sarah Chung: 47:06	Yeah. Okay. Okay. That's fantastic. So I'm assuming that when the new chair of governors came on, is that when things started to become more transparent?
Louis: 47:20	Yeah.
47:21	It was a process of asking for information, not being satisfied with the answers, then going through the pain and the challenge of you know the answers are still not forthcoming, and you keep asking, and you keep pushing, and relationships deteriorate. And then it's really difficult to just keep going.
Sarah Chung: 47:38	Okay. Okay. Thank you. You've been really really candid in your response, and I really appreciate that. Thank you. So we'll look now at the eight elements of effective governance.
Louis: 47:51	Mm-hmm.
Sarah Chung: 47:52	And the question I'm going to ask you now is kind of like a word association. So I'm going to ask you the meaning, and if you just respond with your understanding. So the eight elements of effective governance have been identified as essential to good governance. In your own words, can you explain what these mean to you? So A, the right people around the table.
Louis: 48:18	This is again, it's a relative term because depending on the Constitution, the right people mean that you need to make sure that you've got parent governors there. If you're in a church school, you've got diocesan or foundation governors, staff governors, and so on. And then you can augment that with co-opted governors.
48:41	Now, for me, you know with the parent governors, you get what you're given by the parents, likewise, with the staff. And that's okay because that's random allocation and they've got something to bring. And they put the name forward. So I'm okay with that. The parents usually do a good job of electing people, to be honest. And likewise, the staff. Then it depends. I think church schools are at a massive disadvantage because depending on the Constitution, either 25 or more percent of their governors are appointed by the diocese.

49:16	And I don't think it is a coincidence that church schools on average seem to be getting adverse Ofsteds and getting themselves into difficulty. Whereas with your constitution, with your co-opted governors, the right people around the table mean, have you done a skills audit? Do you know what skills they've got? And then have you matched that to the skills that you need based on the governor competency framework, the eight elements of governance. So therefore, your co-opted governors give you the opportunity to get the right people.
49:45	And so it might be that, I don't know, we need a HR person because I've got one of them, or school numbers are falling, and we really benefit from a marketing and comms expert to raise the profile of the skill. So the right people around the table is a combination of filling the roles appropriately, according to your constitution, and then using your co-opted governors to fill the skills gaps.
Sarah Chung: 50:09	Okay. Brilliant answer. Thank you. So B, understanding the role and responsibilities.
Louis: 50:17	Ultimately, I think there's two elements to this. There's training. So you know we've talked about this. Governors need access to good quality training, and they need easy access to that. And that is variable. The other side to that is that there's an onus on the governing body and the school to make it clear to the governors what their role is. So what that means is I would say there should be a school-specific governor's handbook. It should have terms of reference.
50:45	It should have role profiles. Now, I don't mean you'll have seen role profiles in industry that run on for 70 pages or whatever it might be. All I'm saying is you know a page of A4 with a few bullet points is perfectly sufficient to describe a governor. There are role profiles available. The DFE provide model profiles in terms of reference. So all it is is you know when governors join us, have we made it clear what their role is? You know If we have a finance committee, here's the terms of reference for it.
51:16	If we say we want a link governor for whatever, have we described what a link governor's role is so that we've given them basic information to be able to understand their role. So yeah, training and communication from the board.
Sarah Chung: 51:30	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. C, good chairing.
Louis: 51:34	Okay. So a chair is first among equals in that they have no real power other than to chair the meeting. There's one or two minor powers that they have in emergency.
51:48	And I think it's important to understand that so that you're just there equal to all the others. Excuse me. Then it's actually quite a tricky job because you are not their boss. You don't have any power over them like your boss in employment does.

	So you have got to somehow convince this team of volunteers and mavericks to all pull in the same direction.
52:23	So I think it's actually harder chairing a governing body meeting well than it is chairing a meeting in work because it's typically chairing a meeting in work. You're the boss. And ultimately, you've got a degree of power over those in the room, whereas for governors, you've not. So it requires quite a sophisticated level of to do well. It requires quite a high degree of emotional intelligence, of experience of interpersonal skills, you know whether that's yeah.
52:56	But you know there are simple things. Set your expectations up from the outset. You know I'm going to run this meeting as though you've all read the papers and then go at pace and mean it. And either people will read the papers and be with you or ultimately they go, "You know what? I can't keep up here. Tell you what shall I resign?" So yeah, it's quite a big area, I think, chairing. Not that easy. Okay.
Sarah Chung: 53:23	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Professional clerking.
Louis: 53:29	Exceptionally important and not as common as it should be. It's the equivalent, really, of a company secretary. And if we think you know even a small primary school has a budget of over a million quid. Average primary schools are pushing 2 million quid. And therefore, you know if that was a business, it's quite a big business.
53:53	It's still a small, medium-sized entity. And not only that, it's a high-profile community institution. And you need someone who is on top of all the rules and regulations. You're in a highly regulated industry education. So you need someone who is on top of an abreast of all the regulations to make sure that you don't exceed your powers, that your meetings are recorded accurately, and that you're always quiet, you know all those things.
54:22	So yeah, it's so important and so undervalued.
Sarah Chung: 54:28	Okay. Thank you. Good relationships based on trust.
Louis: 54:32	Yeah. Kind of ties back into what I was saying about the chairing, really, that you need to establish strong relationships and trust in relationships. So you know you know all the things around honesty and all the things in the known principles. It's tied back into your values as well, I think.
54:51	But if trust breaks down, you can't really run the board effectively. You can't run the school effectively. So yeah. On one level, it's a statement to the blindingly obvious, isn't it? You know He doesn't want good relationships based on trust, yeah but it takes work, I guess.
Sarah Chung: 55:11	Okay. Brilliant. Knowing the school.

Louis: 55:16	Yeah. Really important.
55:19	For governors, for parent governors, it's not too bad, actually, because they're in and about the school every day. Yeah Staff governors, obviously, likewise. But for parent governors, they need to understand that they are now there for the whole school and every child, not a child or intervening on behalf of a group of children, you know their friends and so on, their neighbours. So for other governors, you need to know the whole school.
55:50	And this is the area that's been very significantly weakened by the pandemic because knowing the skill comes down to actually governor visits, regular, structured, focused governor visits. And I don't mean you know oh, yeah, you know the chair of governors comes in every week and has coffee with the head. It's not a bloody community centre. You know Why did you come in? What was the purpose of your visit to come in? What did you look at? And what changed as a result? And by change, I mean, you know did you record your visit in a governor visit form?
56:21	And does that get shared with the rest of the board? Because frankly, coming in for coffee every week with the chair and the head is nice, but doesn't move anything forward. So it's knowing the school professionally. Yeah, of course. You want to see you know come in for sports days and performances and choirs and things like that. That's lovely. One doesn't get to know the school that well. You need to be in lessons.
Sarah Chung: 56:44	Yeah. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Asking challenging questions.
Louis: 56:53	So for me, it's easy to misinterpret asking questions as being the same as challenge. And I think, for me, asking challenging questions means you need to have the former in place, knowing the school, knowing the data. And then you think carefully about your questions to go, "So this particular issue that I'm asking the question on, you know is it important enough to be discussed at board?
57:19	And if so, how do I formulate my question?" So again, it very much depends. And I think sometimes the initial question is all well and good, but there's got to be follow-up either throughout that meeting or future meetings so that you ask a question, and then it's followed through to some sort of outcome. So you know if we've got a concern about girls' mats in key stage one, was there a follow-up set of actions?
57:48	You know Did it trigger a governor visit? Did it trigger a further set of data to the next governor meeting? Did it trigger a meeting between the Matt's lead and that particular governor? So that kind of thing. And ultimately, it's about the impact, isn't it? So this thing that we agreed to do, I don't know. As governors, we agreed that they had put in place small group tutoring for girls maths in key stage one.

58:17	So if we did that and we agreed that in October, in the February and March, we should be asking, "Okay. Well, what's the impact of that? Are we seeing any impact?" yeah yeah Asking questions is easy. The right questions.
Sarah Chung: 58:32	That's wonderful. Thank you. So are you okay with time, by the way?
Louis: 58:37	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 58:37	Okay. Brilliant. So the line between strategic and operational can be seen as a grey area for some.
58:44	How confident are you in knowing where governance ends and head teacher SLT responsibility begins?
Louis: 58:52	Broadly, although it's not obvious and is an area for significant training. Of course, I train people in this, so you know I've got to temper it with that. But I feel like I personally know where the role starts and ends and could describe.
59:13	But I don't think it's commonly known. And I think it varies school to school. So for example, in my view well, no, not just in my view. Best practices should have no involvement in teacher recruitment. The head picks the team, and governors hold the head accountable for the performance of the team. But in lots of schools, they will insist on governors being on the interview panel. Because for me, well, why are you there? What hat are you wearing? What benefit are you bringing? And if it goes wrong, would you hold accountable?
59:44	I mean, I don't know if you want me to say more about it or.
Sarah Chung: 59:47	Yeah. Absolutely. If you feel.
Louis: 59:50	So ultimately, you're not there to do. You might have the skills to do, but governors come and go. And if you start getting involved in operational stuff, are you actually helping the skill to be sustainable? I mean, in the short term, you might get involved for a particular thing. But generally, a common area, health and safety, for example, there's often a governor who knows a lot about health and safety on a board.
01:00:16	And they might do a governor visit in a walk around, and they might spot something. But for me, so say you know finger guards on the back of a door might be you know they noticed that finger guards were missed. Finger guards were missing. For me, you wait until you're back with the head and you go, "Can I just ask you? Who does the health and safety reviews of the building regularly? Who's doing that walk around to make sure that the building's safe?" Because I noticed there was a finger guard missing on the year one class.
01:00:47	And whatever the answer is, it's then okay. So can you tell me how are they trained? Because you know if that's missing and it's been missing a while, what sort of training have they had in making sure that the building's safe for the children? Because then you're getting under the skin of whether it's systemically

safe for these children and the adults that are caring for them are doing the job properly rather than that's missing. You need to fix it. That's an operational conversation rather than getting under the skin of it and understanding why.

Sarah Chung: 01:01:16 Okay. Wonderful. So it's that clarity, isn't it?

Louis: 01:01:20 Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 01:01:20 Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So the impact of COVID-19 now, COVID-19 pandemic has actually been immense, hasn't it? The impact it's made. Can you describe your experience of governance during this time?

Louis: 01:01:39 Oh, God, where to start?

Sarah Chung: 01:01:41 So, for example, you could explain the impact of COVID on your ability to govern effectively.

Louis: 01:01:49 It's significantly reduced it, to be quite honest. Yes, we can do Zoom meetings, and we did, although it took a while to adjust to that. So there was a hiatus where governance stopped, to be frank, in many schools. And then it kind of got going again. And then different schools took a different approach. And many governors got very involved in the writing and production of school risk assessments and things like that for COVID, which, frankly, was completely inappropriate.

01:02:20 The school write the risk assessment. We should be just assured that they're in place and of good quality. So I think for us, it affected our number one was our ability to know the school yeah reduced, and we're still in recovery in terms of as governors reconnecting and re-understanding our schools. That is the current issue. And I think it will take at least a year.

01:02:51 You know There are so many long-term implications. You know It still hasn't gone away. Sickness absence levels from COVID and other things in staff and children are still high. You know I come in, obviously, contact with an awful lot of skills and an awful lot of governors.

01:03:14 And the month that was most of the months that were most affected by COVID absences was January and February this year, far and away, you know you know by which time everyone in the country was thinking, "Oh, it's going away now, isn't it?" So knowing the school, biggest impact. Knowing each other as governors was a significant impact. And then the ability to question and challenge that falls out of that.

Sarah Chung: 01:03:42 Okay.

01:03:43 Wonderful. Thank you. So during the pandemic, actually, how did you communicate? Was it via Zoom, I think you mentioned earlier? Yeah. Yeah. We predominantly we cancelled a couple of meetings initially because it was a case of give the head time and space. They're perfectly capable of running the school. We're here to support. But at the moment, keeping the

	show on the road is what matters, and governors need to get the hell out of the way. You know Other than, "We're there if you need us.
01:04:11	We'll sign off whatever you need." And you know I kept in touch with the head predominantly through phone calls and texts, if you see what I mean. Yeah And then once we realised this is going to be the case for many months or longer, we get into patterns of Zoom meetings, which takes time to establish. I'm backing off a little bit. So we moved out of the challenge box and into the support box a little bit just to keep the damn show on the road.
Sarah Chung: 01:04:38	Yeah. Absolutely. Did you find the Zoom meetings effective?
Louis: 01:04:44	Moderately.
Sarah Chung: 01:04:45	Moderately?
Louis: 01:04:46	Moderately. They enabled us to keep going and keep a modicum of oversight, but they're a poor substitute. You know There will always be part of the mix. And I can imagine going forward. You know November, December, January, February, we will be having Zoom meetings. I don't want people charging across the northwest to get to a governor meeting yeah when they could do it by Zoom. But you know face-to-face always has to take place as well.
Sarah Chung: 01:05:15	Okay. Okay. So like an almost a hybrid effect then, do you think?
Louis: 01:05:19	Yeah. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:05:20	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Do you feel that you were kept up to date relatively well by the senior leadership team?
Louis: 01:05:27	Yeah. It became a running joke in a way. And to be fair, the local authorities were really good. And they were pushing out guidance, and they shared that with chairs of governors as well. And what was really interesting was you know the running joke was the heads would get 50 to 60 pages of new guidance every day, and they did you know because I was seeing it that usually contradicted the guidance from the previous day.
01:05:48	And you know that was driven predominantly by DFE. I would say local public health teams on the council were as much at the mercy of DFE as everybody else. And it just became laughable. You know And it was trying to map a way to enable the heads to carry on. They had to read all this guidance, implement it, and then rip it all up and change it the next day.
Sarah Chung: 01:06:13	Yeah Absolutely. That must have been incredibly frustrating.
Louis: 01:06:18	It was, but it was frustrating for the head more than anybody else. I took the view of, "You know what? I'm not even going to

read it because it's not my job to read it. The head will, unfortunately. Yeah, so.

Sarah Chung: 01:06:31 Okay. Thank you. So obviously, governing in a pandemic, did it highlight any areas that you felt underqualified or undertrained for?

Louis: 01:06:45 It's a really good question.

01:06:55 Yes and no. I felt broadly okay and I could contextualise it and put it into a long-term timeframe once you understood you know what was going on.

01:07:13 And you know you know once we got a couple of months into it, it was clear that this was clear to me that this was going to last as an incident two to three years. You know I did a lot of research into the pandemic sort of 1918 to 19, 2021 and how long that lasted and the waves that that went through and so on. Yeah So once you realise you're in for the long haul, you can rationalise it. And you know previously, I participated in it was interesting, actually.

01:07:45 We were always told we could never plan this and we could never spot this and never prepare for it. As head of workforce in [redacted] Trust in 2009, '10, and '11, we used to go into a conference room every six months. And for two days, we would road test emergency preparation plans, including response to pandemics.

01:08:07 So I knew I suppose I had that benefit knowing that, yeah, it was frustrating that all those people were made redundant and all those plans were thrown away and all those warehouses full of PPEs were sold off and shut 10 years ago. So I found that challenging. So I'm going off the subject there.

01:08:34 I think the biggest impact for me that I felt unprepared for and schools likewise is the emotional and social impact on communities, families, and children. And supporting the head and schools when they've got nobody to refer children and families to.

01:09:00 So there's virtually no Sure Start centres anymore. There's no children's centres. There's no every child matters programme. All the early years help that was put in place sort of 20 years ago has been hollowed out and has gone. So schools have now got nobody to refer to. And you know CAMS are completely overwhelmed. So there is no support. So I felt unable to help the head.

01:09:30 That's not my fault. I don't know if that's a really crap answer, I think.

Sarah Chung: 01:09:35 No, no. It's wonderful. It's absolutely brilliant. Thank you. So moving on, we're looking now. Is there one piece of essential training this is regardless of COVID, but generally, as a governor, is there one piece of essential training for every governor in the UK that you feel would be essential?

Louis: 01:09:57 Yeah, induction training.

01:09:59 So a broad-based induction training that covered all six elements of the competency framework. And the DFE competency framework has six elements. And when you compare that to the eight elements of effective governance, there's a lot of crossover. So you cover all eight of one, you'll hit all six of the other and vice versa. Ultimately, for every job, every profession, there's a competency framework, and that's what you should be trained in. There's one for governors.

01:10:27 And yeah, you know what that means is you can't do it in an hour online. You know It varies, but you know perhaps three, two-hour sessions, maybe online, maybe on Zoom, maybe face-to-face, things like that. I don't know. There's different ways of delivering the training. And it should cover all those six elements and also safeguarding.

01:10:58 Now, whether the safeguard is embedded into the induction or stands alone as a separate piece, yeah. I think there's lots of other training that could be provided, or at least if every governor had access to and had to go through a rigorous induction programme that covered all the elements of their job, yeah perhaps they would understand the role and be able to carry it out a little bit more effectively.

Sarah Chung: 01:11:23 Okay. Wonderful. Thank you.

01:11:25 So conversely, what in your opinion, then, is the least valuable bit of training that could be provided to governors?

01:11:33 Ooo now there's a question. I think if you can't tie it into the governor competency framework, or the three core roles of governance, I would question so if governor training is offered that can't be mapped directly onto the governor competency framework and/or the three core roles of governance.

01:12:04 By the way, if you did map it to the governor competency framework, it would map onto the three core roles. I would question its relevance. So I've seen a lot of suggestion that chairs would benefit from coaching and mentoring. I get that. I am a qualified performance coach. However, I think it is utterly ineffectual.

01:12:32 Now, what I'm not saying is that chairs and other governors wouldn't benefit from a buddy or some sort of mentoring system. But in my experience, it is utterly pointless. This idea that you can coach chairs. Once they are appointed and they have a basic competence level, an experience level, then there's an argument that coaching can be overlaid on that where it helps and is appropriate.

01:13:02 But the idea that you can coach a newly appointed chair to effectiveness is frankly ludicrous.

Sarah Chung: 01:13:11 Okay. Okay. Thank you.

Louis: 01:13:12 It's kind of like so you're a PhD researcher. I couldn't coach you I couldn't coach a man off the street to be a PhD researcher. I could coach someone who had a basic level of a good level of skills and understanding and competence in your role to be better. You've got to have something to work with, haven't you?

Sarah Chung: 01:13:31 Yeah.

01:13:31 So it's that basic level of training needed before you even get to the idea of coaching.

Louis: 01:13:38 Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And I think how can I put this? There's a lot of snake oil salesmen in the area coaching and mentoring in all industries, by the way, and education is no different. You see coaching as a panacea. And actually, it's a useful tool for the preconditions that need to be met first.

Sarah Chung: 01:13:59 Okay. Okay. That's wonderful.

01:14:01 Thank you. So now I'd like you to think back to your initial year of governance. Did you feel supported?

Louis: 01:14:10 I did, actually. But when I look back, the local authority offered a suite of training as they do now. I saw that, took the opportunity, and booked onto it. As a result, I rapidly got a good understanding of the role.

01:14:30 And because it was in the context of I went into it with my eyes open a little, I guess, because I always wanted to do it. My wife being a teacher, maybe I had a pre-existing level of knowledge. However, if I had not chosen to do that training, I might feel differently. I felt reasonably supported.

01:14:54 And because it's a volunteer role, I didn't, at any point, feel any helplessness because I chose to go into this. So the onus is on me to pull my fingers out and find the training and support I need. I'm a grown person, a grown adult. You know I shouldn't be playing a victim here.

Sarah Chung: 01:15:16 Yeah. Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.

01:15:21 So in terms then of induction training and sort of training at the beginning of governance, the NGA have openly stated that they feel it should be mandatory, and it actually is in Wales. How do you feel about that? In your own words, can you explain whether you're for or against that idea?

Louis: 01:15:44 I couldn't agree more. If I could think of a stronger word than mandatory, I'd use that.

01:15:49 I think the very idea that you can put people in charge of a community institution and not train them is bordering on the criminally negligent to not train people. The only concern I've got, maintain schools, according to the government, are not

going to exist in a few years' time. And multi-academy trusts can choose not to have local governance.

01:16:20 I know there's a very weakly worded phrase in the white paper that they might look at strengthening that. The pandemic has shown us, actually, that schools are critical to the functioning of their local community. You know They were handing out food parcels. You know Schools never shut. I haven't come across a school that had less than 25% of their kids in, even when schools were supposedly shut.

01:16:44 So what I'm worried about is that governors, as we currently understand the term, won't take in a few years' time because the legal entity will be the trustees in a multi-academy trust. And the governments are on record as saying that trust should have at least seven and a half thousand pupils or 10 schools, which is a weird thing because you could have 35 primaries and still not get near seven and a half thousand students.

01:17:14 Or you could have two high schools and get very close to it. Anyway, what I'm worried about is that if a multi-academy trust can choose whether to have local governors or not, over time, when budgets get tight and things get difficult, if something is optional and it's causing you a pain because the local governors are going, "What about this school? What about these needs?

01:17:43 What about this community?" Human nature is that it will fall away. The mat is the accountable body. And we know that maps are not in the long run going to be unique to a particular town or area. They will be spread across a few. What it means is actually we've embedded into the system zero local accountability and zero local democracy.

01:18:10 At the minute, governors are accountable through the local authority, through their elected members, and so on. Whereas in maps, there is zero local accountability. So those local governors in a mat only exist if the mat chooses to have them. And when you look at their powers, they have almost no powers whatsoever. So I think if we're not careful, governors as a concept won't exist in 10 years' time.

Sarah Chung: 01:18:44 Okay. Okay. Thank you. So final question now. If mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following? Content.

Louis: 01:18:56 Content. So I mentioned the DFE competency framework and the six elements within that. So for me, that would be the starting point. And then it's for training providers to decide how they want to chunk that up.

01:19:19 So I think you could chunk up into strategic leadership, of course, accountability for standards and compliance. You know There are sort of three elements. But then within that, you know yeah, I'd just use those six competency framework areas to define the content.

01:19:42	That describes the governor's role as a whole and the performance levels that they need to be at.
Sarah Chung: 01:19:47	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. And how do you think the training should take place? So currently, it's obviously through LEAs or in-house. What about the idea of perhaps online training? Would that be beneficial?
Louis: 01:20:03	I think training providers should be free to put it on however they wish.
01:20:13	Personally, my preference would be for if it's online, it needs to be tutored, interactive, and conversational. Because being a governor of a school can be quite isolating in that you only ever speak to governors around your table. Adults learn from other adults. So the opportunity to speak to other governors is hugely important.
01:20:40	So even if it is online, you know there's breakout rooms online and things like that. If it is all you know a click-through and watch a few videos, at best, that's taking a compliance approach. It's not learning. It's just a sheep dip. And I would be yeah, I would be against that.
01:21:08	A combination of online and in-person, but it's for providers to decide how that goes. And then governors and schools choose what works for them.
Sarah Chung: 01:21:17	Okay. So how would you feel about a modulated course leading to perhaps a certificate at the end?
Louis: 01:21:27	Yeah. That would be so if I describe our induction course, it's typically three parts. The basics of effective governance, part one, two, two-and-a-half hour session.
01:21:39	The strategic role of the board is part two, and then monitoring support and challenge is part three. And between those three, two, two and a half hour sessions, we cover all six elements of the framework. So it would be relatively easy. You know There's three modules. It'd be relatively easy to attach a certificate to that. The difficulty would be in quality assuring it. Now, it might be that training providers are required to get accreditation.
01:22:06	And you know further in higher education institutions are pretty good at partnering with training providers you know as are examining bodies. So you know it's not a particularly difficult thing. And you know you could tie it into NBQ level two or three, I would say, relatively straightforward.
Sarah Chung: 01:22:25	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So again, I'd just like to thank you very, very much for joining me today and sharing your wealth of knowledge.
01:22:39	You've clearly you know got a love of governance there and it shines through your answers. Is there anything else that you'd like to share?

Louis: 01:22:49	I don't think so. No. I think we've pretty much covered everything, so I'm happy with that. I just hope it's useful to you and you know good luck with your research.
Sarah Chung: 01:22:57	Oh, thank you. No, you've given me so much information. It's absolutely wonderful. Thank you again, Louis.
Louis: 01:23:03	Well, you know if there's anything else you want to go over, you want clarity on, or if you just want to ask a question or bounce something off, just pick up the phone drop as an email more than happy to.
Sarah Chung: 01:23:13	Oh, that's really kind. Thank you. Yeah. I definitely will. That's wonderful. If you're interested in the findings as well, I'm happy to send them to you. Obviously, I'll go through university for it, but yeah.
Louis: 01:23:26	That'd be lovely. No, I'd like that.
Sarah Chung: 01:23:27	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you so much. I'm going to let you go and get a cup of tea now.
Louis: 01:23:32	Brilliant. Thanks, Sarah.
01:23:34	Cheers, Louis. Bye.
Louis: 01:23:35	Bye.

Luca

Sarah Chung: 00:02	So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I am currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. During our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this.
00:31	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training. I would again like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation that you have signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date.
01:07	Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymised data destroyed after a period of 10 years. Should you wish a copy of the results, then please do email me. Any questions before we begin?
Luca: 01:28	No, no. That makes sense.
Sarah Chung: 01:29	Oh, wonderful. Okay. Fantastic. So should we start then with what has been the most enjoyable aspect of your governance?
Luca: 01:44	So my role is a bit of a funny one. I'm the deputy head at school, and I'm an associate governor as well. So being an associate governor, I don't actually have any voting powers as such. However, my role on the governing body is more of one of a learning curve because I do aspire to be a head teacher one day.
02:07	And so the head teacher said that it would be a really good idea for me to join the governing body to see the other side of how it works. So cards on the table completely, it's not an enjoyable process at all. In fact, sometimes the meetings can be quite painful, but I learn loads. So I get to understand how the finance side of things works, how everything you know over £10,000 needs three quotes, and everything needs to be minute and approved.
02:40	So it's useful for my career, but it's not an enjoyable role, if that makes sense.
Sarah Chung: 02:46	Yeah. Absolutely. And so can you put your finger on what makes it unenjoyable?

Luca: 02:54	Yeah. It's having to explain minute things that we just take for granted every day in the education sector to people who are not education specialists.
03:09	And I do not mind being questioned at all. I don't mind being challenged. I don't mind being held to account. But sometimes I just think things would be a bit more speedier if governors had a working knowledge of school life. So therefore, the meetings drag on unnecessarily sometimes.
Sarah Chung: 03:32	Yeah. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. How long have you been in the role?
Luca: 03:39	It's either just coming up to three years or just over three years. I can't quite remember.
Sarah Chung: 03:44	Okay. Wonderful. Okay. So the NGA describes governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction. And the following questions are going to explore your understanding of vision ethos and strategic direction.
04:08	In your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?
Luca: 04:18	It would be the pre-planned analysed from a range of sources, direction and focuses that the school have and the school is currently working towards.
04:41	The main sources would be things like the most recent Osted report, the school development plan, the school evaluation form, and tying all those three together to direct the school and move it forward.
Sarah Chung: 04:54	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So using your own experiences as a governor, can you explain how you shape your school's strategic direction?
Luca: 05:17	I'm not sure we do, truthfully. I think it's more a case of staff reporting, which then turns into lots of Q&As. I'm not sure the governors and like I say, my role is a dual role.
05:36	It's a really hard role. So I speak as a member of staff, primarily, I think. But not a proper one, I suppose. I think it's more a case of reporting and Q&A. I don't think the governors have got enough strategic insight to be able to shape that. It's very much the head driving forward what he wants with the governor's questioning.
Sarah Chung: 06:04	Okay. Okay.
06:06	Do you think there's any training that the governors could have that may enable them to take a more active part?
Luca: 06:14	I don't know whether it's a training issue or whether it's just a case of governors being visible in school more. And in November 2019, the school received a Good Ofsted report, which was the second Good Ofsted report in a row. Yeah And

	for that Ofsted inspection, two of our governors met with the inspector as part of that process.
06:40	And up to that point, the governors used to be seen in school quite regularly, and they'd have monitoring checks and monitoring visits. They do little reports, little summaries to the head teacher after their visit. Then when we had that good, obviously, a couple of months later, sorry, we had the pandemic. The governors stopped visiting. The governing body also changed a little bit as well over the course of the pandemic, and new ones came in and old ones left.
07:09	And I think the governors have enjoyed the flexibility of the team's meetings for the governing body meetings rather than face-to-face in person. And for me, there seems to be a bit of reluctance about governors coming back onto school, site into school. So for me, I don't know if it's about training. It's more of getting back into school to see what's going on.
Sarah Chung: 07:31	Okay. So that visibility is quite important then?
Luca: 07:38	Yeah.
07:38	Because that then links to what I said earlier on about having a working knowledge of what's going on in the school, the strategies we're doing, you know the schemes were running, just understanding what's happening on a day-to-day basis.
Sarah Chung: 07:55	Okay. That's great. Thank you. So now, in your own words, can you describe what is meant by a school's ethos?
Luca: 08:06	A school's ethos is the atmosphere and the feel and the vibe of the school.
08:13	It's physically an emotion or a feeling that you get when you walk around the school building. But it's also things that aren't tangible, that underpin you know the values the school stands for, and the vision of the head teacher, which then would feed down to his leadership team, which feeds down to his management team, and the rest of the cascades to the staff, which then makes it physical.
08:40	For example, it does sound cheesy, but when I've looked for new jobs in the past, you do get that feel, that vibe when you walk around the school. And that, for me, is ethos. So it's something you can tangibly feel, but it's underpinned and rooted in the values and the vision of the head teacher and his or her staff.
Sarah Chung: 08:58	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Again, do you feel the governor's played a part in shaping that ethos?
Luca: 09:06	No. No. Definitely not. No.
Sarah Chung: 09:09	Okay.
09:11	So was it very similar to the strategic direction as in it's led primarily by the head teacher and overseen by the governors?

Luca: 09:25	I think so. But they do buy into it as well. They do agree with it. So as an example, we are a values-based school. So we've got 11 core values that underpin everything that we do.
09:39	And the governing body were a part of that decision-making process, but they weren't a driving force behind it. And then they buy into it, but that's about it. If we wanted to change any of the values or add new ones or put something else in, it would be the head of myself in the deputy head teacher role driving that not the governors.
Sarah Chung: 10:06	Okay. So do you feel the governors are quite happy with the ethos at the moment?
Luca: 10:13	They haven't expressed otherwise. And we have got very vocal governors who would express unhappiness if they were. Trust me on that one.
Sarah Chung: 10:26	Okay. That's wonderful. So again, is it a case of more training to get them more involved, or is it that visible presence that you were talking about earlier?
Luca: 10:42	Yeah. Visible presence. And we train the governors and make sure that they have all their statutory trend they need. For example, the keeping children safe in education, the safer recruitment side of things. But I'm not quite sure what training we would give them for that. I suppose it would be in-house. Like Come and have a conversation with the English leader if there's an English query in school.
11:10	Come and have that professional dialogue with English leader. If there's queries over end of key stage one results. Come and have professional dialogue with the key stage one leader and see what we're doing. So it might not be a training package as such, but more professional dialogue, perhaps.
Sarah Chung: 11:26	Okay. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now, again, similar question, but can you explain or describe what is meant by vision?
Luca: 11:39	A vision is what the leadership team and therefore the governors want at any endpoint throughout the school. So the ultimate vision would be what do we want by the time the children in key stage two leave in year six in our primary school. But okay, so what do we want for them in year five then to get to that point?
12:05	What do we want at the end of key stage one then so that they get to that point in year six and then reception and nursery as well if you've got a nursery. But that's taking care of the children. What's your vision? What's your endpoint for staff? What do you want for them? Obviously, we want happy staff, we want committed staff, staff with great CPD because if you're doing all that for the staff and your vision is to have highly skilled practitioners in your school, your vision for the children will possibly come true because you're taking care of the staff.

12:35	So I think, in summary, a vision is an aim or a target towards an endpoint, but that endpoint can also be broken down into smaller stages as well.
Sarah Chung: 12:48	Okay. Wonderful. So again, as with the previous two points, do governors play an active part in setting that vision, or is that, again, something that they monitor?
Luca: 13:01	Monitor for sure. Yeah, they don't play a part in the vision.
13:08	After our last Ofsted inspection, the head teacher had a bit of a shake-up of the governors and sort of said, "you know My vision is I want an outstanding school." The Ofsted team that came in, it was a small inspection. I can't remember whether that's section eight or section five off the top of my head. And they didn't have the power to change the grading. However, they did say if it were a full inspection, we would be judged under the outstanding criteria, and it's possible we would get it after the pandemic has happened since then.
13:38	And there's been a change of framework as well. But because the inspecting team said that, which is quite you know an honour to hear, really, there was a bit of a shake of the governors, and the head teacher said, "This is what I want. You're all busy. You're all full-time workers. Governing is what you do of an evening on the side, so to speak." He didn't put it this bluntly, but you're either with me or you're not. And several governors chose to leave at that point because they couldn't commit to that outstanding journey we were looking to go on.
14:12	So then that's when some of the new governors came in. So I think your question was, do they help with the vision? No. They buy into it or they don't. And I have to say the new governors that we got you know a couple of years ago, they've been very, very, very vocal, very good. Doesn't quite summarise them, but they've been a lot more strategic, I suppose, than the governors that we'd lost before that.
14:42	Does that make sense?
Sarah Chung: 14:43	Yes, I think so. Yeah. Absolutely. So when you say strategic, they know that line not to cross. They know where strategic and operational begin and end.
Luca: 14:58	One of them in particular does, yeah, because she runs a governance business and she clerks on several governing bodies.
15:07	And the head teacher recruited them through like a governing body website, I believe, which I'm not sure the name of it, but he went through that website to get the governors. And she's fantastic. She's by far our strongest governor. Yeah So she would certainly know the difference between operational and strategic, but I'll question whether the others would.
Sarah Chung: 15:30	Right. Okay. Okay. Is that something, again, that you think training or support might help with?

Luca: 15:41	Yeah. I'd imagine so. Yeah. That is probably something because that's almost theoretical in a way, isn't it? You can teach somebody the difference between operations and strategy. A bit like you can teach the difference between leading and managing. And that could be in any industry, couldn't it? Not necessarily just school-specific.
Sarah Chung: 16:01	Yeah. Absolutely. Okay. Thanks. So moving on now, let's have a little think about pupil performance.
16:10	So can you explain a little bit about how your governing body oversees pupil performance?
Luca: 16:19	Again, it would be reporting at key points throughout the year. So Christmas, Easter, and Summer. And then what the governors will do is from the reports that are generated from the subject leaders, question them. And that could and often does involve questions around, "Okay. So what are we doing next?
16:41	How could this funding be spent? What other things could we be putting forward for those children?" etc.
Sarah Chung: 16:52	Okay. How do the governors then? You've got a slightly different view of this, I imagine, from your role. But how do the governors as a whole know pupils are performing as expected?
Luca: 17:10	Because we as staff would tell them how the pupils are doing. We usually present the data in both percentages and numbers because, obviously, you know percentages can be quite heavy if they're lower cohort. So we give them the percentages and the numbers. We would break down into the key groups like boys and girls, pupil premium and non-pupil premium, Jeff said gender already, ethnicity, that sort of thing.
17:38	So we would break it down for them.
Sarah Chung: 17:40	Okay. And do you think that they, in general, have a good understanding of that data?
Luca: 17:48	I think at the time, yeah. Whether it sticks, I don't know. And obviously, we've had no external data now for three years, basically. So if you were to ask one of the governors, "How did the pupils perform in the 2019 end of key stage assessments?" I'm quite certain they wouldn't be able to tell you.
Sarah Chung: 18:11	Right. Okay. Okay. And that's mainly from the impact of COVID, then, isn't it?
Luca: 18:16	Yeah. I would have thought so, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 18:18	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Do you feel able to challenge or raise questions when necessary?
Luca: 18:28	Definitely, yeah. Okay. And what about the others on the governing body? Absolutely. And they do. They do.
Sarah Chung: 18:36	Okay. Can you describe in your own words a time when you have made the challenge, for example?

Luca: 18:47	It's tricky for me in my dual sort of role. So I'm trying to think there when I would challenge as a governor rather than as the deputy head. Maybe a curriculum area that's not perhaps spending the finances as wise as it could be.
19:12	Particularly because we are very lucky in our school. We've got a very high number of premium children. So therefore, we get a lot of people premium funding. So therefore, a lot of school-led funding, a lot of recovery catch up. We've got a lot of money. We're very lucky. And sometimes we can't spend that money quick enough, believe it or not, which is a good position to be in and a bad one because then you have the DFE breathing down your neck. So I would question around that, you know what more can be done? What else can we spend it on?
19:43	How else can we look to get the funding out so it impacts the children? And I would say the governing body as a whole are more confident to challenge when it comes to money rather than curriculum outcomes, just purely because some curriculum outcomes aren't measurable. So for example, when I'm delivering my report around curriculum because I lead on curriculum in school, I can't tangibly tell them how well art is looking or how well music is looking because art you see and music you hear.
20:14	So they'll agree with what I'm saying. They'll nod, "Oh, that's lovely. That's nice. It's nice to have the singing back on after COVID." But money is pounds and pence. You're either in minus or you're not so that they feel more confident to challenge that black and white piece of paper.
Sarah Chung: 20:31	Okay. That's fantastic. Thanks. Have you ever felt uncomfortable challenging?
Luca: 20:42	No, because I know the school and I know the staff.
20:45	Flipping that on its head, I felt uncomfortable being challenged when other governors don't necessarily have that insight that I do. And some of them can jump the gun a little bit and be a bit too critical and too challenging. And I said a few minutes ago, I do not mind being challenged or how to account at all because ultimately, you know I'm a public servant and the school is public money, basically.
21:13	But some of them can be a bit too, "Well, that needs to happen or that needs to happen without having that." Well, hold on. Give me the full context first. This is what it is. This is how it looks. And this is the reason why I've said that. Yeah Yeah. They can do that sometimes.
Sarah Chung: 21:30	And how did you handle that then as a challenge?
Luca: 21:36	Just almost asking them to have trust and have faith because sometimes, particularly the time of the year matters as well. Yeah So there's far less challenge in the governing body meetings in the summer because you're wrapping up the year

and you're bringing things to a close and things come to a natural close anyway in summer. I find there's a lot of challenge usually around the new financial year times, that April meeting, and also December when sometimes academic data might not look very bright.

22:10 So it's about asking them to almost have faith. You know We're a good school. We're a strong leadership team. The head and I know what we're doing. We're supported extremely well by good teachers. We've got very low staff turnover at our school, and teachers only tend to leave for promotion. So it's getting them to have faith. The longer-serving governors, that goes down well with. But some of the newer ones are still a bit touchy about that.

Sarah Chung: 22:42 Okay. Okay. No, that's fantastic. Thank you. So the next question may be trickier to answer from your perspective because of that unusual position you've got where you're an associate, but you're a deputy head at the same school, aren't you? So another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for management of staff. And it should be how confident are you in this area? But as your staff, I'm assuming you're not going to be involved in that process.

Luca: 23:13 On a day-to-day outside of governing body meetings, yeah, I am. And the head teacher and I've got a fantastic relationship in as much as he doesn't like nodding dogs. And outside of governing body meetings, we will slash ideas out to the clouds, come home, and we will think about which staff are going where. Do we need to hire an additional TA for that year group? Do we want a third teacher in that year group because the children are so low?

23:43 And we disagree all the time. But when we have that final decision, it's either we fully agree with one another or we agree to disagree on that occasion. But outside of the room, we're a united team. But that, therefore, wouldn't happen in a governing body meeting because we've done all the thrashing around outside of it.

Sarah Chung: 24:04 Yeah. So speaking as somebody who maybe observes that governing body, how do you think they handle that oversight of staff management?

Luca: 24:18 They don't, truthfully. They don't. No. What will happen is when the finance officer from the city presents the financial report, especially the April one, and she does her forecasts, she'll make recommendations to the governors around we've got too many teachers, which we're very lucky because, as I said earlier, we're a well-funded school.

24:46 So we have got a couple of additional teachers here and there to boost in certain year groups. But she'll make recommendations along the lines of, "You can't hire any more teachers or do not hire another TA for key stage one." And the governors will agree with her. And they don't tend to question her, really, but they'll agree. And then because the head

	teacher already knows what she's saying because he's had the meeting with her beforehand, he'll agree with her.
25:14	So therefore, by proxy, they'll agree with the head teacher.
Sarah Chung: 25:18	Right. Okay. Okay. Thank you. As a governing body, then, how do you ensure that you have the right staff? So, for example, do you discuss rewards or developmental I know you mentioned CPD was quite a strong point for your school.
25:45	Do you have anything in place that the governors oversee or support?
Luca: 25:55	The governors will listen to the recommendations of the head teacher when it comes down to things when it comes to things like pay awards. So for example, teachers making their way through the main pay scales, teachers who have applied for UP, they'll listen to the recommendations of the head teacher.
26:13	Obviously, they'll have something in writing as well from that teacher if they're applying for UP. We have a couple of annual TLRs for certain teachers. And again, the head teacher will recommend if that TLR should be renewed. I couldn't think of the word then. And the governors will question, particularly if it's a UP2 or UP3 teacher.
26:42	But again, I've never been in a governing body meeting where any of the governors have challenged it. They recognise, particularly the long-serving ones, they recognise how hard working the teachers are.
Sarah Chung: 26:55	Okay. Okay. That's fantastic. Thank you. Okay. So as well, there are setting ethos in the strategic direction of the school and also ensuring that there is a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing,
27:12	probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight of your school. How comfortable are you and your governing body with this situation?
Luca: 27:21	With the finances, sorry.
Sarah Chung: 27:23	Yeah.
Luca: 27:30	Literally, for the past 10 years, the head teacher has been saving for a school hall expansion.
27:39	Historically, we're a one-form entry school, and we started expanding to two form entry in 2012. So obviously, our school hall is built for 200 children, not 400 children. So for the past 10 years, the head teacher has been squirreling away money, all legit, all above board, minute every single year. But the local authority every single year will challenge him and say, "Why have you got a quarter million pounds sat there?
28:07	And then, obviously, the next year, why have you got £300,000 sat there? And then the next year, why have you got £350,000 and so on and so on?" And every other governor's like, "He's saving for a school hall. Here's the minutes. Here's the

documentation. Here's where we've all agreed it." And the school hall is finally being built now, so. The [redacted] City Council can stop challenging the head teacher every year. But that's an example. So the head teacher knew what he wanted. We needed a new school hall being built.

28:37 The governors knew it. They bought into it. They agreed with it. And I think it's just over half a million pounds has been saved for 10 years, but it's now being spent. Every step of the way the head teacher management was minute, checked, signed off in the finance reports, everything like that. So I would say very confident.

Sarah Chung: 28:55 Okay. That's wonderful. So in general, then, the governors are quite happy with looking at a school budget as a whole and using it?

Luca: 29:06 Yeah.

29:07 Yeah. I would say so.

Sarah Chung: 29:09 Okay. Can you give any examples of questions that have been raised during the financial meetings?

Luca: 29:19 It would usually be around the school hall expansion and the spending of the pupil premium money as well. Because depending on intake, we can sit on anything from a quarter of a million pounds to £300,000 for pupil premium budget, which is obviously a huge amount of money.

29:39 And in lockdown, the pupil premium budget had a massive carry forward. And the governors were very concerned about that carry forward just because, primarily, the large majority of the pupil premium funding is spent on staffing. And during lockdown, some of the staff were not necessarily like the agency staff who do extra were obviously not being used because we were closed.

30:06 So that meant we had practically a £90,000 carry forward in 20, 20, 20, 21 financial year. And sorry, the year after that, sorry. And the governors were very concerned about that. And one governor actually said, "Oh, we need a complete overhaul of pupil premium," which alarmed me and the head teacher because it made it look like we weren't doing our jobs properly and spending the money wisely. We were. It just COVID has had a massive impact on that spending.

30:35 We're now back to normal levels of premium spending, which is great. So that leads back to the point I made earlier about sometimes, governors, you've got to have faith that it will be spent. It looks terrible now, but we have a clear action plan that we've got to spend that money. And how did that how is that explained to the governor? Like that. Okay. So I've got a £90,000 carry forward. Yes, that keeps me awake at night as well.

31:04 But this is the plan I've got for it. The DFE, from a statutory point of view, you have to put your pupil premium action plan on your school website. So it's there for the DFE to see if they

	wanted to see what we're going to do with it. Here are the areas we're going to spend it on, staffing, curriculum, nutrition, etc., etc. And yeah, to be fair, it was spent. And the next year, we carried over £18,000, which is a healthy carry forward.
31:33	You know That's about 7% of the budget. So that's a healthy carry forward. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. And in general, how are the challenges received by the head teacher? He's got an answer for everything in a good way, in a good way. He's very transparent. If anything, he's overly cautious. He'll get everything minute-ed. The other day, he wanted to move the timing of the school day forward by five minutes, just five minutes.
32:05	And the rigmarole he went through to get that done. I mean, obviously, it should be done legally. You have to have your governor's approval for extension of the school day. But you know I can think of head teachers in the borough who would have just gone, it's five minutes, so I'll just change it. But no, he had an extraordinary meeting. He got it clerked. He got it minute. He put it to the vote. Yeah, he has an answer for everything. But in a good way.
Sarah Chung: 32:31	Yeah. Okay. So very structured and very yeah.
Luca: 32:35	Completely. Yeah. Absolute minute detail, meticulous detail. And this is one of the reasons why you know I'm benefiting so much as being an associate governor because I can see how he keeps his minutes, how he has to get the chair to sign things, the corners of the page he's assigned. He's excellent in his running of these meetings.
Sarah Chung: 32:57	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So now we're going to talk a little bit about the eight elements of effective governance.
33:05	So the eight elements of effective governance have been identified as essential to good governance. So in your own words, I'd like you to explain what these mean to you. So it's a little bit like a word association almost. So I'm going to say you know A, the right people around the table. And then if you tell me what that means. Yeah, of course. Okay. So we'll begin with A, which is the right people around the table.
Luca: 33:33	So they need to buy in to the head teacher as a person, as an individual, so that they can then share his vision, his aims, his values, what he wants. Because otherwise, I feel that governors could be overly critical and challenge unnecessarily.
34:02	They have to challenge and any good school worth its salt will welcome that external eye looking in to challenge. But I think if you've got the wrong people around the table, potentially they're governors for the wrong reasons, i.e., nosy parents, and they could challenge unnecessarily.
Sarah Chung: 34:24	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. B, understanding the role and responsibilities.

Luca: 34:35	Governors need to understand their own roles and responsibilities and what they are there for. And also, the job of the leaders and managers in school, even little things like who is responsible for English, who is responsible for maths, that would be my understanding of that.
Sarah Chung: 34:57	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. C, good chairing.
Luca: 35:06	So your chair of governors and/or the chair of the different committees needs to be somebody who is organised, can delegate tasks within the meeting that require the follow-up actions. Someone who cares as well. They're chair because they genuinely care about chairing and they want to push the school forward and push the head teacher forward to achieve.
Sarah Chung: 35:36	Okay. Yeah. Wonderful. Thank you. D, professional clerking.
Luca: 35:47	Someone who captures the essence of the meeting adequately, but succinctly at the same time, no one wants to read 12 pages of minutes. When you're reading minutes in preparation for meeting, it's really helpful to have the key things there.
36:08	So where the challenges were, where the approvals were. So it's that clarity of the minutes as well. And then, obviously, on the big important things, making sure everything is documented and all the I's are dotted, all the T's are crossed.
Sarah Chung: 36:24	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. E, good relationships based on trust.
Luca: 36:31	That would be about challenging appropriately.
36:36	And a big one for me would be about challenging and taking the person out the situation as well. I think sometimes as governors, governors can sometimes forget that the person on the other end has done full day's work in a very intensive job. And like my personal opinion is I've never met a teacher, head teacher, assistant head teacher who's doing the job for the wrong reasons.
37:06	And sometimes governors challenge and they can make it quite personal and it can come across as quite personal. So challenge the opinion, not the person, and have that open relationship of being able to challenge it appropriately and also thank. My head teacher never gets thanked. The staff do. I do, but he doesn't.
37:36	And it really winds me up because without him, the school just wouldn't run. He's amazing. And so I make a point of when I'm giving my reports from a deputy head teacher side of things, I'll make sure I don't go over the top with it, but I will make sure the head is acknowledged in lots of different ways.
Sarah Chung: 37:55	Okay. That's wonderful. F, knowing the school.

Luca: 38:02	They need to have a good working knowledge of what goes on on a day-to-day basis.
38:07	They need to know the facts and the stats of the school, like the percentage of pupil premium, the percentage of EAL, how many members of staff there are. The key headline things with the working knowledge.
Sarah Chung: 38:20	Okay. Wonderful. G, asking challenging questions.
Luca: 38:28	I'm not sure I've got anything else to add to that from what I've just said, if that's all right.
Sarah Chung: 38:33	Absolutely fine. Yeah. Not a problem.
Luca: 38:35	I think you would come down to ask the questions and challenge the opinion, not the person.
Sarah Chung: 38:39	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. H. Having courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people?
Luca: 38:56	I'm not quite sure courageous is a word I would associate with our governing body, truthfully. Courageous conversations.
39:07	They certainly consistently talk with the children in mind. There is no doubt about that. And linked with that, they make sure the staff's well-being is questioned and discussed. But I've never been in a governing body meeting where something is being discussed, where I would associate with a courageous nomination or courageous agenda item.
39:37	Sorry.
Sarah Chung: 39:38	No, no. No apologies at all. That's wonderful. Thank you. Sorry, I'm just making some notes here as well.
Luca: 39:46	No, no, that's fine.
Sarah Chung: 39:49	Okay. And let's see. Yep, that's all it is. So moving on now to question 10. The line between strategic and operational can be seen as a bit of a grey area for some.
40:04	And we've already briefly touched on this, I think. But how confident are you knowing where governance ends and head teacher SLT responsibility begins?
Luca: 40:16	I personally am very confident. And to be fair, the governors are as well, like the governors with voting powers, I mean. Because during the whole COVID pandemic, the governors and before, to be honest with you, they don't micromanage.
40:36	They really don't. They're very good at letting their teacher get on with the operations of the school. They don't micromanage it. So for example, the change of the school day, they listened to the rationale behind it, and they approved it. When we reopened in September 2020, we presented our plan for reopening, and the governors questioned it when needed and accepted it. They're not micromanagers at all.

Sarah Chung: 41:05 Okay.

41:06 Wonderful. Thank you. As a governing body, what role do they play in policy development, for example?

Luca: 41:20 We got one governor who's really irritating because she puts comments all over it in Microsoft Word. And then you can't get rid of the comments. And when you turn it to PDF, they're all still there. Yeah. To be fair, I would say they do have more of an input into policy development.

41:38 However, it will be that the head and I would write the policy first. So to give an example of that, when NQTs became ECTs, we heavily rewrote what is now our ECT policy. We send it off to the governors to have a good crawl all over it. Three in particular are very good at going through the policies for us, and they'll ping it back, and we'll ping it back, and then they'll ping it back.

42:09 And then we'll take it to the meeting when we're happy with it. But again, like I said earlier, sometimes governors being on the panel for wrong reasons. There is one governor who is stupidly picky, like you know bullet points have to be aligned. And you're thinking, "I haven't got time for this. It's a bullet point." So yeah, they do have a good input into policy development.

Sarah Chung: 42:34 Okay. Wonderful. Thank you.

42:36 So now, looking at COVID, obviously, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been quite immense. Can you describe your experience of governance during this time?

Luca: 42:49 Lots of emails, really, keeping governors updated, even just little things in terms of you know how many key worker children we had on site throughout the week, how staff are.

43:03 The chair of governors is quite maternally, quite motherly, and she would often just check in with the head teacher, "How are you? How is the school?" So lots of emails. Could you repeat the question, please?

Sarah Chung: 43:18 Yeah. Absolutely. So can you describe your experience of governance during this time?

Luca: 43:23 Yeah. But in terms of the formal meetings, the official meetings, they all moved online.

43:29 And we haven't gone back yet to face-to-face meetings or any form of hybrid approach or anything like that. And like I said earlier on, the governors have enjoyed that flexibility of logging on five minutes before and just getting on with the meeting. I am a really impatient person, and time for me is precious. My days are bonkers busy and time is really precious.

43:56 And without sounding ignorant, I hate going to a meeting and people waffling and being small talky. How are you? Let's have a biscuit. No, let's just get it done. So actually, what the online

	meetings have meant is governing body meetings are shorter by a good 30, if not 45 minutes easily. But that's because we're so focused because there is no time for chit chat and passing the crisps around the table and just getting on with it.
44:28	And I don't mean to sound rude there, and I don't mean to sound antisocial, but we've all got very busy lives. And it's nice that we can be friendly with the governors and get on with them on a personal level. But for meetings, whether we're face-to-face or whether we're online, let's just keep it focused, please. And the pandemic has allowed that to happen. And you know gone are the days now where I'm coming home at 8 o'clock after a governing body meeting. It is more like half, six, quarter to seven. It's nice. Okay.
Sarah Chung: 44:56	That's quite a noticeable difference in time then.
Luca: 45:00	Easily. Particularly the main four governing body meetings. You know The ones where all governors are there. They are significantly shorter. And the committee ones, there's a good portion of time shaved off there as well. Governors aren't being lazy. It's just we're focused, really focused. And did all of the governors adapt quite easily to online? The chair of governors is an older lady.
45:27	And so she still has paper. So what happens is we bought into something called Governor Hub, which you're probably familiar with. We bought into Governor Hub, which I think is marvellous. But the chair of governor still has a tree of paper put through her letter box. But the head doesn't mind. He doesn't mind doing that at all. She's a good chair. She's been very loyal to him, and he doesn't mind.
Sarah Chung: 45:52	Okay. Wonderful. And did communication was that effective at all, or did it carry on fairly well?
Luca: 45:59	Yeah, very well.
Sarah Chung: 46:01	Okay. When you were online, what sort of platform were you using? Did you have a specific one, or did you base it on the needs of the governors at the time?
Luca: 46:10	No, it was instantly teams. No sort of questions asked. It was Teams.
Sarah Chung: 46:15	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So obviously, governing during a pandemic, like we said, is quite a challenge.
46:25	Did you find there were any areas that either you or other members of the governing body seemed or felt underqualified for or undertrained for?
Luca: 46:44	Not that I can think of. I mean, no, sorry. Nothing's springing to mind there.
Sarah Chung: 46:53	Okay.

46:54	That's wonderful. Thank you. So moving on then. If you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be and why do you think it's essential?
Luca: 47:06	A day in the life of a typical school. And I think it would be really useful for the governor to come in at quarter to nine, go into a classroom, and follow that class round with them all day, out for play, out for lunch, sitting in the math session, sitting in the English session, seeing what the teacher does, and just really getting to grips with what actually goes on in school.
47:35	And the reason for that is there's so much that goes on in school that we don't report to governors because from an accountability point of view, it's not noteworthy of going on an agenda. But from a minute, finite detail point of view, actually, if A, B, and C didn't happen in the governing body meeting, X, Y, and Z couldn't be reported or couldn't happen.
48:02	So it would be a day in the life of a typical whatever school you're at, a day in the life of that school.
Sarah Chung: 48:08	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So conversely, then, what, in your opinion, is the least valuable piece of training for governors and why?
Luca: 48:20	This sounds really controversial, but yeah, I completely get and understand the safeguarding agenda.
48:33	And again, one of my roles is a DSL in school. As a DSL, my goodness, do we need everybody in school trained on keeping children safe in education? There is absolutely no question about that. What frustrates the life out of me is when governors are given training like that, when actually that is not going to impact them. All that's going to do is show them what we are doing in school to keep children safe.
49:06	It's not them. And I was thinking about this the other day, actually, because we've just bought into a new training packaging school. The only reason governors have to read part of keeping children safe in education is, God forbid, anything goes horrendously wrong, which I hope never, ever would. The headteacher could turn around and go, "Well, all my governors were trained. So you know it's not our fault anymore." And I think sometimes there's so much red tape and bureaucracy around training, but actually, is it training?
49:38	Is giving governors part one or part two of coming what parties off the top of the head of keeping children safe in education, is that training? I'd argue not, but you have to declare on Governor Hub that you've read that. Yeah So I don't know whether I'm expressing myself properly. It just winds me up when we have to do certain things for the red tape.
50:00	I would rather give the governor something much more useful for their role, like better safer recruitment training so that when the governing body is sitting opposite a potential candidate, it's not the head teacher doing all the work. Because actually, safer recruitment, that's crucial. You know Governors need to

	scrutinise references and you know check a good conduct letter from abroad if they've had some abroad time. I don't know whether I express myself properly there.
Sarah Chung: 50:28	Yeah. No. It's absolutely clear.
50:30	Thank you so much. Okay. So thinking back now, I think you said you've been an associate governor for three years.
Luca: 50:39	Yeah, about three years.
Sarah Chung: 50:40	So thinking back to your initial year of governance, did you feel supported?
Luca: 50:48	Yeah. I did. Yeah. The head teacher supported me. I didn't speak much, to be honest. The governors scared me.
50:56	But yeah, the head teacher, he has trained me from both angles like, "This is what you would do as the head teacher, and this is what you need to do as the governor." But not every governor would have had that. It's only because he's priming me for headship that he's given me that insight into the governing body. We've got staff governors who haven't had that insight.
Sarah Chung: 51:20	Okay. So you had almost a mentorship experience there then with him?
Luca: 51:25	Yeah. I mean, and it's ongoing. So you know when we're preparing for the governing body meeting, he gets everything out and he puts them into piles under the agenda items. He's got his minutes there. He's got his folder there. And he'll commentate on what he's doing and why he's doing it. Yeah But that's more from a staff point of view than from a governor point of view.
Sarah Chung: 51:47	Okay. So the rest of your governing body, did they have any mentors or a governing buddy, for example, in their first year?
Luca: 51:58	No.
Sarah Chung: 51:59	No? Okay. So what happens in the life of a governor in their first year at your school?
Luca: 52:09	There's an induction process, and they'll be given a load of training material through our online provider, which is videos and then a quiz. And the head teacher makes sure they get everything they need from a statutory point of view, but also there's non-statutory stuff in there as well, just so that they're well-rounded.
52:33	And then they attend the meetings. The office will sort out all the paperwork side of things, the DBS, etc. But yeah, there's no other sort of, "Hold my hand, I'll talk you through," sort of thing. It's just, "There's your training videos. Please get them watched and quizzed by your first meeting, and then there's your first meeting.".

Sarah Chung: 52:54	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So do you think then, reflecting on that, what are your thoughts on mentors for governors or chairs of governors or clerks even?
53:07	Do you think they'd be helpful?
Luca: 53:13	Yeah, I do. I'm not sure to what extent our governors will take you up on that offer or take whoever was offering it up. Just because of time, more than anything, with the exception of the chair who's retired, they've all got full-time jobs and sinking diaries can sometimes be quite challenging sometimes.
53:37	But yeah, I think it would be nice if it was at least offered. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 53:42	Do you think then should the mentor come from within your own governing body, or do you think it would be better to become from an external position? So another governing body.
Luca: 53:53	I think there's pros and cons to both, isn't there? So if it was someone internal, it's again about buying into the vision of the school and knowing how that specific school governing board operates, when the meetings are you know who's who as well.
54:09	Like When I first sat in a governing body meeting, I hadn't got a clue who anyone was. You know I knew who the main players were, but I didn't know everybody. Yeah But I suppose, from an outside point of view, if you got somebody externally or you paid for somebody to do that, like a service they offered, it would be more objective, I suppose, more clinical. And it would probably be, in some ways, more thorough because no stone would be left unturned.
54:36	You know If you were buddied up with a really nice governor who is really nice and never asks any challenging questions, then that could rub off on the governor. Whereas if the objective person come in, they could coach on actually what's involved. So pros and cons to both.
Sarah Chung: 54:54	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So the NGA have openly stated that they feel that induction training should be mandatory within the first year.
55:04	And in fact, in Wales, it is actually mandatory already. In your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this and why?
Luca: 55:19	Yeah. Yeah. I think I do, if I'm honest, because at least you're going to get that consistency across governing boards. Well, hopefully, you'll get consistency across governing boards in the country.
55:31	And then that would avoid you know the terrible Trojan horse that happened here in Birmingham a few years ago. Things like that could be avoided if that training was mandatory because you wouldn't be able to well, sneak things in, would you? Especially if it was an external objective training provider rather than an in-house one.

Sarah Chung: 55:55	Okay. Wonderful.
Luca: 55:55	Yeah. I think I agree with it.
Sarah Chung: 55:57	Okay.
55:58	With that in mind then, if mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following? Content? What should be included?
Luca: 56:14	Contextual information about the school. So whoever runs the training would need that knowledge. So contextual information to the school would be important. Who's who?
56:28	And then for me, it would be a case of not front-loading everything. So staggering it out. Let's say if it is that 12 months, maybe having different things in different months that are manageable across the time. So for example, governor appropriate appropriate keeping children safe in education. What does the governor actually need to know about safeguarding? Because they don't need to know everything.
56:56	They just need to know their safer recruitment, then finance, and even you know how to conduct yourself in a meeting, you know what sort of things, you know the roles of the governor, the responsibilities of the governor, how to conduct yourself in a meeting. But all this would be staggered and layered over the 12 months rather than front-loading everything. I think that's it.
Sarah Chung: 57:23	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you.
57:25	So how do you think training should take place? So for example, currently, most training is conducted either within LEAs or in-house within the schools themselves. So would you feel online training might be beneficial, for example?
Luca: 57:43	I think so. And I think what the pandemic has taught us is that there is some great online stuff out there. But there is also that contact that you can have as well.
57:59	You can't replicate that. You can't almost do better than that. So for example, if it was decided that school should be the provider of training, the governor should get into the school and do the training there because ultimately, that's where they're going to be governing. So that's important. I mean, some governors I've not met yet because of the pandemic. They're just on the screen. And it's really important they start getting back into school now.
Sarah Chung: 58:25	Right. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.
58:27	So final part is, what are your thoughts on a modulated course delivered online and resulting in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year?

Luca: 58:39	Yeah. I think that's a great idea. Again, that brings the consistency across. I imagine that would be an England thing or at least a local authority thing. So yeah, I like the sound of that. And then you could really upskill your governors then, couldn't you?
58:55	Because you could look at which modules perhaps they could audit themselves, couldn't they? Which modules they feel they need more support in. And then that then becomes the role of the head teacher then or the chair, for example. So yeah, I think that's a great idea. Plus, if it's from external providers, it would put workload for head teachers as well, which is important.
Sarah Chung: 59:17	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So yeah, I'd like to just say thank you again for taking part.
59:23	And if there's anything you feel I haven't asked you and you'd like to say, please take the opportunity, yeah?
Luca: 59:30	No. I can't remember where I saw. I don't know if it was on Twitter or what, but I thought, "Oh, no, I must do that interview because, yeah, governors, they're a funny bunch of people, and it's just a case of when you've got a right governing body team behind you, they're very supportive and very helpful.
59:56	But for me, it would be about getting that right team behind you. And by and large, we have at our school. And you know being an associate governor, that privilege of seeing both sides of things is good, although the meetings aren't enjoyable. It's great CPD for me as a future ed teacher, hopefully. So no, I hope that was useful for you as well because I know I'm not like a proper governor.
Sarah Chung: 01:00:22	No, it's absolutely brilliant. Thank you. You've brought a wonderful insight to the research.
01:00:27	So really, really thank you very much.
Luca: 01:00:29	No problems. Good luck with it.

Sarah Chung: 00:00	So I'll just read through again just to make sure you're aware of your rights within the interview. So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in the study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. During our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this.
00:29	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training. And I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation that you've just signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date.
01:03	Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years. If you do want a copy of the results, please do email me. I'm happy to share them with you. Do you have any questions before we begin?
Morgan: 01:26	No, that sounds great. I will drop an email because I think the results will be really interesting and something I can probably take back to my governing body and sort of have a look at with them.
01:36	Yeah, that'd be lovely.
Sarah Chung: 01:38	Well, the full results will be a little while because I'm due to I'm writing up over the next year. But what I hope to do is get some of the findings out in a small headline sort of edition, if that makes sense.
Morgan: 01:53	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:54	Okay. So wonderful. Right. Should we jump in with something really nice and easy? How long have you been governor?
02:02	Oh, crikey. I thought you said easy!
02:06	The reason being, I started as an associate governor, and I did that for two years, and I've done this for two years. So I think I must be I think coming up to four years, I think, in November in total.
Sarah Chung: 02:18	Wonderful. And what made you take on the role of a governor?
Morgan: 02:22	So I'm a governor at my son's school. So I'm currently parent governor. And partly, it was, I suppose, being a bit nosy.

02:32	But really, it was about you know wanting to make sure that the school was headed in the right kind of direction. So I work in education as well. And the school was coming in on the back of a double RI inspection pattern. And I just wanted to be able to provide a bit of that steering, a bit of that guidance that I do in my day-to-day job. You know In my day job, I work in [redacted]
03:04	And there's just so much that's transferable there into other settings.
Sarah Chung: 03:08	Yeah. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So reflecting back then over the last roughly four years, what has been the most enjoyable aspect of your governance?
Morgan: 03:25	I think really getting to know the school and really getting to know how the staff and the leaders approach the school and approach the challenges that have come along, including COVID, but more broadly than that as well.
03:39	And really getting to understand the journey that the school's on that otherwise, as a parent, you can't quite see because you're living it kind of in the day, really, and seeing the longer term and seeing how things are coming together. And then I suppose the other side of that is looking back at how we have moved things on and you know the satisfaction, really, of seeing a job well done because we've had Ofsted and it went good.
04:05	And so yeah, I think kind of looking at those sorts of aspects.
Sarah Chung: 04:12	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. And in the interest of looking at both sides, what's been the worst aspect of governance for you?
Morgan: 04:23	I think frustrations, particularly during COVID, of not being able to do more to help.
04:32	Again, because you know my day-to-day job, during COVID and during lockdowns, I did a lot of sort of troubleshooting and a lot of fixing things quite quickly. And I think, obviously, you know the governor's function is strategic and is that step away from being operational. But I almost feel like we probably could have supported more in practical ways during those lockdowns.
05:02	You know For instance, a big part of my day job during lockdown was about remote teaching and learning. And I was working at home, obviously, but I was sort of half-listening into my son's online lessons and thinking, "Oh, I could have fixed this.
05:18	I could sort this." So that kind of frustration around actually, at times where things are sort of extremely unusual, it's almost as if there could be a bit of a, I don't know, a mechanism of being able to be a bit more operationally supportive because governors do have certain areas of expertise.

05:44	That's the whole reason I was sort of brought on as an associate governor in the first instance was because of my background and my expertise in education. And I did feel a bit like you know I really could probably have helped with things a little bit here. Because at the time, obviously, I work in a [redacted], and my son's primary school is a two-form entry primary school.
06:11	So we, before COVID, had done some bits of remote teaching and blended learning and things. So we weren't quite starting from scratch. But obviously, a lot of primary schools in particular had done absolutely nothing. Some of the staffing was decimated, so they had a massively reduced capacity. And yeah, I think that was the frustration in those times was about not being able, really, to get stuck in a bit more.
Sarah Chung: 06:42	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So now, we'll talk about the NGA and some of the three core functions. So the NGA describes governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction. The following questions will explore your understanding of vision ethos and strategic direction. In your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?
Morgan: 07:13	Okay. So people talk about strategy and strategic things. And I think people overcomplicate it sometimes. You know Strategy and strategic, it's really just ideas and plans. So for me, it's just what we're planning to do and where we're planning to take things. And I suppose there's different levels of detail.
07:43	So you can start with an overall sort of strategic aim or a strategic plan, which you know some organisations have, which is very broad and very high-level and very, very non-specific. But then you know we have strategies and policies that sit underneath all that. But really, it's just about having the plans and turning ideas into plans, I suppose.
Sarah Chung: 08:09	Okay. Thank you.
08:16	All right. So using your own experience now, can you explain how you've contributed to shaping your school's strategic direction?
Morgan: 08:28	Yeah. So I suppose one of the most recent ones, we had offset inspection actually almost exactly a year ago. And it was a really good report.
08:41	But there were some development points that came out because it was good rather than outstanding. And sort of because of my kind of sort of professional background, I sit on our Quality of Education Committee. So we sat and looked at the there were two actions came out of the Ofsted plan relating to quality of education.
09:08	And we came up with the development plan, the strategic plan to look at those. One of them was relating to the curriculum in early years, specifically in the very youngest in reception and

	looking back into nursery as well. Because the curriculum higher up the school was praised. So key stage one, key stage two, they were really happy and really pleased with the way the curriculum has been set up and structured.
09:39	But I think in early years, it's probably right to say that it wasn't quite as well structured and established. And it was still a little bit sat in what you might have expected 5 to 10 years ago. So we came up with a curriculum plan, essentially, for early years that modelled what the children will be going on to into key stage one. But obviously, scaffolding that and providing those steps up into the higher study.
10:11	The other one I can't remember the other one was. Oh, the other one was an unfortunate thing about religious education. So they asked one of the it's a Church of England School, and they asked one of the children about other religions, and this child didn't have a clue. So they put something into the report about religious education not being broad enough.
10:35	So again, through the quality of education group, we did some work with the assistant head who leads on distinctiveness and religious education and PSHE and things. And we, again, came up with a curriculum kind of structure through the school that sort of addresses that need for a broader religious education, not just the Church of England focus.
Sarah Chung: 11:02	Okay. Wonderful.
11:05	So now then, can you use describe in your own words school's ethos?
Morgan: 11:12	So I suppose the school's ethos really boils down to one thing, which is all about caring. It's very much a caring school. It's very much a school where the child comes first as an individual.
11:34	And by supporting and looking after the children and supporting the parents and families, actually, that means the rest of it, the education side of it and the behaviour side of it and you know personal development and things like that all follow along. So really, the core and at the heart of everything we do is caring about the children and building everything else on that.
Sarah Chung: 12:00	Yeah.
12:01	So would you then do you feel Ethos is more of a character of the school than anything else?
Morgan: 12:09	It almost feels like a personality. It almost feels like the school as an organisation and as a group of people has that as it's almost like a personality is the way I kind of see it.
Sarah Chung: 12:21	Okay. In your own words, then can you describe what is meant by vision?

Morgan: 12:29	So I think the vision is where it's how you describe or visualise, I suppose. It's how you describe where you want to get to and where you want to take an organisation within usually within a period of time. So we have a vision. We've managed to avoid academisation by some miracle.
12:59	So our vision, you know 5, 10-year kind of vision, is to move through another Ofsted cycle and to get the outstanding. But also, because this is the direction everywhere is going, is to become an academy, but on our own terms. When we had the double RI part of the arrangement, the head teacher left. And we got an executive head teacher who's now across two schools. The other school is outstanding but hasn't been inspected for a very long time.
13:31	And the vision there is to bring the two schools together as an academy trust underneath that sort of banner of two outstanding schools eventually and bringing in kind of training, teacher training, that kind of thing around it. So that's the sort of vision that we've got. It's sort of looking at what things will look like in the future.
Sarah Chung: 13:55	Okay. That's wonderful. So now we'll talk a little bit about pupil performance.
14:03	Can you explain a little bit about how you and your governing body monitor pupil performance?
Morgan: 14:09	Yeah. So we have really detailed reports from the head every half-term. Obviously, in year, that tends to be based on internal assessments and so on. But again, when we get the external results every year, which we haven't for a couple of years, but in normal times, that obviously includes that data as well.
14:36	The thing I would like, probably, is a little bit more rather than it being paper-based, I think, a little bit more sort of analysis that we can tweak and play around with a little bit. So something I'd like to work on in the future is to develop it as an electronic kind of data dashboard rather than a paper-based report. The report's great. It's very detailed. But again, it was probably just me and my day job.
15:03	I fiddle around with data reports all the time. And you know it'd be good to be able to sort of scrutinise the data a little bit more. What's the word? In a more sort of customised sort of way.
Sarah Chung: 15:15	Okay. So I'm assuming then, do you feel quite comfortable with the data being presented to you?
Morgan: 15:24	Yeah. I mean, it's very clear, and it's very easy to understand. Yeah. I'd maybe just take it to the next level a little bit with the sort of bespoke analysis.
Sarah Chung: 15:36	Okay. And do you think that's is that a claim that could be made in general for the governing body? Do all the governors on your board understand?
Morgan: 15:47	They certainly understand how it's presented at the moment. I don't know necessarily how accessible they'd find it if it was all

	of a sudden on a lovely Power BI dashboard or something. I think it's something that certainly the vast majority of them would engage with and would use if it was there.
16:06	Some of them probably don't have access to that kind of data analysis all the time. So maybe it wouldn't be something they're too familiar with. But the way things are presented at the minute, yeah, everybody's quite happy with that.
Sarah Chung: 16:20	Oh, lovely. Okay. Thank you. So now thinking more in general, do you feel able to challenge or raise questions at any point in your governing career?
Morgan: 16:33	I've got a little bit of a reputation for being the one who asks the questions.
16:38	So yes. Absolutely.
Sarah Chung: 16:41	So can you describe in your own words in a time that you have challenged?
Morgan: 16:48	Yeah. So one of the I think it was probably no, it would have been in the last academic year, I think. In the quality of education meeting, one of the curriculum needs came along and presented you know her plans for how she was restructuring part of the curriculum.
17:08	And it looked lovely, and it was great. And my question was because it was largely based around a bought-in scheme rather than stuff that's been developed in-house, which is okay. But my question was about how is this individualised and personalised because it is a two-form entry. So there are always two classes in each year group. And certainly in my son's year group, but I know in some of the others, the two classes are very different.
17:40	And you know they manage that. The school do that quite deliberately to manage some personalities and to help with the curriculum. And I think that's a strength that the two classes are quite different. But therefore, a bought in scheme of work is never going to work for probably either of them. And that actually did prompt a little bit of a reflection. And they went away and did a bit more on it and came back with some suggestions and some sort of tweaks to it to make it a bit more flexible.
18:15	And it's a great scheme. And you know you know it's fine for what it is, but it's better when they're able to adapt it and to make it fit for their classes and for their children.
Sarah Chung: 18:28	It sounds then like that challenge was met quite well. Yeah. No, they do. I mean, anytime you ask any questions, they're really keen to get the feedback. They're really keen to take that on board and to act on it.
18:43	There was another question a little while ago about finance. I don't really know how, but coming out of COVID, they were running a surplus on the budget. And on our sort of two to three-year projections, the surplus was getting quite high. So

	again, that jumped out at me, and I said, "Look, is this too high?" And again, there was a discussion in the meeting and a bit of reflection about, "Actually, it is quite high, but we know we've got things coming up in the pipeline.
19:13	So actually, it's prudent to keep that buffer because when we get to that two to three-year projection, actually, that's going to drop right down, and it's going to be a much more manageable.
Sarah Chung: 19:26	Okay. So it sounds like you've had quite a positive experience of challenge at the moment. Has there ever been a time when it's been less positive?
Morgan: 19:38	No. I honestly don't think there has. Certainly not that I've seen.
19:42	I can imagine yeah based on the school's history, it possibly has been in the past. I think with the current leadership and with the current governing board, no, we've not had any negative responses to that.
Sarah Chung: 19:56	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for staff management. How confident are you in this area?
Morgan: 20:07	So I'm not directly involved with the head's performance management or appraisal.
20:13	But our chair and vice chair do that along with the chair and vice chair from the partner school because, obviously, she works across both schools. And they come back and produce a summary for the meeting after they've done that and had any updates with that. And I do feel like they do hold us to account for running both schools. Running both schools really well.
20:42	I think the staffing levels are good. You know We prioritise maintaining and increasing staffing levels where we can. And the budgets are well-balanced. So that obviously is working. It's not frivolous. So you know they do scrutinise and they do make sure that appointments are necessary. I mean, she's very experienced, so you know she does make the right calls, really.
Sarah Chung: 21:07	Okay. That's wonderful.
21:09	So in your school, then, are you aware of any developmental or rewards arrangements that are available to staff?
Morgan: 21:20	Staff. Do you know I'm not sure? I'm trying to think. No, I'm not sure, to be honest. Okay.
Sarah Chung: 21:35	That's all right. Absolutely fine.
21:38	So could you explain the process involved in appointing a new head teacher?

Morgan: 21:45	Not in detail because I've never been involved with it. So my sort of instinctive picture would be you know involving people like, obviously, governors would be involved, but also the HR at the local authority in our case because we're not categorised.
22:06	We have put in place in the agreement with our partner school a proviso that if [redacted] were to leave or retire, the partnership wouldn't necessarily continue sort of automatically. You know We'd have to look at where each school was, and it might be that we go back to a substantive head teacher post for each separate school. But my sort of initial thoughts on the process, I suppose, would be agreeing what is required within the big picture of where we're at.
22:40	And obviously, then advertising and shortlisting between governors and staff from the authority. And then an interview process, which, again, I've never been involved with, but would involve different types of tasks and discussions with children as well as the more sort of traditional formal interview types of things.
Sarah Chung: 23:01	Okay. So even though you've not taken part in one, you feel like you've got a good understanding of the process?
Morgan: 23:09	I think so.
Sarah Chung: 23:10	Okay. Good. So as well as setting the ethos and strategic direction of the school and also ensuring a clear level of accountability for pupil results and staffing. Property must be clearly displayed in financial oversight of your school. How confident are you in this situation?
Morgan: 23:35	So in terms of the whole governing body approach, very confident.
23:39	We've got two governors with a really strong financial background in the day jobs, if you like. Yeah I'm not on the finance committee, but we see the reports and we see what comes out of that, obviously, in full governors. And it all does seem it's very clear. It's very you know upfront and accountable. And certainly, again, in the period of time, I've known the school, there's certainly been no issues in terms of audit or anything like that.
Sarah Chung: 24:11	Okay. So you mentioned that you've got two external financial experts almost, I suppose, on your governing body. Are they specifically on the finance committee then, or do they?
Morgan: 24:26	Yeah. I'm just thinking. I'm fairly sure they're both on the finance committee. Yeah. No, they will be. And then, obviously, they come back with the head and report to full governors. .
Sarah Chung: 24:41	Okay. That's fantastic. Thanks. So could you explain a little how you, as a governor, would ensure that the school budget is managed?
Morgan: 25:00	So I mean, essentially, it's based in trusting the head and the business manager to do that.

25:11	But then we verify everything and we follow it up through the finance committee. And we do have quite clear procedures in place. I can't tell you off the top of my head, but you know purchases above certain amounts have got different levels of control up to very significant purchases which come through the governing body. But obviously, the school have autonomy over the vast majority of things.
25:37	I can't remember the exact amount, but certainly, recently, we've had some porta cabins installed, which sound awful, but are actually really lovely, to grow some capacity for an ASD unit in the school. So we've moved year six out into the port cabins to free up the actual classroom space. And that's a six-figure sort of project, and that had to come through governors.
26:05	Yeah I can't quite remember where exactly the thresholds are, but so significant things come through governors. And again, you know it was quite a robust conversation around that and around the need and the payoff and that kind of thing. But you know in this instance, it had back in from the council. There's also some income coming in through teacher training as well, which helps with that.
26:28	So we were able to see a big rounded picture of, yes, it's a big expense if you just look at one kind of figure, but actually, the cost to the school budgets is minimal because it's got all these other bits of funding coming in around it. So yeah, I think it's a robust system, I think. The two financial experts we've got are happy with it. So you know I think that's probably good enough for me.
26:58	And it seems to work. You know In practice, you know it does seem to work. And we do run an sort of appropriate level of surplus most years. So I think if a system works, it's not doing too badly.
Sarah Chung: 27:12	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. Can you think of a time when yourself or another governor actually has challenged a financial decision?
Morgan: 27:25	So we did in the project we were just talking about with the port cabins.
27:33	That's running across both schools. So we had a joint governor's meeting to discuss it as a whole project. And there was a bit of challenge there. I think one of the governors from the other school in particular wasn't as keen on the project overall. Yeah And so the financial aspect was almost the only way you could really challenge it. And again, it was a robust discussion.
27:59	It was you know really open, honest about the costs, and it was really good to talk about the benefits as well. So not just from a perspective of balancing the books, as important as that is. Actually, the broader benefits to the children and to the communities was the driving factor behind it. So I do think it's

	important to have those discussions about the money because ultimately, that's got to work out.
28:34	But then actually, to expand that and go, "Look, we're not just a money factory. You know We're actually a school, and this is actually about education. And we have to you know look at the bigger picture, really, not just the money.".
Sarah Chung: 28:48	Okay. So when there was that challenge, was it received quite well?
Morgan: 28:56	It was.
28:56	I mean, it was. And the head sort of sounds wrong, but the head defended it really well and was able to explain why this was a good project to do and to talk about the benefits and where other bits of funding would be coming in. And to talk about it in the long term, rather than just looking at it as a budget line for this year, actually, what it does is it grows capacity.
29:26	So that's always a good thing as well. So yeah, it wasn't an issue. You know There's no issue around challenge at all. And actually, the head was ready to explain and defend what she put forward as a proposal.
Sarah Chung: 29:42	Okay. Lovely. So now we're going to look at the eight elements of effective governance. And what I'm going to do, it's almost a little bit like a words association. So I'm going to read the element to you.
29:54	And if you tell me what you think it means to you, then that would be great.
Morgan: 29:59	I'm just going to go get some water.
Sarah Chung: 30:00	Yeah, absolutely.
Morgan: 30:02	This room is so dry.
Sarah Chung: 30:04	It's really hard, isn't it? It is.
Morgan: 30:16	Luckily, there's a sink just there.
Sarah Chung: 30:18	Oh, that's handy.
Morgan: 30:20	Very good. Okay.
Sarah Chung: 30:24	So in your own words, can you explain what these mean to you? So we'll begin with A, the right people around the table.
Morgan: 30:35	So I think that is about the chair of governors, but the governing body as a whole. Making sure that vacancies which come up that are a bit more flexible, like we've got a co-opted vacancy.
30:50	We've had sorry, parent vacancies fairly recently as well. Making sure that there's a good balance of skills and experience to cover all the different activities that the school is

involved with. I think it's also about using, as we have done in the past, using things like associate governors to bring in specific things that maybe are if there's a skills gap there.

Sarah Chung: 31:22 Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So B, understanding the role and responsibilities.

Morgan: 31:34 So one thing I had, which was really good for this, our local authority do a governor induction, which I actually did just before lockdown.

31:50 It was a refresher for me, but I went in like the February before everyone went we all went on lockdown. And it's a full day at the council in the nice meeting room, but talking exactly about what the role is, where the sort of role of the governor sits in terms of the school. And also, I think, importantly, for anyone, I suppose, coming in outside of education, what governors don't do and what governors can't get involved with or shouldn't, maybe, is the better word.

32:24 So I think it's understanding that. It's understanding the accountability as well and understanding in terms of the structure. So you know if you end up in a situation with complaints or you end up with a situation where there's issues with staff, actually how and when governors appropriately might get involved with that, but also when they don't.

Sarah Chung: 32:48 Okay. Wonderful. C, good chairing.

32:55 So I mean, our chair is great. She does a good job of balancing between sort of an open and fluid discussion, but also not letting everything descend into chaos and everyone talking over each other and all the rest of it. She follows the agenda quite well.

33:17 But also with the scope for you know slight broadening of discussions if that's what's appropriate and what's needed. Because sometimes the discussions are a bit organic and a bit broad. So I think that's quite important. And she works well. So we buy in the clerking service from the local council. And she works really well with them to make sure that you know all the papers and things are ready and distributed.

33:47 And again, working then with the business manager for the logistics, but to make sure some of my colleagues on the board prefer printed out copies of the papers. I prefer to do everything electronically. So you know either of those is an option. And just making sure everybody's sort of ready and prepared for the meetings as well.

Sarah Chung: 34:10 Okay. Wonderful. It jumps to the next section, which is actually D professional clerking.

Morgan: 34:18 So we buy the clerking in from the local authority. It's good. I think there could still be improvement. So for instance, we had a meeting. It was dark, so it must have been in one of the winter one of the winter months. And from the clock, there was a lot of noise and chatter in the background. And what it turned

	out was this chap was sat in his dining room because we were on teams at the time.
34:49	And his wife was also sat in the dining room clerking a different meeting together. So we couldn't hear the other meeting, but we could hear her and presumably vice versa. And it was all a bit chaotic. And actually, at that point, he did make a mistake, which came out in the minutes and had to be corrected, which could have been quite serious because it was to do with appointing new governors, one to a co-opted space and one to a parent space. And he got them the wrong way around.
35:20	So the clerking is generally fine, but it illustrates the importance of having a really good clerk there.
Sarah Chung: 35:28	Okay. E, good relationships based on trust.
Morgan: 35:36	Yeah. I think you've got to have the philosophy that everybody involved, the governors, but also the school staff, you know the head, but the other school staff who either there as staff governors or attend to report or anything.
35:54	You've got to work on the assumption that those people are there to do a good job and do their best. And that's how we operate. And we have a very open sort of safe space for discussions. And if there is any challenge or any difficult things to talk about, you know we operate in that sort of mutual respect and mutual trust. And I think that's built to an extent over time. We don't have a lot of turnover in the governing body.
36:25	Parent vacancies become available when someone's turn runs out and their children have moved on. Cooped vacancies come around very, very rarely. We had one because we had a lady who was a former head teacher. She retired, but she stayed in governance to support a couple of schools and got to the point where she wanted to essentially retire from that as well.
36:53	But we have a very low turnover, which means we know each other really well, and you build up a really good relationship.
Sarah Chung: 37:00	Okay. So G, sorry. No, F, knowing the school.
Morgan: 37:11	I think it's important to really understand the context of the school, the backgrounds that the children are coming from, and understand what it's like to be there.
37:22	So we have governor days where we basically go in and spend the day in school. We have some meetings during the day as well, but we spend some time in lessons, in assemblies, you know just generally around the place, being there and getting a feel, and getting to know the staff, getting to know some of the teachers. And for them to know and recognise us as well.
37:46	So we're not just this kind of ethereal body that nobody ever really meets, which I think you know would be pretty awful,

really. So trying to be there and trying to be involved, we get involved. We get invited to all these sort of events in school. And between us, we try to make sure someone attends at least you know someone attends all of them. We get involved with any sort of open events.

38:15 We get involved with recruitment and interviews as well. So you get to know some of the staff. And you know I can see the school developing, and I can see members of staff growing into roles, and I think, "Oh, you know we appointed them." And I was there and that was really great. Yeah So I think just being there as much as possible, really, not interfering and busybodying, but you know just being there and being a friendly face.

Sarah Chung: 38:40 Okay. Wonderful. G, asking challenging questions.

Morgan: 38:46 For me, the challenging questions come from being prepared. So it comes from having the papers and knowing you get into a routine and a rhythm and you know what to expect at different times of year. And then when it comes and you've got the report and you've got whatever it is that's there, actually being prepared enough and making time before the meetings to read it through and understand it and to make note of what questions you have to ask.

39:19 And again, something I bring from my kind of day job. It's almost a case of not asking a question that you don't already know what the answer should be. You know I try to know what the answer is before I ask the question or at the very least, know what I think the answer should be. Because otherwise, how do you know if your question is effective?

39:44 Yeah And it tends to be that people across the board ask more questions in their own kind of specific areas of expertise or responsibility. But everyone tips in. And I think it is about being challenging, but you know it's support and challenge. It's critical friend rather than just critical.

Sarah Chung: 40:10 Okay. That's great. Thank you.

40:13 So final one there, H having courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people.

Morgan: 40:21 So actually, this isn't something we've really had to do at a governor's level recently. They did in the past. They had a head teacher who had to leave. But that was before I got involved in that sense. And it's something I do quite often at work. So it's something I'd certainly be comfortable with if it came up and if we had to.

40:46 I suppose the nearest we got was where a member staff had to leave on medical grounds. She was unfit to work. But actually, that decision was in her best interests. And it was what she needed, actually, for some pension payout or something. She

	wouldn't have been able to claim a pension early if she'd just left of her own accord.
41:14	So actually, it turned out to be the best thing for her. But that could have been a very challenging conversation to have in a different context.
Sarah Chung: 41:25	Okay. Wonderful. So we're moving on now to sort of the next section. And the next question is, the line between strategic and operational can be seen as a very grey area for some. How confident are you in knowing where governance ends and SLT headteacher responsibility begins?
Morgan: 41:50	I agree that that is actually quite hard. The way I kind of manage it in my head is it's the school's responsibility to do stuff. It's the school's responsibility to write policies. It's the school's responsibility to present information.
42:15	And that's very broad, obviously. Yeah That's the operational, essentially. That's SLT. The governors are there to be that critical friend on those things that the school's done. So the governors aren't writing the policies. The governors aren't doing things. The governors aren't putting things in place. The governors are looking at the policies and the procedures and the plans that the head teachers made and making sure they're fit for purpose and the best they possibly can be for the children.
Sarah Chung: 42:49	Okay. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now, the impact of COVID-19, it was immense. Can you describe your experience of governance during this time?
Morgan: 43:04	So in terms of meetings and things, we obviously all moved to online meetings straight away.
43:15	And it became quite flexible in terms of when the meetings were...rearranging them at short notice if something had happened and [redacted] needed to go and the head teacher needed to go and deal with something you know there and then. You know We all agreed that the priority should be running the school.
43:36	And you know depending on which phase we were at during COVID, you know dealing with greater or lesser amounts of children on site, dealing with remote learning, dealing with a lot of the family crises that came up during that time as well. So we obviously moved everything online. We also became quite flexible in terms of we planned a meeting, but we fully understand potentially at very short notice. It might have to be rearranged.
44:04	[redacted] also started including us in sort of some of her whole staff emails and communications and things really to save a bit of time when it came to meetings rather than writing big, massive reports and saying, "This is what we've done and this is blah, blah, blah, blah." Actually making that a bit more efficient because we saw what was happening.

44:35	She did an update quite frequently to all the staff and to all the governors about you know what we were doing with children who were on-site, how we're handling all the free school meal chaos and things like that. So that as governors, again, you know we're not getting involved operationally, but we're really aware of how things are being handled and reassured that things are being handled because I think otherwise the risk during that time was that governance could become quite remote and quite distant from the school itself because one of the strengths of our governing board is the amount of time we spend in school in normal times.
45:19	So I think that was trying to mitigate against that to a degree. And then it just added almost an extra line to every agenda item was about how are we impacted by COVID on this. And as we moved forward, we had I can't remember what they called them, but like the interim offset visits where they were looking at what we were doing through remote learning as we went into the second academic year.
45:50	And that went really well. But again, it was about us being informed and being knowledgeable about what was happening. And just having that you know a bit of a quality assurance eye over it to look at it from every perspective and to think about, you know is this definitely the right thing? Definitely going in the right direction. And I think broadly, you know I think in that period, there wasn't a lot of challenge because it wasn't really required.
46:22	You know The school did a brilliant job. And they did a lot more than a lot of other schools you know locally and nationally. We did a lot more of live online teaching and learning. They kept up whole-school assemblies through remote learning. Yeah So we just felt as a governing board, we felt you know we didn't consciously back off particularly in terms of standards and expectations.
46:54	But actually, they did a really good job. And you know we were really more there as just a reflective, kind of a sounding board, but also looking after the welfare of the head and the deputy because you know they had a really tough time through that.
Sarah Chung: 47:14	Okay.
47:25	So now let's think about training a little more generally. If you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be and why do you think you'd choose it?
Morgan: 47:39	I think our local authorities induction should be I mean, I'm sure you know I'm sure the majority of us do something similar, but I don't know what that's like. Ours was really good. It was very, very broad. It was really relevant and really you know it wasn't just sitting and listening to boring presentations. It wasn't just a load of online training modules that I'm sure you're familiar with.

48:08	It was actually you know real people talking about real things that happen and really discussing and understanding how that governance role sits. So I think that is something that you know really should be there for everybody. And maybe as a not just for new governors, but maybe, I don't know, a refresher when you go into a new term of office or something like that.
Sarah Chung: 48:35	Okay. Thank you.
48:39	So conversely, then, in your opinion, what is the least valuable piece of training a government could you receive and why?
Morgan: 48:53	I don't really know. I went to one thing. I can't even remember what it was, but it was quite early when I'd started. And it was in person, so it must have been well before the pandemic. And there was quite a few things during the day.
49:09	But one of the things was very, very specific to virtual school and really not relevant at all. And I think my kind of take on that whole thing would be making sure that training is relevant to where you're working. So yeah, that's the only real example that I can think of.
Sarah Chung: 49:35	Wonderful.
49:40	Wonderful. So now I'd like you to think back to your initial year of governance. Did you feel supported?
Morgan: 49:47	Yeah. So I had really good support from the chair. She was really welcoming and kept in touch with me really well. Great support from the authority. I said the induction, but other bits of training, we use Governor Hub and the communication through there was and still is really good.
50:08	And really well supported by the school as well, actually. They were really welcoming. And I sort of knew them as a parent anyway, but they were really welcoming in terms of bringing me onto the governing board and you know making me feel comfortable and things like that in meetings. So yeah, really good.
Sarah Chung: 50:27	That's lovely. It sounds like it was a really positive time for you, which is fantastic. Did you have a mentor or a governing buddy at all?
Morgan: 50:36	Not officially.
50:39	I think I would have just gone to the chair if there was any sort of queries, but and I didn't ask for anyone either. So you know I think I would have asked for that. That might have been a thing. But I think informally, I would have my first call would have been to go to the chair.
Sarah Chung: 50:57	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So what are your thoughts on mentors for governors, chairs of governors, or even clerks?

Morgan: 51:07	I think that's probably a good idea for anybody.
51:10	I think it might depend on the individual. So going in as a governor, you know you might be a new governor to the school, but you've already been a governor somewhere else. And so I think the needs would be different in that case. And I think, again, coming in is different types of governors. So I actually think being a staff governor that could be quite a difficult position sometimes.
51:37	And that person might need that support more than you might imagine, perhaps coming into quite an unusual situation. So I mean, in principle, I think coaching and mentoring really should be something which is around for everybody moving through these sorts of roles. But it would need to be I suppose, by definition, it would need to be quite individualised and personalised.
Sarah Chung: 52:03	Okay. Wonderful.
52:05	So what are your thoughts on a mentor that would you prefer a mentor that was internal to the governing body or external?
Morgan: 52:14	I think as a governor, I'd be quite happy with something internal. I think if I was moving into chair, then I'd probably appreciate something external, maybe from another sort of another chair of governors from another governing board in another school, perhaps. So I think, again, it would depend on the role, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 52:36	Wonderful. Okay. So now the NGA have openly stated that they feel that induction training should be mandatory within the first year and indeed in Wales it is already. So in your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this and why?
Morgan: 52:55	Yeah. I think I do agree. I think the parent vacancy that I moved into came about because of another parent who'd gone into it for the wrong reasons.
53:12	And I think that's part of the reason why they did introduce the induction through our local authority. So I think, yes, I think absolutely you know people should be trained and really aware of what they let themselves in for, but also the skills they need and what their role is. Almost before they I mean, even more than just the first year.
53:43	I mean, even almost before they actually take up the role properly, you think there should be some degree of induction or something like that to make sure they're in the right kind of mindset.
Sarah Chung: 54:00	Okay. So final question now. So it's broken down into three little parts.
54:11	But if mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following? So A, content. What should be included?

Morgan: 54:22	Wow. That's a very big question. I think, actually, some of the sort of topics you've talked about would be the topics you'd want to cover. So I think the roles and responsibilities, I think there needs to be some well, there would need to be some element of safeguarding.
54:47	I think even where governors are coming in from an education setting because you know there can be different nuances in different settings and it should be consistent. And I think maybe some almost like scenario-based discussions. You know If these particular things happen, how would you react to it? So as a parent governor, you're on the playground at pickup time.
55:17	What can you do when parents start complaining at you? And they think that as parent governor, you can solve all the problems of the world. So I think that sort of scenario-based training might be useful as well. Understanding of terminology, I know you know from my day job, education is full of ridiculous acronyms that don't mean anything or stupid words that don't mean what they mean in the real world.
55:45	I think like a, yeah, a glossary.
Sarah Chung: 55:52	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So how do you feel the training should take place? So for example, a lot of training at the moment is LEA led or in-house in schools. What about the possibility of online?
Morgan: 56:11	I'm a bit more of a fan of in-person.
56:15	And I think maybe a split. So I think some of it should be led by the authority or the Academy Trust, yeah both. And I think some of it maybe should be led more by the schools, you know maybe by the chair and some of the other governors for some of the more specific in-house kind of things.
Sarah Chung: 56:36	Okay. Okay.
56:41	In that case, what are your thoughts on a modulated course that was delivered either in person or online, possibly even hybrid, but resulting in a certificate confirming induction year completion?
Morgan: 56:56	Yeah. I think that would be something really interesting. I would worry about the balance between. That would undoubtedly be very valuable and be very useful.
57:09	The balance between the sort of amount of work and effort that a governor would need to put into that against you know the reasonable expectations of the role. It is a voluntary role. I wouldn't want to get into a situation where we were putting people off becoming governors because the training was too time-consuming or too difficult. So it would be the balance there. But in principle, I think it would be a really good idea.

Sarah Chung: 57:39	Okay. Fantastic. That's great. So that's actually the last question. But if there's anything you can think of that I've missed or that you'd like to add, please do. Feel free.
Morgan: 57:54	I think the only thing I something that I keep banging on about is how good an experience being a governor is for people who work in education.
58:05	And I almost wonder if you know when I'm king of the world, we'd include something in teacher training about getting involved with being a governor, not necessarily as a staff governor in the school where you work, but maybe in another sector or maybe a similar school in another you know authority or whatever. Because you see schools, you see education from a different perspective.
58:34	And I know these things I've come across as a governor that have really helped me in my day job as well. So it's not just me bringing my expertise into the governor's role. Actually, there's benefits the other way as well. Even across sectors, you know even coming from a governor in a primary school to working in an FE college, you know I pick up things that we do at school that are really good and really you know ideas and good practice that we can bring into working in the college as well.
Sarah Chung: 59:12	Okay. That's really wonderful. Thank you, Morgan. That was great. No problem. Yeah. So yeah, I'll definitely let you have a copy of the findings as soon as they're sorted. But no, really, thank you ever so much for joining me today and for putting in the survey in the first place, so.
Morgan: 59:34	That's alright. Yeah. No, that's fine. And good luck.
Sarah Chung: 59:37	Oh, thank you. Yeah.
59:41	It's wonderful to talk to so many different people about it. So thanks again, Morgan. I'm going to let you enjoy the sunshine now, so. Lovely to meet you.
Morgan: 59:50	Thanks a lot, Sarah. Yeah. Lovely to meet you. Bye. Bye-bye.

Noah

Sarah Chung: 00:00	Okay. So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in the study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance.
00:29	During our interview, we'll discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this. Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training.
00:58	I'd like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation that you have signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any time during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years. And should you wish a copy of the results, please do feel free to email me. Do you have any questions?
Noah: 01:27	Nope.
Sarah Chung: 01:28	Lovely. Okay. So shall we jump in a nice, easy question?
Noah: 01:34	Yeah, do the easy ones first.
Sarah Chung: 01:37	How long have you been a governor?
Noah: 01:40	Four years.
Sarah Chung: 01:41	Four years. Okay. What made you join up?
Noah: 01:46	A good question. Yeah. The school was going through a bit of trouble. We had a few changes ahead in a short period of time.
01:55	Everything seemed a bit chaotic, and I thought, "Well, perhaps to help contribute, perhaps I should be a governor, understand what's going on, you know have a proper overview of what's going on at the school.".
Sarah Chung: 02:07	Okay. Lovely. So that was your children's school?
Noah: 02:09	Yeah, yeah. Yeah, primary school.
Sarah Chung: 02:12	Okay. Wonderful. So what has been the most enjoyable aspect to your governance so far?

Noah: 02:19	It's been really I wouldn't say enjoyable, but really interesting to understand how education system works because when you're outside of the education system, you just have no idea.
02:28	So that's been the most enlightening.
Sarah Chung: 02:32	Okay. So conversely, then, what's been the least enjoyable aspect?
Noah: 02:42	I don't think there's anything that's not enjoyable. There's a lot of reading to do. We get sent out like a big pack of information sort of a week in advance of the governor meeting. There's a lot to go through. And I don't necessarily understand the way it's presented.
03:00	I'm quite an analytical type of person, and it's not always presented in a way that I can necessarily easily digest.
Sarah Chung: 03:08	Okay. Do you think that's an education thing, or is that just is it just your school presents it in a certain way?
Noah: 03:18	I think it's probably just the head teacher presents because different head teachers present it in different ways. That's what we found. You know Since I've been a governor, there's been three head teachers. So yeah.
Sarah Chung: 03:30	So that's quite a lot of change then that schools had to go through.
Noah: 03:33	Yeah, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 03:34	Okay. What was the reasoning behind that?
Sarah Chung: 03:39	They had a long-term head who retired. Yeah And then it's part of a larger academy, and they brought in like a temporary head, and the school performance kind of dropped off. And then they brought in one of these kind of like super heads to try and sort of turn things around.
03:59	But she was shared between two schools. You know And she did turn things around. But you know obviously, she was too stressed trying to do two schools. So yeah, eventually, they've recruited a new head teacher. She's been enrolled for about two years now. Yeah, and she's been very good, yeah, so.
Sarah Chung: 04:17	Oh, lovely. Okay. So I think you said that it was part of a trust. So are you on an LGB, or are you on?
Noah: 04:24	Yeah, yeah. LGB.
Sarah Chung: 04:25	LGB. Okay. Wonderful.
04:27	So the NGA has described governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction. So the following questions are going to explore your understanding of those. So in your own words, can you describe what it's meant by strategic direction?

Noah: 04:44	Well, the head teacher has a vision. Yeah She wants the school to be a caring, nurturing, and academic kind of environment. So that's her vision.
04:58	And I think she has the governance on board for that. So strategic. You know But obviously, the education system as a whole has a set of measures that she's measured against and the academic achievement that's expected. Yeah And we get a report every governance meeting. We get a report of how the schools is it every governor meeting? It might be once a term. You get a report as to how the school's doing academically.
Sarah Chung: 05:29	Okay. So as a governor, how did you help shape your school's strategic direction?
Noah: 05:39	I'm not sure we have. Yeah, I'd say we don't because it's very much governed by the trust. And I think we're actually in a position where the role of the governor is becoming less important than the trust. If they didn't have to have governors, they would get rid of us.
Sarah Chung: 05:58	Right. Okay. So it feels...
Noah: 06:01	They're trying to reduce the role of the governor and the influence of the governor.
Sarah Chung: 06:05	Ah, right. Okay. So.
Noah: 06:06	The governing body, not just the role, but the governing body, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 06:09	And that's within your trust?
Noah: 06:11	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 06:12	Okay. So in your own words again now, can you explain what is meant by a school's ethos?
Noah: 06:21	Ethos. So I've kind of answered that one already, did I?
06:26	With the sort of caring, nurturing, academic kind of crossover. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, the head teacher's got a really clear vision of what she wants to achieve. And it seems to be working. You know She has an ethos, if you like, and a strategy that seems to be you know we got Ofsteded just before Christmas, had an Ofsted inspection, and that went really well, so.
Sarah Chung: 06:55	Oh, good.
06:56	Yeah. Okay. So I'm going to mention vision now. So your understanding of vision. But as we've seen, it's kind of all tied in, so.
Noah: 07:06	Yeah. Yeah. When the head teacher joined the school, there was 100 pupils on roll. So her goal you know with a low

	number of pupils, she had a limited number of staff that she could maintain. Yeah.
07:26	The trust were sort of pushing a lot of pressure back down on her to you know is this school viable, etc. So you know her vision there was she's grown the school. I think there's about 142 children now in her time that she's managed to increase the school number of children on role. So yeah, she's really succeeded on there. She's taken the school from an Ofsted.
07:54	I think it was good but needs kind of improvement to good in all areas, so. Okay. Fantastic.
Sarah Chung: 08:03	Okay. So now then, looking a bit more generally, can you explain a little bit about how your governing body oversees pupil performance?
Noah: 08:14	Yeah. So we do visits. So the way it's split up is that we have subject areas that you know each of the governor will be looking at subject areas.
08:29	So I do science and sustainability. And then we'll do a visit with the teacher who's responsible for that sort of subject area. So you know all the subject areas within the school are you know have a governor who they call it a link governor who sort of looks at those subject areas. And then in terms of the general academic performance of the school, yes, I think it's one's term. We get a head teacher's report with the academic achievement. Obviously, no names or anything, but you know how each year is performing against that sort of national targets.
Sarah Chung: 09:02	Okay. Wonderful. So I think you mentioned briefly at the start, didn't you, about not being 100% comfortable with how data is presented in the school. How do you feel with the performance data?
Noah: 09:18	Because it's done against a national level. So it's really difficult to sort of gauge. You know Is it good or is it okay?
09:27	And it's presented very much like you would present to the board of the Excalibur Trust or something. You know So we've got abbreviations in there that you know non-academic people might not understand or from a school background. Yeah. It's not presented clearly to me in the way I would expect.
09:55	I'm an engineer, so everything's got to be clear and concise and accurate. And yeah. And it's always clear to me how they make the measure of the children's performance. That's very much a subjective measure from what the teacher feels, I guess, so.
Sarah Chung: 10:10	Okay. So I think from what you've said, it seems to be more localized to how they're presenting it rather than something training that could support, or?
Noah: 10:22	I'm sure there could be some training to support.
10:25	Yeah. Or the governing body perhaps needs to work better with the head teacher on how she does the reporting. You can

	get the information out there when you're in the meeting, but it's nice to understand it before you go to the meeting. I think it's...
Sarah Chung: 10:41	The questions ready and...
Noah: 10:45	Yeah. Yeah, yeah. And it's just clear. And it saves some time as well you know if you're not asking silly questions.
Sarah Chung: 10:52	Absolutely.
10:54	So in that case, do you feel able to challenge or raise questions?
Noah: 10:59	Yeah. You know She's very open, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 11:01	Oh, good. Okay. Yeah. So have you ever challenged can you think of a time that you've challenged? And do you feel the response was it resolved your concerns, or?
Noah: 11:15	I think not with the current head teacher, but you know when that sort of period of flux, there was lots of challenges because there was issues.
11:22	There was behavioural issues in the school. The academic achievement levels weren't where they should be. You know And the staff weren't happy. So yeah, the governing body at that point was making quite a few challenges, I would say, in a number of areas.
Sarah Chung: 11:38	Yeah. Have you ever felt uncomfortable challenging?
Noah: 11:45	No. No, because I think it's quite easy as a governor because you know you're not paid by the school or you know it's quite easy to be in that position where you can make a challenge.
Sarah Chung: 11:56	Okay. So another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for the management of staff. How confident are you in this area?
Noah: 12:05	It's difficult to know because we rely on the head teacher to tell us, or we have another teacher on the governing body. So you know you're kind of relying on them to tell us that you know the staff are happy or if there's any issues with staff. And that did pan out, actually, because one of the teachers was let go a couple of years ago an underperforming teacher.
12:27	She's put on a development plan. Things didn't work out. Yeah. So it was interesting to see you know how the school dealt with an issue like that. You know She had long-term sick issues. So yeah. So the governor you know because you know you don't want to see that as a governor because it's taking money away from school because you've got a teacher on long-term sick. And yeah, that was quite interesting to see how that was handled.

Sarah Chung: 12:53 Yeah. And do you feel it was handled well, or?

Noah: 12:59 Probably about as well as it could have been. She was a long-term teacher, though. She'd been there like 20 years. But in all that time, she was quite a strong character. And in that time, you know all the previous head teachers never you know really challenged her and let her get away with the behaviour that she was sort of she had. So I guess it's like in any job, isn't it? You might have a problem member of staff if you don't tackle it.

Sarah Chung: 13:27 Yeah. So do you ever do exit interviews with any of the staff?

Noah: 13:32 No. I've never been involved in that. Nor, I haven't been involved in recruitment either.

Sarah Chung: 13:37 Okay. So although you haven't been involved in recruitment, how aware of you of the recruitment process for a head teacher?

Noah: 13:48 Yeah. Well, the governing body was involved in that. I just didn't put myself forward for it. So yeah.

13:54 So the governing body, I think two or three members of the governing body were involved in the recruitment of the head teacher we have at the moment.

Sarah Chung: 14:01 Yeah. Okay. So as well as setting the ethos and strategic direction of the school and also ensuring that there's a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil performance and staffing, probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight of your school. How confident are you with this?

Noah: 14:22 Yeah.

14:23 So our chair of governors is a tax auditor for one of the [inaudible]. So she does all the financial oversight. Yeah. And it's a real battle because we're part of a much larger trust. Obviously, you know they have the budget and they decide how much money the school gets or doesn't get. But yeah, it's really good having someone with that level of expertise on the governing body because I don't think the head teacher on her own would have that level of confidence to be able to go and challenge the trust.

Sarah Chung: 15:01 Okay. So then the challenge in that situation is less from you as a local governing body and more from the head teacher to the trust?

Noah: 15:10 Yes. But she always goes with the chair and she steps down. I don't know what they're going to do after she steps down, really. It might be interesting to see what happens. Well, she's so strong. You know She's very senior in this company. And yeah, she's quite a strong character.

Sarah Chung: 15:26 Yeah. But you found that quite helpful.

Noah: 15:29	Oh, yeah.
15:30	It's been very good. Yeah. Well, we would have less teachers in the school if it hadn't been for her.
Sarah Chung: 15:36	Really?
Noah: 15:37	Yeah. There'd be more shared years, for sure.
Sarah Chung: 15:41	Okay. Okay. It sounds like she's quite essential then at the moment.
Noah: 15:47	Yeah. Oh, she has been. And things are stabilising now with the growing number of children on roll. It's the maths.
15:57	You know They have a simple spreadsheet that says, "You need to have this X amount of pupils per year to have a teacher per year." So it's a bit more straightforward now. But when you know the school was growing from 100 to where it is now, it was a real challenge.
Sarah Chung: 16:13	Right. Okay. I can imagine it sounds it. So how long has she been chair of governors?
Noah: 16:20	Well, she's been chair for four years, but she's been in the governing body longer. She's got about [redacted] children that have gone through the school.
16:27	So her youngest child is now just leaving the school this year.
Sarah Chung: 16:31	Okay. So quite some time then?
Noah: 16:34	Yeah, at least six years. Okay. Have you started planning for transition if she does before? Yeah. We've got a new chair, and one of the new parent governors comes from a financial background. So he's going to pick up the financial link kind of role. So it'd be interesting to see how he he's much quieter.
16:55	I'd be interested to see how he manages the trust or how he deals with the trust rather than manage me.
Sarah Chung: 17:03	Okay. That's wonderful. So the eight elements of effective governance have been identified as essential to good governance. So what we're going to do now is a little bit not exactly, but a little bit like a words association. I'm going to review the sentence. Well, the element. And then if you tell me what that means to you. Okay.
17:24	So we've got A, the right people around the table.
Noah: 17:28	Yeah. To me, you know it's broader than just the teaching staff. Obviously, the teaching staff, head teacher, the financial support from the trust or however the support is managed. So yeah, you need the financial side and the management side of the trust and the governing body as well has some contribution to make in that, I think.
Sarah Chung: 17:54	Okay. B, understanding the roles and responsibilities.

Noah: 17:59	Yeah. So I think that's the biggest challenge. I don't think it's clear in our academy what the role of the governor is. Not anymore. I think it was clearer, but now it's really ambiguous.
Sarah Chung: 18:16	Okay. And so did you convert then to an academy quite recently, or?
Noah: 18:22	No, no. It's always been part of an academy.
18:24	But it's got a new CEO of the academy. And they're...yeah, you know I've not met them or anything, but yeah, they seem to have a different vision for how they want to manage things.
Sarah Chung: 18:37	Right. Do you think they're a little bit more hostile to having a local governing body?
Noah: 18:46	Yes. Yeah. Yeah. They feel like the trust should be able to do all the governance themselves.
Sarah Chung: 18:54	Right. Okay. Have they ever explained it or?
Noah: 18:59	We had a presentation that was made to the head teacher, and then the head teacher relayed it to us, and we were like, "Well, this really doesn't mean anything to us." yeah So yeah, it's never been relayed directly by the trust. It's been done via the head teacher.
Sarah Chung: 19:12	Right. Okay. So there's a little bit of disconnect then between.
Noah: 19:16	Oh, yeah. Definitely. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 19:18	Okay. Good chairing.
Noah: 19:21	Ooh. Yeah. Essential, I think.
19:25	Yeah. You need a really one thing I've seen in four years, you need a really strong chair, a really important role in the governing body. And you need to have the time to be a chair. I don't think you could do it if you're working full-time. So our chair, she works part-time. And that's been essential for her to be able to do the things she's done, especially on the finance side of things, and go to the right meetings because if you're working full-time, you wouldn't be able to attend those meetings.
Sarah Chung: 19:57	Absolutely. So it's almost like it's become more of a professional role as chair of governor than maybe...?
Noah: 20:05	I think for her it did, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 20:06	Yeah. Okay. D Professional Clerking.
Noah: 20:11	We have a professional clerk. Yeah. He's part of the trust, and he covers five or six schools. So I don't know how many schools are in a trust. It must be close to 15 or 16. Yeah Maybe more. It's quite large now.

20:25	But yeah, he covers sort of maybe 25% of those scores.
Sarah Chung: 20:30	And like with the good chairing, which was essential, do you think it's essential to have a strong...
Noah: 20:35	Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Definitely because you need to keep everything documented in hand. Yeah, he's very good at doing all the meeting minutes and answering any sort of technical points of question.
Sarah Chung: 20:52	So E, good relationships based on trust.
Noah: 20:58	Yes. Well, I think you need that trust between the teaching staff and the governing body. It's essential.
Sarah Chung: 21:06	Okay. And F, knowing the school?
Noah: 21:13	Yeah. Well, the more involved you are, the better you get to know the school and staff.
Sarah Chung: 21:17	Yeah. Okay. And do you think that's essential to?
Noah: 21:21	Of course, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I think so, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 21:23	Okay. G, asking challenging questions.
Noah: 21:29	Yeah. Perhaps we're lucky in our governing body that you know with the head teacher. I find it quite easy to challenge the teachers. I think when you're on the outside looking in, it's much easier to ask challenging questions.
Sarah Chung: 21:41	Okay. And H, having courageous conversations in the interest of children and young people.
Noah: 21:48	Yeah. I'm not sure what that means. Yeah. We're very much focused on we're focused on well-being.
21:55	I don't think we ask any sort of challenging questions around it. Possibly because we don't need to. Maybe if it's a bigger school because it's still quite a small school at 140, 150 children. So maybe you know the behaviour is not an issue. So yeah, maybe we don't as a governing body, we've not had to challenge in that regard. But a few years ago, we might have done better, not now.
Sarah Chung: 22:21	Okay. Thank you.
22:23	So moving on now, looking at strategic and operational. We know that the line between strategic and operational can be quite a grey area for some. So how confident are you in knowing where governance ends and SLT or Trustee responsibility begins?
Noah: 22:40	Yeah, it's really great. Yeah. And with the trust trying to sort of diminish the role of the governor, yeah, it's even more grey now.

Sarah Chung: 22:50	Right.
Noah: 22:51	Yeah. They don't even want us to go in and do link visits.
Sarah Chung: 22:55	Oh, really?
Noah: 22:56	No.
Sarah Chung: 22:57	Okay. And did they give a reason why?
Noah: 23:01	Because I think they sort of see they don't see the governors having any role in terms of monitoring the performance of children. You know Perhaps that's not I don't think that is our role. But you know it's nice to go in and understand how the school is operating and you know how the school is teaching science as an example. And you know what level of engagement you've got with the children when you're teaching science as an example.
23:26	So yeah, you know the trust are trying to sort of push back on that.
Sarah Chung: 23:34	Okay. It sounds like that's quite a it could put a it could make difficulties within the local governing body with that sort of attitude. Have you noticed?
Noah: 23:47	Yeah. Yes. Everyone's questioning what's our role now. It's kind of where are we going with this? What's our role? It's really not clear.
23:57	And is the head teacher happy with it as well? That's another point that's not clear. You know How does the head teacher feel because she's going to be very much measured from top-down rather than having sort of a bottom-up kind of governing body kind of looking at things from a different angle.
Sarah Chung: 24:14	And have you had conversations as a governing body about this?
Noah: 24:18	We have, yeah. We have. We've had our last couple of meetings, it's been discussed, and yeah, we're still not clear. It's really not clear.
24:25	Maybe we need to get that clarity for the next academic year.
Sarah Chung: 24:29	I was going to ask if you got an action point for that then, are you?
Noah: 24:34	I missed the last meeting, but yeah. It's not clear to me. It's not clear to me what the plan is.
Sarah Chung: 24:44	Yeah. Wonderful. Thank you. So now we're looking at COVID and the impact. So we know that the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of it has been immense.
24:55	Can you describe your experience in governance during this time?

Sarah Chung: 25:00	Yeah. Well, the first lockdown was a bit of a disaster for everyone, wasn't it? No. The schools weren't prepared. No one was prepared. Yeah. So, yeah. You know I think the school coped as well as they could. As a governing body, I'm not sure we had much impact or were able to help, particularly.
Sarah Chung: 25:24	So did you continue to meet?
Noah: 25:30	Yeah, virtually, yes.
Sarah Chung: 25:31	Okay. And the meetings, I mean, normally, they'd revolve around sort of assessments and progress and general monitoring. Is that still how it was, or did it move to a more of a pastoral role?
Noah: 25:50	Yeah. It's kind of you know how are we going to manage this?
25:55	How do we understand that the children are still being educated? Because then, obviously, the big concern was that children weren't at school, and they had a high level of disengagement. And I guess this was probably the same one across most primary schools. So you know they had a number of children that were still engaged, still submitting work, and then they had a high number of children that weren't. And then the focus turned on to how can we as lockdowns ended, how can we get these children back into school?
26:26	How can we bring them back up to the academic level that they need to be? And they still catch up now.
Sarah Chung: 26:33	Yeah. Did you feel that you had enough communication from the school or the head teacher?
Noah: 26:42	Yes. She's very good. Yeah. I feel a bit sorry for her because she had long been in the role, and then she got hit with the pandemic.
Sarah Chung: 26:51	Well, that's a way to start your job. Oh, gosh.
26:55	So did the chair support the head teacher a little bit more during that time then?
Noah: 27:00	I think so, yeah. Yeah, she did.
Sarah Chung: 27:03	Okay. Was there anything that you identified during the pandemic that maybe highlighted areas that you felt underqualified for or undertrained for?
Noah: 27:13	Yes. Special educational needs. Because obviously, you know a lot of children could have fallen into that sort of area.
27:23	Or you know how did they identify children with special education? Because their needs are going to be so much more now after two years of limited education. It was kind of yeah, that was an area where I needed to understand more and still do, I think.

Sarah Chung: 27:39	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So now we're going to look a little bit more about general training for governors. If you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be and why?
Noah: 27:53	Understanding the role properly. Because when I started my governance role, there was like every term, they get the new governance together at the academy from all the schools, and you get this sort of introduction into what's the role of the governor. And you know it's very broad and very because governors from secondary schools, primary schools, and what have you. So yeah, you kind of just got to pick it up as you go along.
28:21	Kind of You sit in the meetings and understand what's happening. And yeah, in terms of those mandatory training, we had to do sick guarding and the like. But yeah, the role of the governor, I think it needs to be much clearer.
Sarah Chung: 28:40	Right. Okay. And then, conversely, what, in your opinion, is the least valuable piece of training?
Noah: 28:50	Well, you're forced to do a lot of training. You know I don't have any interaction at all with the children, really. You know I might go in and do a link visit, but I'm just sat in the I might just go look at some books or I might watch a bit of teaching, but I don't interact with the children, you know but I still have to go through all the training as if I was doing that kind of role. You know And someone who's time-limited like me, I work full-time.
29:17	And I'm doing a PhD. You know doing that extra level of training is a bit you know a bit annoying.
Sarah Chung: 29:28	I can imagine. Okay. So I'd like you to think back now to your initial year of governance.
Noah: 29:34	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 29:34	Did you feel supported?
Noah: 29:37	I felt a little bit out of my depth for the first half a year. I didn't understand what was going on necessarily. It was difficult to keep up.
29:47	Yeah, I felt supported though. The chair is very good.
Sarah Chung: 29:51	Okay. So the chair was that a kind of mentoring role? Was it an informal kind of mentoring?
Noah: 29:58	Informal, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 29:59	Okay. So you didn't have then there was no actual mentor on the governing body or governing?
Noah: 30:08	No.

Sarah Chung: 30:09	Okay. And what are your thoughts then on mentors for governors or even chair of governors and clerks?
Noah: 30:17	That'd be useful because you're kind of just in at the deep end. It is with us anyway. You're kind of in at the deep end and your first meeting. You're governor now. You know You're supposed to understand what's going on. And it takes a while. You know It takes a year or two to really understand how it all works.
Sarah Chung: 30:37	Do you think there's an expectation because you're bringing in a certain skill set that you would automatically know?
Noah: 30:44	Yes. Especially because most of the governors are professional people at our school.
30:49	Yeah. I think there's that level of expectation. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 30:52	Right. Okay. So the NGA have openly stated that they feel induction training should be mandatory within the first year. And in Wales, it already is. What are your thoughts on that? Do you agree with it?
Noah: 31:05	Yeah, I do. Yeah. And I guess our trust would say, "Well, they do it because you have this introduction meeting." But I think it needs to be you know it's only a morning, and it's really an introduction to everyone.
31:19	And then, yeah, like an hour of, "Oh, this is what it means to be a governor." All right. So it's more of a sort of a tick-box exercise to say it's been done. Yeah. It kind of feels like that way to me.
Sarah Chung: 31:33	Yeah. Okay.
Noah: 31:34	It's useful to do it, but it's not enough to set you up for the role.
Sarah Chung: 31:40	Okay. So the quality then, although it's there, it's the quality of the training.
Noah: 31:45	Mm-hmm.
Sarah Chung: 31:45	Okay.
31:46	So if mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following content?
Noah: 31:56	A really clear description of the boundaries of governance. Because that's the biggest thing for me is, you know, where are our boundaries? And it's still not clear to me after four years. You know.
Sarah Chung: 32:12	Yeah. Okay.
32:17	What else? Is there anything else you would like to see included?
Noah: 32:22	A little bit of understanding on reporting. You know What needs to be reported and where should we be challenging?

	Because you know I don't think it's the governor's role to necessarily pinpoint areas of poor achievement in the school or not poor is a wrong word, but you know the head teachers, that's their role to understand.
32:49	You know So it's understanding that it's a boundary issue, again, for me. It's understanding where we should be challenging because we just challenge everything. That's not useful for the you know because their teacher's fully aware that there's an issue there. And we just want to sort of understand how she's going to address that issue.
Sarah Chung: 33:07	Yeah. Okay. So at the moment, a lot of training takes place sort of within LEAs or within Trusts, or in school, you know in-house.
33:20	What are your thoughts on online training?
Noah: 33:22	Well, that's what's done to us. It's just thrown to us on online training.
Sarah Chung: 33:26	Oh, right. Okay.
Noah: 33:29	Feels a bit disconnected because you know you must do this mandatory online training. Okay. Yeah. And maybe it'd be better if it's sort of delivered to a governor's.
Sarah Chung: 33:41	Face-to-face or?
Noah: 33:42	Face-to-face, yeah. Okay.
Sarah Chung: 33:46	Do you feel there's a lost opportunity for networking and things when it's.
Noah: 33:52	Yeah.
33:53	Absolutely. I mean, some of the training can be online. Safeguarding, you know that's online. That's fine. Okay, yeah, I get that. But yeah, some of the other training, you know it would be much more useful to do it in person. I get you know the budgets are limited and time's limited, but definitely.
Sarah Chung: 34:10	So in that case, what are your thoughts on a modulated course? Perhaps delivered in one of a number of ways. It could be hybrid, it could be online, or it could be face-to-face, which resulted in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year.
Noah: 34:33	Yeah. I guess, kind of interesting...yeah I'd need to understand more, I think. But yeah, it's just the amount of time that would be consumed. I think that would be the big issue is the amount of time. Most governance are working full-time and what have you, so.
Sarah Chung: 34:50	Yeah. Right. So that's actually the end of it.

34:58	But is there anything you'd like to add that I may have missed or.
Noah: 35:07	No. I don't think. I don't think so. Yeah. It's an interesting role, the governor, isn't it? Yeah. Even after four years, I really still don't understand the role of the governor. What our aim is to what we're supposed to be achieving is still not clear to me after four years.
35:30	So yeah. You know I just see us as a group of professional people who are assisting the head teacher in trying to understand the challenges of the school. And yeah, it's just what would really help me in training wise is really having a clear understanding what the role of the governor is.
Sarah Chung: 35:52	Do you think that's because of the situation that you're in with your trust? Or do you think that's a general?
Noah: 36:00	Maybe it's just because I've only got a view of our trust. And it might be unique to our trust. And then it just got really confusing and more confusing when they're trying to sort of water down the role of the governor. It's almost like we're questioning, "What's our role at all, if any?" It's kind of just not clear.
Sarah Chung: 36:28	In that case, do you feel like there's a little bit I think we briefly touched on it earlier with that disconnect, but how are the other governors coping? Do you see the LGB losing governors because of it?
Noah: 36:44	We haven't lost any governors, but we're all questioning what our role is. Even the chair. Even the chair is not clear.
Sarah Chung: 36:54	Oh, really?
Noah: 36:59	Yeah. Because we live in a military area as well. So I live in [redacted]. It's a very big military area. So you know we've got Army people on the governing body, you know Army officers. And you know they're very clear you know when you're in the military, everything's black and white. And this ambiguity is just like not good for it's just not good.
Sarah Chung: 37:23	Yeah, I can see.
37:24	That must be actually really quite difficult. So you've got all of these you know highly skilled people on the governing board that are just a little bit lost.
Noah: 37:32	Yeah. Yeah. I wouldn't say lost, but yeah. Not clear.
Sarah Chung: 37:37	Yeah.
Noah: 37:38	It's just not clear. Because we've basically just carried on as we were before. You know The trust is saying the head teacher doesn't have to give us reports anymore on how the

	school's doing academically. They consider that to be their role.
37:54	But the head teacher said, "Well, I'm going to carry on reporting anyway because I have to generate these reports for the trust, so I'll show them to you." So yeah. So it's kind of you know because she's not reporting that to us anymore, you know how can we put together an action plan? How do we understand what's going on? It's a very strange situation, and I'm sure it's very peculiar to our trust. But yeah, it makes the role of the governor very confusing and a bit unclear.
Sarah Chung: 38:24	So then the trust, are they sort of they're expecting it to be reported to them? Would they then feed down to you, or does it literally just stop with the trust?
Noah: 38:35	They see the responsibility being with them.
Sarah Chung: 38:37	Right. Okay. So they don't even share the information even on a sort of just so you're aware of your information.
Sarah Chung: 38:45	Yeah. They've told the head teachers that they don't need to report it to the governors.
Sarah Chung: 38:49	Okay. Okay. Gosh, that sounds really tricky.
Noah: 38:53	Yeah.
38:53	It's weird because you know I've done the role for four years and three of them, you know you get the same reports, and you can understand what's going on. You can see the level of achievement going up or stagnate in certain areas. And it's really clear to understand how the school's performing. You know When you don't get those reports, what do we discuss in the meetings?
Sarah Chung: 39:16	So actually, what do you discuss in the meetings?
Noah: 39:19	Well, the head teachers carried on as before. So she hasn't changed her behaviour at the moment.
Sarah Chung: 39:26	Yeah. Gosh.
Noah: 39:28	It'd be interesting to see what happens in the next academic year.
Sarah Chung: 39:32	Yeah, I can imagine. Do you think it will change?
Noah: 39:36	I think she's getting pressure to change her behaviour, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 39:41	Oh, right. Okay. So there's a little bit of pressure on her to stop feeding.
Noah: 39:46	Yeah. Because I think their intention is that their head teacher does less admin sort of bureaucracy type things for the governors and focuses on the teaching.

39:58	I think their intention is to support the head teacher, but I'm not sure how that then links to the governor's and how the governor's role is seen.
Sarah Chung: 40:11	Yeah. Absolutely. Well, yeah, that does sound really a really tricky one to navigate, I think.
Noah: 40:17	Yeah. I mean, is that unique to our trust, or is that something you see on? I've heard of similar in other trusts where it's normally come down to where they want the buck to stop with them.
40:32	And then the LGB are almost losing that level of accountability. So it's a board, but it's a board with no objectives. So I've seen it in a couple. Yeah. But I'm not sure what the answer will be, really, I think.
Noah: 40:54	No, we'll find out next year. I mean, I'm going to carry on as a governor until my children finish at the school, so.
Sarah Chung: 41:02	Oh, lovely.

Peter

Sarah Chung: 00:00	So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in the study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. Yep You will be aware the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. Yep During our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this.
00:26	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training. I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation that you've signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date.
00:59	Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview dates will be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years. And of course, should you wish a copy of the results, please do email me. I'm happy to share those with you. Any questions?
Peter: 01:20	Yes. So just remind me again. Bear in mind, I signed this ages ago. This is the University of Birmingham study, is it?
Sarah Chung: 01:27	It is, yes.
Peter: 01:28	And what's the objects of it, or what's the purpose?
Sarah Chung: 01:31	So I'm doing my PhD thesis on the role of governor training in effective governing bodies. And so it's a study based in the university and supervised by two of the university.
Peter: 01:45	Okay. So what made you choose that? Just a matter of interest. So you're a school governor yourself, I guess?
Sarah Chung: 01:50	Yes, yes. So I'm actually a trained primary school teacher. And I joined my children's governing body several years back now.
02:00	And it struck me that there was just the training wasn't suitable.
Peter: 02:05	Where's your school? [redacted]-based. Well, it was. So yeah. So at the time, the training didn't seem to meet the needs of the governing body. And even though I had an education background, there were differences in you know so it was just a case of seeing what's out there. Is it appropriate? How is it changing?
02:28	But it's also noting that we've moved on from that stakeholder model to a skills-based model now.

Peter: 02:38 Well, yeah, possibly. That was a plan. Anyway, we'll probably cover that. I mean, I think it's important to say two things. One is it varies dramatically from local authority to local authority.

Sarah Chung: 02:48 Yes. Absolutely.

Peter: 02:48 Funny enough, I got a call this morning, but the lady only rung me five minutes before this call, and we've rescheduled it. And she's from [redacted]. And I'm a governor in [redacted] and I'm ringing up [redacted] saying, "Your governor training is crap.

03:00 What are we going to do about it?" So that's the call I'm having there. Also, in addition, just a bit of background, unless you're going to ask me this, I'll tell you anyway. I have been a governor for over 30 years. I've been a chair of a primary school for six years. I was chair of a high school academy personnel committee for 16 years. I clerked three schools for several years, and I've been delivering governor training for the last six or seven years.

Sarah Chung: 03:25 Lovely. Okay. So that's a really varied background there.

Peter: 03:29 So if that helps.

03:30 Oh, it absolutely does. It absolutely does. And actually, that's taking care of question one. So that's wonderful. So then now we've looked at sort of how long you've been in the role and the fact that you've had such varied experience, chair of governor, trainer, etc. What's been the most enjoyable part of governance for you? What's been the most enjoyable part of governance?

Peter: 04:00 It's an old cliche. It's making a difference, isn't it? You'll never get a you'll never get a good school without a good governing board. So I think it's really, really important that the governing board have the best skills they can have because if they're better trained and better interested in their own self-development, the better the board will be. And if better the board will be, the better the school will be.

Sarah Chung: 04:26 Wonderful. Okay.

04:28 So conversely, then, what's the least enjoyable aspect of governance for you?

Peter: 04:34 Chairing exclusion committees. Although there's always learnings to be taken from it, but it's not great when you're listening to a catalogue of things that a pupil has done or not done in school. And you feel like you failed them and exclusions are effectively the last resort.

04:58 But it just seems to me it's just a shame that it has to come to that. There's something going wrong somewhere. Quite often, to be fair, the schools and everything they possibly can, and it's a home life thing.

Sarah Chung: 05:08	Yeah. Okay. Okay. Yeah. That does sound quite a difficult part of the job, really. So moving on then, we'll look at the NGAF described governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos. Ethos and strategic direction....
Peter: 05:26	Holding the head teacher account for the educational performance of the school and staff and performance management. Yeah. And making sure the money is well spent.
Sarah Chung: 05:33	Exactly. Absolutely. So the following questions are going to explore your understanding of those three. So in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?
Peter: 05:46	Well, in my world and in my thoughts, it's one of the most important things that schools should do is set a good vision because everything leads from that.
06:00	Therefore, you set your vision. If you do a SWAT analysis to find out where you are right now, and effectively, your strategies to take you from where you are right now to where you want to be. And actually, everything should tumble out of that. So as I say, as a school, stick your vision on the top of all your agenda. Stick your vision on all your documents because everything you do should be geared to head into your vision. If you're discussing something at a governing board meeting or a committee meeting, you should always ask yourself, is this helping us achieve our vision or get closer to it?
06:31	If the answer is no, then why the hell are you talking about it?
Sarah Chung: 06:34	Okay. So then can you tell me a little bit using your own experience about how you've helped shape your school's vision?
Peter: 06:44	In the schools that I've worked with and also the training as well, it is about the importance of the vision.
06:51	So in other words, the current scholar match in Worcestershire right now, early on in the spring, I led a governing away day where we actually come up with a brand spanking new vision from which then we could because I had to deliver a training session on this exact topic because I do it all the time. When I first did governor training, there was no training around vision and strategy in some of the local authorities I was working with. And I had to write because I've done vision and strategy in the commercial and business world.
07:21	And you know it's really, really important in schools. And as it's one of the three core functions, I then wrote and I've developed some training courses around vision strategy. So from my perspective, it was leading that session whereby we've now got a concrete vision where we want to be in 2024.
Sarah Chung: 07:38	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So can you describe in your own words what is meant by school's ethos?
Peter: 07:47	It varies from school to school, but effectively, it's values, it's culture, it's the way we do things around here.

07:57	Sometimes it's written out as a list of golden rules, so ones have a better phrase, but that's what it is. It's the way we do things. It's what's acceptable and what's not acceptable and all that sort of stuff.
Sarah Chung: 08:07	Okay. Lovely. And are you happy with your own schools, Ethos?
Peter: 08:10	I am.
Sarah Chung: 08:13	How did you develop it? Were you involved as a governor?
Peter: 08:16	No, to be fair, it was already in place. It was already in place when I went to the school and didn't need changing.
Sarah Chung: 08:22	Okay.
08:23	If it was, would you as a governing body be able to become involved in that, or is it something that sits with the SLT and then?
Peter: 08:31	I mean, at the end of the day, the governors have to have a role in it because it's one of our three core functions. We're responsible for the ethos of the school. Generally speaking, what happens with something like that, it will be written by the head teacher or something like that. And then we board to governments to say, "This is what we think. What do you think?" And we would have our input into it.
Sarah Chung: 08:49	Okay. So it's more like a feedback?
Peter: 08:52	In that particular one, yeah. I wouldn't see it as being a governor-led we might say, for example, if the school hasn't got one or hasn't got a set of values or a culture statement or something like that, then we might say we need to get one done. But certainly, whereas the vision and the strategy documents should be definitely be governor-led, the ethos is less so.
Sarah Chung: 09:15	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So can you give me, in your own words, again, an explanation of vision?
Peter: 09:23	The vision is where we want to be. I think the governance handbook says something like three to five years. I think five years is too far. I think three years is more of acceptable. So this is where we want to be excuse me. This is where we want to be in three years' time. Now, that causes lots of problems sometimes because schools don't necessarily are not really good at doing vision statements. They're great at doing mission statements.
09:47	This is the sort of school we want to be, but they're not very good doing vision statements. And strangely enough, schools don't have to do a mission statement. They have to do a vision statement, but they don't have to do a mission statement. And quite often, they get them mixed up. So their vision statement

	becomes something that you can't really hang your hats on. We want to be a wonderful little school in our little village in a multicultural environment and make all our little kitty wings go off into the world and be wonderful human beings. Well, that's very nice as a mission statement, but it's not a vision statement. It's not something you can hang your hat on.
10:18	I like something that's crystal clear that you know when you've arrived. You know how far down the road you are to achieving it. You know what still needs to be done. So it could be something like by Officer terminology, we want to be an outstanding school in three years. And that way then, everything you do, every decision you take, whether it's strategic or operational is geared to, "Is this taking us towards being an outstanding sort?" Now, I know head teachers don't necessarily like that because head teachers and members of staff don't necessarily like being held to account for results.
10:49	And I know that schools are more than just an exam factory. Yeah But at the end of the day, if you want to we should all be aspirational. I think a lot of the problems in society and some of the things with kids, particularly when we go back to exclusions, are caused by kids not having good role models and not being aspirational enough.
Sarah Chung: 11:09	Okay. Wonderful.
Peter: 11:10	That sort of went round and round in circle. But basically speaking, to answer your question, it's where we want to be in three years' time.
Sarah Chung: 11:15	Okay. Lovely. Thank you.
11:17	So I noticed then that you mentioned that you like that clarity, that very specific aspect. Can you tell me outside of governance...I know you've been a governor for 30 years. Outside of governance, are you in a business field or?
Peter: 11:33	Yeah. I was in the corporate sales world for 30 years. Sales, rep, sales, manager, sales director. I set up my own business seven, seven and a half, eight years ago now. And I do sales training and marketing training.
11:46	One of the things I also do is coach and mentor businesses and business start-ups around particularly vision and strategy.
Sarah Chung: 11:53	Ah, okay. Right.
Peter: 11:55	Which is where I bought my experience into schools because nobody was doing it, and I was already doing it. I was seeing it in the commercial world and saying, "Why is nobody doing this in education? This is so important." And that's why I bought it across, which is why I do a lot of training. I got us to speak to the events and that sort of stuff.

Sarah Chung: 12:10	So bringing those external skills has helped you then in the world of governance?
Peter: 12:15	Absolutely. I think these are two-way streets.
12:16	I think people that you know learn skills in governance they can take into their business life. And certainly, people who have got good business skills can bring them into the education world, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 12:29	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So can you explain a little bit then now, moving forward, about how your governing body oversees people performance?
Peter: 12:41	Basically speaking, we have a teaching learning committee, and they do the donkey. They do the work.
12:48	Governors are encouraged to visit school when school is working. It's very easy sometimes as governors are to rock up when it's quiet. But then if you see the school when it's working, then it better inform decisions you make in governing board meetings. So we obviously see data. So we've got access to analytic school performance. So we can see all that sort of stuff. We can do learning walks, book trolls, and all that sort of thing. So it's a triangulation type thing.
13:15	But most of the nitty-gritty is done by the teaching and learning committee, and then they just bring that overview to the governing board and we discuss it as necessary. But we certainly don't then revisit everything that they've done to that point.
Sarah Chung: 13:27	Okay. So it's a more traditional model of governance then where you have the main board governing bodies and committees as well.
Peter: 13:35	Yeah, we've got two subcommittees well, so we've got a pay committee, which I have to have. But the basic two committees do most of the work are the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Resources Committee.
Sarah Chung: 13:46	Okay. Do you get head teacher reports over?
Peter: 13:49	We do. Right. Okay. And they're very good, actually. Some schools I've looked at because I also do external reviews of governance as well, which I didn't tell you. And I also do I used to run an audit and a governor award scheme for another organisation as well. So I've got a lot of experience of other governing boards as well.
Sarah Chung: 14:07	Yeah. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. Do you feel able then to challenge or raise questions if necessary?
Peter: 14:16	Absolutely. A, we've created an environment which encourages it, even the people that are sometimes quiet around the table. Me by generator, I have no problems asking questions whatsoever and challenging ones unnecessarily. And I can be like a dog with a bone sometimes. But part of the

	culture of our governing board and to be fair, most of the schools I've worked in with one exception when I had a really bad experience in the [redacted] MAT a few years ago. But all the other schools I've worked in have been really, really good.
14:45	And we've developed a culture whereby openness is important and challenge and support is kept in the right balance.
Sarah Chung: 14:52	Okay. Can I just jump back a second there? You mentioned you had a difficult experience with a [REDADCTED] MAT. Do you want to just talk a little bit about that?
Peter: 15:02	Yeah. I was asked to go to I was asked by somebody who contacted me to say, "Will I come and serve on a trust board?" Then before I went to serve on a trust board, they said one of our schools has got a brand spanking new governing board.
15:18	We've got to reconfigure from scratch. They could do some experience on there. So I said, "Well, I'm not going to be chair because I've done my days a chair." So effectively, I sat on that governing board as a trust board appointed governor, but it was horrendous. To summarise the 18 months, effectively, the trust board ran the rod of iron. The local governing boards were no more than curriculum committees with a little bit of financial responsibility except financial responsibility.
15:50	We didn't get a budget or a balance sheet or anything for 18 months. And then in the end, and I think we tried to they came up with the schema delegation that basically speaking put all the power at the trust board level. So that was horrendous. And in the end, I was the vice chair effectively, and the chair and the vice chair and I were about to resign. And then the final straw, I think, was we had an officer inspection. The first thing we knew about it was in the evening of the first day.
16:22	And I contacted the head of governance for all the trust board who happens to be the head of governance happened to be a report to the chief operating officer. So there was a huge mismangle of responsibility with regard to keeping things strategic and governance-wise and keeping it away from operational stuff when all the chairs are supposed to report into a lady that then reported into the chief operating officer. I said, "Okay.
16:49	So when do Ofsted want to meet us?" And she said, "They don't. We're going to deal with it." And the problem by then was they knew that we'd got so many questions we were going to raise and so many issues we were going to raise with Ofsted about governance within the trust that they just kept us away from Ofsted. So at that stage, then the chair and the vice chair and I resigned.
Sarah Chung: 17:09	Wow. Okay. So that sounds like it was quite a difficult time for you.

Peter: 17:12	I hated it. I mean, to be fair, it was good to start with him so much as it's nice to be asked for your experience and user experience and seeing that going. So that was fine.
17:20	And the chair was a really nice guy. He was a career. He'd been a counselor. He'd worked in [redacted] Council for years. And he was a really nice guy. He didn't understand school governance, but he was very, very good at crossing the I's and dotting the T's and all that sort of stuff. So he was an ideal chair for that perspective. But even he got frustrated in because he would turn to me and say, "What do you think Peter?" or, "What's your experience of this?" So that was a nice place to be.
17:42	Just before it all fell apart, I mentioned that I'd been asked to join as a trust board member, and they said, "Would I help out?" Just prior to it all going to something, but I've said it now. Before that, I got invited to have an interview for the trust board appointment. I was surprised to get an interview bearing in mind that asked me if I'd do it anyway.
18:11	Anyway, when I went in, the people doing the interview with the head of governance, the chief operating officer, and the chief executive officer. So in other words, the three key operational people who led the trust were interviewing trust board members who were going to hold them to account. Consequently, from some of the questions I asked them, and it didn't surprise me at the end of the day, I didn't get appointed.
Sarah Chung: 18:35	Yeah. Gosh, yeah, that does sound.
Peter: 18:38	Horrendous.
Sarah Chung: 18:38	Yeah.
Peter: 18:39	And this is the experience when I was at an event a few weeks ago at another local authority when they were talking about families of schools and what the future looks like with regards to federations and MATs and that sort of stuff. And I just said, "Yes, there are some good things happening in MATs, there are some really shocking things happening in MATs as well, and you need to be aware of the shocking things as well, and you need to hear both sides of the story before you decide whether you're going to commit or not.".
Sarah Chung: 19:05	Absolutely. So can I just check then?
19:08	So you were a trustee, but you were also were you on the LGB as well?
Peter: 19:12	No, I did. I was never appointed a trustee. They asked me to be a trustee, and they said, "Before you come on six months of your time up to go and help this LGB out, well, that six months became 12 months, became nearly 18 months. And then so in the last six months, they interviewed me on that stage, I

	thought, "Right, okay. This is not the place for me. It was toxic.".
Sarah Chung: 19:31	Oh, goodness. That sounds...
Peter: 19:33	It was toxic.
Sarah Chung: 19:36	So I know you said that yourself and the chair resigned.
19:40	Did you lose any other governors at the time?
Peter: 19:43	I don't know because at the end of the day, I just walked away and then I just said, "I'm not going to take any part. I'm not going to take any part in this." Okay. That must have been quite, from a personal perspective, quite difficult for you. It is in so much as I always think I can change the world and this and the other, and I'll have a go at it. But at the end of the day, you can only bang your head on the wall for so often. And I just said, "I'm a volunteer. I'm not being paid to do this. I don't need the hassle." So I gave that up, took six months out, and now I'm a governor, vice chair, and well-respected at a lovely little village school.
20:14	So if I'm giving my time up for free, I want to be able to enjoy it and see positive benefits coming out of it.
Sarah Chung: 20:19	Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. Well, thank you for sharing that. That does sound like a really, really difficult time in your governance, but I'm glad you made it through. Okay. So we know then that another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for the management of staff. How confident are you with this?
Peter: 20:40	Very good. In so much as I say, I chaired a personnel committee.
20:43	I've done lots of head teacher performance management reviews. I've also monitored the policy and how the policy was applied. In a school, they've got 150 teachers. And when I was in the corporate world, I ran sales teams as well. So I'd done a personal I've been both sides of the table for doing performance management reviews anyway, so it's not a problem for me.
Sarah Chung: 21:09	So I can see there's a clear link there from your external work to your governance work.
21:16	Do you think was there anything that could have been developed further to support the governance, or do you think the skills that you brought alone helped?
Peter: 21:27	I think governing boards need a good balance of skills, so they wouldn't want 10 of me around the table. Yeah But then they wouldn't want 10 you know people who have got little or no business experience or have been housewives. You know House husbands have got great experience to bring.

21:47	And generally speaking, quite often, they are appointed as parent governors. But again, you wouldn't want 10 parent governors because you wouldn't have the right skills. One of the great things about having cooperative governors or foundation governors aware at our school is that we can go out and look for the type of people that we need. So surprise, surprise. I'm a link governor at my school for skills and development of the governing board. So we did a skills audit a year or so ago, 18 months ago.
22:20	And he told us, to be fair, there were no surprises. One of the things he told us was that we hadn't got as much financial knowledge around the table as we should do. At the time, we'd got two vacancies for corporate governors. So we went out and not just the first person stuck the hand up, but we actually went looking for people that had got financial experience. So we ended up with one lady who had been a governor for many years and chaired a finance committee for about 10 years. And then we had another lady who was an auditor [screen froze] and public company.
Sarah Chung: 22:48	Sorry, you froze then...
22:49	That's all right....you're back...
Peter: 22:50	Oh, sorry. So we got one lady who had been a governor for many years and chaired a finance committee for 10 years. And then we got another lady who was an auditor and accountant in a public company.
Sarah Chung: 23:03	Oh, okay. Okay.
Peter: 23:04	So again, that was us going out and finding the skills we want and making us an even better governing board.
Sarah Chung: 23:10	Do you think those skills are directly applicable? Or do you think, given it the educational setting, that the skills need some support to cross over?
Peter: 23:21	I think as part of the induction process, governors need to understand how schools operate. So in this particular case, we've got one lady been a governor for 10 years, so she knew how schools operated. The other lady had never been a governor. So she needed some guidance to start with abroad. This is how schools work and this is the financial year and all that sort of stuff. But at the end of the day, she was there to read the financial reports that we were getting and use her experience to guide us. And that's worked really well.
Sarah Chung: 23:49	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.
23:52	So as well as setting ethos and strategic direction of the school and also ensuring that there's a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil results and staffing, probity must be

	clearly displayed in financial oversight to your school. So how comfortable are you in that situation?
Peter: 24:12	I'm pretty comfortable. I don't come from a financial background, but I've been in schools long enough to be able to set budgets and monitor budgets and that sort of stuff.
24:23	So yeah.
Sarah Chung: 24:25	Okay. Wonderful. So then can you explain a little bit about how your governing body monitor the budget?
Peter: 24:33	Well, firstly, we set the budget. In conjunction, obviously, we discussed it with the head teaching leadership team. And then, obviously, we've got a resources committee which effectively covers health and safety, finance, and HR matters in the main. So that meets once a term.
24:49	So each term, we go through the budget, the documents we've been given, and you know just to see where we are with regards to how far through the financial year we are and how much budget spent, and are there a big underspends or are the big overspends now in that discussion, so yeah. And we've also appointed a new bursa or school manager who's really, really good. A lot better than our old one, who fortunately took early retirement with some persuading. And so, yeah.
25:18	So she's really good as well. So we've got this in-school, a couple of people now that do the management of the finances in the school, and then they come to the committee meetings, and we'll have a big open discussion.
Sarah Chung: 25:30	Okay. Okay. You mentioned that you've got a new bursa now. The previous bursa didn't work so well with you?
Peter: 25:38	She was there when I went there. She was the bursa, and she was also the clerk as well, which never works well anyway. And she shouldn't have been doing that.
25:50	One of the problems in schools, whether it's a governing board or the school itself, is that can be very insular. You only know what happens in your governing board. Yeah Very few people have any experience of what happens in other governing boards. Fortunate in the schools I've worked with and also the training and running awards and stuff that I see a lot of other governing boards so I can see what's good. And I've got something to benchmark it against.
26:16	So I think that's another thing I also advise you know when I was in when I was at high school for 16 years, we had a separate finance committee. So we had a personal committee and a finance committee. And the chair of the finance committee quite often would go into other schools and sit in their meetings and vice versa. So you get that wider knowledge of how other schools do things, and there's always something new you can learn and bring back.
Sarah Chung: 26:42	Okay. That sounds wonderful.

26:44	It sounds like you sort of there was quite a community spirit then amongst other governing bodies?
Peter: 26:52	With some schools.
Sarah Chung: 26:53	With some schools? So thinking back to the [REDACTED] MAT that you mentioned as well with the local governing body there, there was some financial oversight, but it was mainly....?
Peter: 27:05	There was supposed to be. But the fact that we hadn't got a budget to work to or we weren't getting any financial documents coming out of the MAT made it very difficult.
27:13	So effectively, it was a curriculum committee.
Sarah Chung: 27:16	Right. Okay. That must have been quite frustrating for you as a board.
Peter: 27:23	It is. They tried to present a new scheme of delegation at one stage, and they just thought it would go through on the nod. And because I've been around the block a few times, I went through it line by line and just said, "Can I just ask what you mean about this?" So in that particular set of circumstances, what would happen and who would make the decision. And effectively, the meeting took a lot longer than they should have done because I was doing it.
27:45	And then somebody said, "Do we really need to do this?" I said, "This is the most important document that exists in any multi-academy trust." And in fact, it was after that then that effectively we realised that all of the responsibilities and all the power sat with the but actually, we actually got it all out in the open and got it minute.
Sarah Chung: 28:04	Right. Okay.
Peter: 28:05	Which is why the chair and I got nailed as a couple of troublemakers, I think.
Sarah Chung: 28:10	So was there hostility then, do you think, from the.
Peter: 28:13	Oh, there was absolute hostility, yeah, because the trust board wanted to run into the way that they went to.
28:21	They weren't used to people like me sitting at a local governing board level and challenged them saying, "This is what you really mean?" You do realise and then turning to the other governors that are around the room who didn't understand and say, "Just so you know, this is what this now means." yeah And I think they didn't like that.
Sarah Chung: 28:38	Right. Okay. Do you think that was a whole Trustee issue, or do you think it came sort of from the very top down?
Peter: 28:47	Well, I think it came from the chief executive officer, the CEO, the executive head.

28:52	Effectively, he didn't want a trust board. He wanted to run it how he wanted to run it, which is why he was interviewing the trustees because he would have liked people like me challenging him. And that's one of the problems one of the problems that happens in MATs. You know It's members that should appoint trustees, not the executive head teacher. Yeah And I happen to know one of the members, and I said, "You know they're interviewing for trust board members right now. You should be involved." He said, "No, I didn't, and no, I didn't.".
Sarah Chung: 29:20	Gosh. Okay.
29:22	So do you think there's an element of lack of training them for the trustees as well, the fact that they didn't pick up on that?
Peter: 29:28	It wasn't the trustees. It's the members. It was the members who were.
Sarah Chung: 29:30	Oh, sorry, the members.
Peter: 29:31	The members who appointed the trustees. I think to be said, what probably happened was he got approached by somebody and just said, "We need a member. This is what it entails. It's nothing much to do. I just need to put your name in a bit of paper. And by the way, we have to have AGM once a year, and that's it. And he probably said, "Yeah, that's absolutely fine." yeah Would see it as just another notch on his CV without realising what he actually was taking on.
Sarah Chung: 29:53	Gosh. Okay. Okay. That sounds like it really was a difficult time then.
Peter: 29:58	And one of the problems also in MATs is there's a problem with oversight as well. So you know what's the old Latin phrase? Key Custodes custod - Who guards the guards? No, but they're supposed to report to the Regional School Commissioner. Actually, I've just changed the name now. I can't think what it is now, but it used to be the Regional Schools Commissioner. Except the Regional Schools Commissioner's area is so huge that they haven't got a cutting out stance of managing all the academies within that area.
30:26	So effectively, MATs are just getting away with virtually anything. Now, I'm not tiring all MATs with the same brush because there are some really, really good MATs around that are doing some really, really good stuff. But there are lots of ones around.
Sarah Chung: 30:41	Okay. So it's that accountability for possibly rogue maps then.
Peter: 30:45	There's no accountability effectively because at the moment, Ofsted only do individual schools.

30:49 So Ofsted will go into a school and a math and they'll say, "Well, you're a good, better, or indifferent." But nobody's going into the MAT to see how the MATs being run.

Sarah Chung: 31:00 Right. Okay.

Peter: 31:01 And yet the government wants to push everybody to go down the map route, and yet nobody's monitoring what maps are doing.

Sarah Chung: 31:08 So for you, then it's more a case of making sure that the accountability is in place before that ever happens?

Peter: 31:16 I think, yeah. I think there's two things.

31:18 I think things need to happen. There needs to be more accountability for Matt. I've said need to work out how they are going to how they are going to monitor multi-academy trusts as opposed to just individual schools. And also, individual schools that are thinking about joining MATs need to hear both sides of the story and not just all the great things that MATs do.

Sarah Chung: 31:48 Right. Okay. Okay. That's really wonderful. Thank you for sharing that. So now we're going to look at the eight elements of effective governance, which I'm sure you must know really well. It's kind of a words association that we're going to do or a sentence association, if that makes it easier. The eight elements of governance have been identified as essential to good governance. So in your own words, can you tell me sorry, explain to me what these mean to you?

32:18 So we'll start with A, the right people around the table.

Peter: 32:23 I think I mentioned this early on. It's having that right skill set around the table of experience. You want new you don't want everybody to be like me 30 years of governance because it's great having new people come in, they ask a question and say, "Why?" So it's a balance of years and experience and also skill sets as well.

Sarah Chung: 32:41 Okay. Lovely. Thank you. B, understanding the roles and responsibilities.

Peter: 32:47 Again, that's where you come back to making sure that governors have, firstly, good induction training. They also get given the buddy. So all our governors have a buddy, have more experienced member. And see, it's not only the induction training, but also people continue their own self-development.

Sarah Chung: 33:05 Okay. Good chairing?

Peter: 33:08 Essential. Essential. Some chairs have stayed too long or not good in the role.

33:18 Get a good chair, and things tend to happen really well and really effectively, really efficiently. Get a bad chair, and generally speaking, it leads to other problems.

Sarah Chung: 33:27 Okay. Thank you. D, professional clerking?

Peter: 33:30 Absolutely. Clerking or governance professionals, as we now call them. Again, the school I'm at, we had the Clerk was also the bursa. That thing anyway because you've got a huge conflict of interest anyway.

33:48 But I think you know I've done Clerking myself, but I think the best investment a school can ever make is to get the best governance professional they can afford. Certainly, I persuaded our school to go outside and the clerk that we've had has revolutionized things in an 18-month period.

34:08 Okay. E, good relationships based on trust?

34:13 Yeah. Essential.

34:14 Strangely enough, when I do some governor training on leadership and management, I say, "So what should the head teacher expect from a governing board?" And then we do another exercise, "What should the governing board expect from a head teacher?" And the virtually identical list. It's about commitment. It's about time. It's about trust. And all that sort of stuff. So yes, it has to be openness. It's the worst thing if things are being hidden. I worked with a head teacher once in the school who would not sign the code of conduct because it included a phrase that said, "Governments will hold a head teacher account for the educational performance of the school." And he was the head teacher.

Sarah Chung: 34:50 Gosh. Okay. And how did you overcome that?

34:54 Basically speaking, he said basically view of a school. And I sat in a committee meeting and listened to it, and I thought, "What?" And he basically speaking said in the meeting, "If you make me sign that document, I will hide stuff from you." Oh, my goodness. Well, I wasn't in that school. So there would have been a war.

Sarah Chung: 35:15 Absolutely. I can imagine.

35:20 Was your reason given, or just?

Peter: 35:21 No. As I say, I was only sitting in a governing board meeting, but I made a point to the chair. I said, "You can't do that. You can't do that." Yeah. Yeah. Goodness.

Sarah Chung: 35:34 Okay. So F, knowing the school?

Peter: 35:38 Yeah. Again, it's not just a case of rocking up at governing board meetings and listening to what people tell you the head teaching stuff.

35:43 It's a case of getting into the school and understanding and seeing for yourself what's going on and the challenges, all the

	good stuff that's going on, and not just going to governing board meetings.
Sarah Chung: 35:54	Okay. Wonderful. Asking challenging questions.
Peter: 35:59	Should go with the territory, although some governors are less comfortable doing it as others. It goes back to sort of ride people around the table. You don't want everybody that challenges all the time. By the same token, you don't want everybody around the table that's overly supportive.
36:16	You know If the head teacher says, "Jump, you don't want Governor saying how high." So there has to be that balance around the table of people who are willing to support but also ask challenging questions as well.
Sarah Chung: 36:26	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. And then having courageous conversations in the interests of children and young people.
Peter: 36:34	Again, that's about culture. Again, that's about openness. That's, again, about sharing everything. We know we're all in this together. It's no good.
36:44	The head teachers you know producing reports to governors with rose-tinted spectacles only to find out subsequently 12 months later when I've said walked in that you've actually got a shambles on your hand, but you didn't realise it or you didn't ask the right questions.
Sarah Chung: 36:56	Right. Okay. Wonderful. So now we'll move on from the eight elements, and we'll look at strategic and operational. So the line between strategic and operational can be seen as quite a grey area for some. How confident are you knowing where governance ends and SLT head teacher responsibility begins?
Peter: 37:18	Very comfortable in answer to your question...since I train people on it, and I've seen good and bad examples of it.
Sarah Chung: 37:25	Do you want to give some examples?
Peter: 37:30	It would be lovely. It would be lovely if it was a straight line. It's very wavy. When I do my strategic and vision and strategic training, one of the things I do is I give governors a little quiz to do. Is this strategic or operational?
37:47	Should governors be involved or not? And certainly when they do that, then there's a few that are clear-cut either way of them or actually you know it's probably operational, but governors are involved. So I mean, you know the day-to-day running of the school effectively is obviously operational. The setting of the strategic plan and the vision is definitely sits with governors, but there will be an operational input from the head teacher.
Sarah Chung: 38:14	Okay.

Peter: 38:14	So it's really, really important that governors don't step across the line and get involved in day-to-day stuff. They need to keep that sort of helicopter view of let's look into next year and the year beyond not what's happening today, tomorrow, next week.
Sarah Chung: 38:30	Okay. So even though there's some crossover, it's still very much in your mind. It's got to be distinct.
Peter: 38:39	Yes.
38:40	There has to be there has to be a line because from the reasons we've just said, so much as governors are not going to be going into school on day-to-day operational stuff, but they need to understand what's going on in day-to-day operational stuff to be able to do their job more strategically better.
Sarah Chung: 39:00	Okay. So it's that balance again, isn't it that we're talking about?
Peter: 39:03	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 39:03	Okay. Wonderful. So we'll move on now, looking at the impact of COVID. And as we know, it was immense, wasn't it?
39:12	Can you describe your experience in governance during this time? It was challenging.
Peter: 39:18	I think there were a couple of things. First of all, there was no getting into school. All the things I've said there was no going into school. Yeah All the meetings were held online. And I always think meetings and training is better face-to-face than in you get through the business, but it's always better when people in the room.
39:39	And thirdly, obviously, there was a lot more work to be done on risk assessments. I'd never seen as many risk assessments than I did in those first few months of COVID. And again, that's the operational strategic thing, where the head teacher was producing it and bringing it to governance to say, "This is what we're going to do with regards to getting the kids into school, and this is the risk assessments we're doing." So that was very much operated.
40:04	Although risk assessments are such and risk management and stuff is strategic, you know we were never going to be going to produce the documents because we couldn't because the operational staff know what they can make work and what they can't. But they then bring it just to say, "This is what we've produced, any comments.".
Sarah Chung: 40:22	Right. Okay. So it's all from the SLT, and then it's brought to the governing body..?...
Peter: 40:26	For the points of risk assessments about how we can get kids into school. Absolutely. And of course, there were constant reports.
40:32	I think we had more meetings, and of course, because things kept changing. So you'd make a decision at one meeting, and

	suddenly, three weeks later, the world had changed, and we had to have another meeting to deal with the latest guidance. You know Home-schooling was a huge challenge. Home-schooling was a massive challenge about how not only you know because teachers couldn't go into school to see it happening. So there was a lot of trust in parents. And some parents could do it better than others.
41:00	You know I mean, it wasn't in our school, but I remember seeing somebody on television. The lady was saying, "I have one mobile phone in the house. It's mine. I've got three kids, and I've got a mobile phone. Can't afford a computer. Can't afford anything else. How am I supposed to do it? She's trying to hold down three jobs as well. So there were some severe challenges, I think. And I think governors also became more aware of some of those things that they probably or the challenges that some households had, they'd probably never even been aware of before.
Sarah Chung: 41:35	Okay. Okay. So thinking now about your role as governor during this time, do you think there was do you think it stayed as an oversight sort of monitoring the academics and everything else in the school? Would you think there was a move towards a more pastoral role?
Peter: 41:58	I don't think governments had a role in the pastoral stuff as such.
42:05	But I think, as I said early on, they were more I think they were probably brought very much closer to what the school was doing from a pastoral sense than they ever had done before in normal times.
Sarah Chung: 42:15	Ah, right. Okay. And was there a lot of support for the head teacher during your time?
Peter: 42:21	Yeah. Yeah. I mean, the chair at the time was literally speaking constantly. Every meeting was to say to [redacted], how are you? How's it going? What can we do to help you? But not only that, that was for the meetings that benefited us.
42:33	She was also in regular calls with her to make sure everything was okay as well. So yeah, the mental health and well-being of the staff as a whole and the head teacher in particular was key.
Sarah Chung: 42:42	Right. Okay. That's wonderful. And you generally felt kept up to date by the SLT?
Peter: 42:48	Yep. Absolutely.
Sarah Chung: 42:50	Wonderful. Do you think there's anything that was highlighted by the pandemic that you felt underqualified for or undertrained for?
Peter: 43:02	I think everybody was underqualified now to deal with COVID. People were writing almost. That's the government. That's local authorities. That's schools. We were writing the manual as we went along. Were the things we could have done better?

	I can't remember now, but almost certainly. Yeah Did we learn any lessons? Yes, I'm sure we did, but hopefully we'll never have to put them into practice again.
43:31	You know Life's got back to normal. I'm pleased to say. And again, probably only I have a different approach to COVID. I think it's a case of the flu in which you just get on with it. And the quicker it gets out into the community and we all get herd immunity and just treat as a normal dose of the fluids take a couple of days off, the better. And so I think there was quite a lot of overreaction to COVID anyway.
Sarah Chung: 43:53	Okay. Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So we'll look now at training more generally.
44:00	If you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be and why?
Peter: 44:06	Induction training and make it mandatory. The problem I think I have is some areas in some schools have difficulty in getting governors, and I think they are scared that if they then put this thing out, you must have training, it might frighten people away.
44:25	But I would rather have fewer, dedicated, committed, knowledgeable governors than have lots and lots of governors that actually can't be bothered to learn what their job is.
Sarah Chung: 44:36	Okay. Lovely. So conversely, then, what in your opinion, if there is any, obviously, what is the least valuable piece of governor training?
Peter: 44:49	Think it depends on I don't think any training is not valuable.
44:56	There are some training that you will use more some knowledge that you definitely use more often than others. So if you're sitting in a finance training, then commit to, for example, you're going to want some knowledge around finance. If you are not on finance training, then you might have done some initially. But if you're not on the finance committee, you're probably less likely to keep up to date with the finance training that you need to have.
45:25	So it all develops depends on your role. Okay. So it needs to be personalised then to each governor. And also, the other really important one, apart from induction, is obviously that vision and strategy, which I don't think schools do well, because if they get that right, it makes so much easier going forward and make decision-making so much easier if they understand that.
Sarah Chung: 45:47	Absolutely. Okay. That's lovely. Thank you. So I know you know you've mentioned about the mentors and governance that you use yourself, don't you?
45:56	I'd like you to think back to your initial year of governance now. Did you feel supported?
Peter: 46:01	Was I gordon bennett, that was 1990 or something? Yes, I did. To be fair, it was a really good governing board at the time. I

think things have changed. We didn't do mentors. We didn't do formal mentors. I can remember acronyms are always a big problem when I first started. So many acronyms used in education that I can remember the first two or three meetings sitting next to a lady and every time an acronym was mentioned, I'd write it down and slide across to her.

46:29 She'd fill it in and send it. Whereas now you can go online. I mean, there wasn't even any online when I became a governor. I think that's how long ago it was. And also the NGA did some really good stuff like welcome to governance books and stuff. But yeah, in answering your question, yeah, I felt well supported. It was a good governing board.

Sarah Chung: 46:48 Okay.

Peter: 46:49 And the training by the local authority in [redacted] at the time was really, really good as well.

Sarah Chung: 46:54 Okay. So that informal mentoring and that good training set you in good stead?

Peter: 46:59 Yes.

Sarah Chung: 47:00 Okay.

Peter: 47:01 Again, from my experience, the [redacted] training at the time was very, very good. It was on a par with one of the local authorities I work with now has probably been the best local authority I've come across for delivering government training. Others are not anywhere near as good. But the problem is the governors in those area don't know that because that's all they've been exposed to.

Sarah Chung: 47:22 Yeah. Exactly. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So as I touched on earlier, I know you've mentioned that you've got mentors and governing buddies.

47:32 Do you find them useful?

Peter: 47:34 Do I find them useful? I haven't had a mentor for years. I tend to do the mentoring. So you'll probably need to ask the other people, but hopefully that hopefully they would say yes. Again, it's not something that other schools do. When I do my governor training, I suggest that you know for new governors. And most of the schools most of the people I'm talking to, they don't have that buddy or that mentoring system, but they take it back because I always, at the end of my training session, say, "What's your two biggest takeaways from this session?" And one of them is invariably, "I'd like to have a mentor or a buddy." So, yeah.

Sarah Chung: 48:08 Do you think mentors are better from within the governing body itself or externally?

Peter: 48:15 I think that can be both. So I work for one organisation where I do a lot of training and run webinars and do mentoring for governing boards because the government was handing some

	money out to local authorities. So it was free at the point of access for school. So up until it finished last year.
48:36	But for two or three years before that, I was doing mentoring of governing boards. But I think also having a mentor on your own governing board is really, really good as well.
Sarah Chung: 48:43	Okay. Wonderful. So the NGA have openly stated that they feel induction training should be mandatory, and in Wales, it already is. In your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this? I think you've already mentioned, actually.
Peter: 48:59	Absolutely. Absolutely should be main mandatory.
Sarah Chung: 49:02	Okay. Why do you feel that?
Peter: 49:05	Because of the reason I said early on, I would much rather have a smaller number of committed governors that want to learn what the job's all about and keep learning and keep improving as opposed to a lot more that don't give it to hoots.
Sarah Chung: 49:19	Okay. So for you, then it shows that commitment to the role?
Peter: 49:22	I think it shows a commitment, but why would you want to sign up for a role to be a school governor when you don't know what the role entails and you're not prepared to go and learn?
Sarah Chung: 49:32	Yeah. Absolutely.
Peter: 49:33	And that comes from somebody that I am passionate about my own self-development. If I put the sales up there, I've got loads and loads of book on management and leadership and stuff from people like Alex Ferguson, David Coultard, Alistair Campbell, Giuliani, the old mayor of New York, and people like that. So I'm passionate about my own self-development. Other people are less so.
Sarah Chung: 49:58	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful.
50:01	So then if mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see as part of the following? So content.
Peter: 50:11	Mandatory training as a whole?
Sarah Chung: 50:14	Yeah.
Peter: 50:15	I think you probably have to be careful. You didn't have too big a list. Certainly, I mean, I'll have to have a look at the list of all the training I do. But certainly, I would put vision and strategy down as one and induction as another. And you probably need another and to be fair, finance.
50:33	Because obviously, if one of the core roles of governance is a financial one, the probability of the school, then you need to have some knowledge about how school finance works.

Sarah Chung: 50:44	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So how do you think this training should take place if it was a mandatory induction training? A lot of training at the moment is through LEAs or even in school, in-house. Would you consider online training, or?
Peter: 51:03	I do it always. So I think in classroom, face-to-face training works best of all. So in a small local authority like where I do some work around Warsaw, for example, it's quite a small geographical area. So it's far easier to get people into a classroom, except for the fact, for some reason, a local authority, very low to get people into a face-to-face environment right now. So I think it's all being done online.
51:32	So even though it suits me better to do it online, because literally speaking, from 6 o'clock in the evening to 8 o'clock in the evening training course, I can sit here at 5:00 to 6:00 and walk away five past days. Whereas if I'm going to [redacted] in the rush hour, for example, I'd probably need to leave about half past four and probably don't get home until 9 o'clock on. But I think governors get a better experience, I know governors get a better experience from face-to-face training than they do online.
52:00	But then another company I work for who looks after training or the [redacted] area, it's a huge geographical area. And so consequently, that lends itself more to online training. So I think it just has to be horses for courses.
Sarah Chung: 52:15	Okay. So again, a little bit personalised to the situation. Yep. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So final one. What are your thoughts on a modulated course delivered online or in-person or hybrid, which resulted in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year?
Peter: 52:35	What do you mean by modulated?
52:38	So you may have a module that looked at strategic direction. You may have a module that looked at safeguarding. So it's taking aspects of what you need to learn as a governor and just putting it into a modular form.
Peter: 52:54	Okay. So ask me the question again. So now I understand what you mean by modulated.
Sarah Chung: 52:57	So what are your thoughts on a modulated course delivered in one of those three ways, hybrid, in-person, or online, which resulted in a certificate confirming successful completion of an induction year?
Peter: 53:13	I think you'd probably have to say, "What's the point?" Certainly, one of the local authorities when I first became a governor, I did a lot of training in [redacted], you got a certificate at the end of every training course, either presented to you there and then or sent to the governors at the next governing board meeting. It was handed out a governing board meeting to say you'd done the training. I think if governors are just asking for a certificate to prove they've done it, bears a

	question as to why they are you know the important thing is they've done it.
53:47	At the moment now with Governor Hub, you can upload all your training records onto Governor Hub. So you know if I went on a training course tonight, tomorrow morning, I can go and go into Governor Hub and say, "I've now done this training course." So I don't necessarily need a certificate. You know all a certificates is effectively a certificate of attendance. It doesn't mean you've learnt anything.
Sarah Chung: 54:11	Yeah.
Peter: 54:13	Oh, you poor soldier. Are you suffering from hay fever?
Sarah Chung: 54:15	I am. I'm very sorry.
Peter: 54:17	Go and have an antihistamine tablet.
Sarah Chung: 54:19	I've actually taken one.
Peter: 54:20	All right. Okay. Take another one and fall asleep.
Sarah Chung: 54:24	Yeah. I think I'm going to have to. Okay. So that was wonderful. We've covered everything. Is there anything else you think that I've not asked or you'd like to tell me?
Peter: 54:36	I don't think so. I think you've covered yeah, I think you structured it quite nicely. You've covered most of the I think i think I've got most of the important points out that I wanted to get out there.
54:51	As soon as I put this down, I'm sure I'll think, "Oh, I should have said that." But no, I think you've covered most of things, and so hopefully you found that useful and more response is useful.
Sarah Chung: 55:02	Oh, absolutely. Yeah. It was absolutely fantastic. It's really lovely listening to different experiences, actually. If you do remember anything, do feel free to drop me an email and just say, "Oh, yeah, by the way,".
Peter: 55:13	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 55:13	I meant to mention this. If you are interested in the results, the thesis is going to take a little bit of time.
55:20	That's about a year's worth of writing up. But I'm hoping to get out the findings a little bit quicker than that.
Peter: 55:26	Cool. I'd be happy to have a copy of that when you've done them. Just have a read-through.
Sarah Chung: 55:31	Wonderful. Okay. Well, Peter, it's been great talking to you.
Peter: 55:35	Okay. Thank you, Sarah. I hope you found it useful.

Sarah Chung: 55:38 I have. I really have.

Peter: 55:39 And good luck with the rest of all.

Ronan

Sarah Chung: 00:00	Here we go. Okay. So I'll just do a brief overview, and then we'll begin if that's right. So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I'm currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governance Association has highlighted eight elements of effective governance. During our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this.
00:29	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel you have received appropriate training to help you to address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation and duties and training. Sure. I would like to remind you as well that as stressed in the letter of participation, thankfully, you've just signed.
00:59	You are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will all be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years. And should you wish to receive a copy of the results, please do email me. Do you have any questions?
Ronan: 01:25	No. No. That all sounds pretty straightforward.
Sarah Chung: 01:28	Wonderful.
01:28	Okay. So should we jump in with something nice and easy? How long have you been a governor?
Ronan: 01:34	I've been a governor for 11 years now.
Sarah Chung: 01:37	11 years. Sorry, yeah?
Ronan: 01:39	Yes. 11 years.
Sarah Chung: 01:41	What made you join?
Ronan: 01:46	So I became a governor at the school where my son was. So I became a parent governor. I guess that was the primary motivation.
01:56	But also, a couple of my friends were school governors as well, and they said you know it's an interesting thing to do. And I think you'll enjoy it. So I thought I'd take the plunge.

Sarah Chung: 02:09	Okay. That's wonderful. So what has now, thinking back over those 11 years, what's been the most enjoyable part of governance for you?
Ronan: 02:21	Interesting question.
02:24	I think getting into school and doing the learning walks and doing the monitoring, meeting the children, meeting the teachers, you know doing the face-to-face stuff has been because you just get a really good idea of how the school works and how things kind of all fit together and then the kind of impact that hopefully you can make.
02:54	So I participated in a lot of learning walks, and I've been in for other meetings as well. So yeah. So that for me really is the interesting bit is seeing how the school works, seeing how it all fits together, you know the logistics of it as well, seeing the children in between lessons, in between classrooms, assemblies, lunchtime as well.
03:25	So yeah, that for me is a really interesting bit to see it all happening.
Sarah Chung: 03:31	Okay. Thank you. And in interest of looking at both sides, what has been the least enjoyable part of your governance?
Ronan: 03:41	Yeah. Yeah, good question.
03:49	I guess, well, with the difficult conversations. So I had a while ago in my previous governor role, I had to have quite an uncomfortable conversation with one of our governors who wasn't turning up for meetings and what have you, and had to sort of persuade her that you know this wasn't quite the right thing.
04:20	And I've also had to sit on a couple of disciplinary and complaints panels as well, either as a member or as chair. They can be pretty uncomfortable as well. Yeah Very emotional. It can be quite confrontational as well. So yeah, I find those very, very difficult regardless of the kind of training and all the experience you can bring to them.
04:49	Yeah, they're hard. Unfortunately, we've got another one coming up as well. So I'm not looking forward to that, but you've got to take the rough with the smooth, I guess. It's all part of the role. So you can't just do the good bits. You've got to do the uncomfortable bits as well.
Sarah Chung: 05:06	Okay. Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. So now we'll move forward a little bit and we'll look at the vision, ethos, and strategic direction.
05:16	So as we know, the NGA has described governors as being responsible for ensuring vision, ethos, and strategic direction are there. The following questions now, we're going to explore your understanding of them. So if we begin, we'll look at in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?

Ronan: 05:40	I mean, really, it's the long-term direction of the school.
05:45	In conjunction with the SLT, it's where we want the school to be in kind of the next five to seven years' time, and then very broadly speaking how that looks. So inevitably, it's got to be quite a broad vision. But that's something that you work through in conjunction with the SLT, and then cascade that down into manageable chunks and manageable steps, which then informs the school improvement plan, and so on and so on.
06:18	So yeah. So that for me, obviously, one of the most important things that we do as a governing body. But that, for me, is that long-term aim, long-term direction. That's kind of key.
Sarah Chung: 06:30	Okay. Okay. Thank you. So using your own experience now as a government, can you explain how you've shaped your school's strategic direction?
Ronan: 06:40	Yeah. Interesting question.
06:42	So at my previous school, we had two or three strategy days where the governing body sat down with the SLT and really kind of thrashed out where we wanted the school to go and how that impacts on the children and you know where we want the children to be when they leave school and what kind of preparation.
07:16	So at my current school, we've not really had the opportunity to do that because of COVID. We keep having a strategy day in the diary and it keeps getting postponed. We've just hired a new head teacher who starts in September, so then that will be the opportunity for us once he's embedded is to sit down and talk strategy with him. I think we've got lots of ideas about where we want the school to be.
07:41	And I think we're broadly speaking, we know where we want the school to go, but it's just then articulating that, making sure that that fits with the head, and then making a plan to go forward for that.
Sarah Chung: 07:54	Okay. So with the strategic direction, is it something that you feel governors all play a part of developing, or is it more SLT-led?
Ronan: 08:06	I mean, ideally, it should work in partnership. Obviously, governors are strategic, so this is a big part of what they do.
08:15	But then it's got to be done in conjunction with the SLT because they're the ones that will own the strategy, and they're the ones who will implement it. So it's no good governors coming up with a strategy that the head and the SLT aren't sold on because it's just not going to work. So it's got to be a combination. But I think in terms of strategy, I mean, the reason that you become a governor and the reason you become a head are usually pretty closely aligned.
08:45	You want to do the right thing by the children. You want the children to be able to be the best they can be. So in terms of

	strategy, it's pretty straightforward. Obviously, longer-term now, you've got the added complication of multi-economy trusts and accountisation. So I'm a governor for grant-maintained school. So that's one of the big ongoing conversations around strategy and academisation.
09:16	But again, I think the direction of that is being set by the government, and it's something that you can't avoid these days. But it's got to be a partnership, in effect.
Sarah Chung: 09:31	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So in your own words, and again, could you describe what is meant by a school's ethos?
Ronan: 09:40	So the ethos, really, for me, is how really people behave.
09:48	So the strategy is around the direction. And the ethos is how we expect people to behave. So it's very much capture in one or two sentences how we expect people to conduct themselves to teachers, SLT, governors, children. And obviously, you want everyone to be respectful of each other. You want everyone to be tolerant.
10:15	You want people to strive to be the best they can be. So that kind of drives the ethos of the school. And that really obviously goes hand in hand with the strategy. So the strategy is where you want to go. And the ethos really is sort of the behaviours designed to help you get there. That, for me, is how they fit together.
Sarah Chung: 10:39	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So can you tell me how you shaped your school's ethos and how it was developed?
Ronan: 10:46	Yeah. Again, interesting. We've not managed to do that at the current school, and that would be something that we do with the head. My previous school, as part of the strategy day, we would look at ethos, and we came up with a one or two-line statement in terms of how we expect people to behave and how we expect people to conduct themselves, and then disseminated that throughout the school.
11:14	So used posters, made sure the teachers were using the right language in class, and disseminated that down through the classrooms, making sure that's how the staff conducted themselves, and talking about the ethos and behaviour all the time through assemblies as well. So really, it's cascading it right down and then breaking it down so the children understand the appropriate way right from foundation through to year six, you know how the school expects them to conduct themselves.
Sarah Chung: 11:49	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So in your own words now again, can you describe what is meant by vision?
Ronan: 11:58	So the vision really goes hand in hand with the strategy. So the vision is, again, a statement, a couple of lines, in terms of, right, you know what's the vision for the school? Where do we want to where do we want to be? What do we want the

school? Where do we want the school to be? And how do we want it to look and feel?

12:22 And all these things kind of fit together, and all these things kind of bleed into each other in a certain extent in terms of vision, strategy, and ethos. But the vision is very much in five to seven years' time, what do we want the school to look like? The children that leave? How do we want them to behave? How are we going to equip them to deal with life after school?

Sarah Chung: 12:49 Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So moving on now to pupil performance. Can you explain a little bit about how your governing body oversees pupil performance?

Ronan: 13:02 Yeah. So I mean, there's several ways that we do this. And the main way is data. So the school has three data points every year at the end of the three terms.

13:16 And I got anybody who scrutinise that data and then break it down into the different cohorts. So you have it by year group, then cohorts, boys, girls, pupil premium, SEND, double disadvantaged, and so on. And then you're looking at that versus the targets that the school set itself in the school improvement plan. So you're looking for improvement against that.

13:40 And obviously, improvement versus previous year, and then looking at benchmarking against similar schools locally and nationally. And then what you also want to do is answer the you know how do you know question. So data is one thing. It's like, "Okay. Well, how do we know?" So then it's about your own monitoring. So each governor has got a monitoring subject that they do on an individual basis, and mine is writing.

14:09 So I meet virtually with the writing teacher every term to talk about improvements in writing. And then we do learning walks as well, where we go on site once a term. And we've just managed to start doing that again after COVID. So we did that a few weeks ago, and we went in to see Phonics. So we went to see Phonics across reception year one and year two.

14:36 So that was very much looking at what the school tells us is happening is actually happening. That's done in conjunction with teachers. And that was really good. As I said earlier, that's one of my favourite bits of the job. So you're going in. You're talking to the children. You're looking at the children as they're doing their learning and different cohorts of children. So the ones that need more help being taken out of class, the ones who have got greater depth, you know being stretched a bit more in class, and seeing how that works across the different year groups.

15:09 And so that is another way. Obviously, we've got the STEP report as well. So the schools improvement partner from the local authority. We get her reports and look at the work that she does. So she recently did a deep dive on maths. So that was very useful for us in terms of getting a really good idea from a local authority perspective, how the school's doing.

15:39 And obviously, the questioning through the full governing body and then through the committees as well. So I chair our standards and effectiveness committee, which basically looks at data and the curriculum. And then we'll do deep dives through that committee in terms of the specifics around the school improvement plan. So for example, writing is one of the school's weaknesses.

16:07 So not only will we do that through the monitoring I do as a writing governor, but also through standards and effectiveness as well. So you're always looking to triangulate everything that you do. We've got a science learning walk coming up next week, and that will also involve doing a book look as well to look at the writing and the work that children do in their books.

Sarah Chung: 16:28 Okay. That's wonderful. Thanks. Again, now we're going to look a little bit more generally. Do you feel able to challenge on your governing body?

16:38 Can you ask challenging questions?

Ronan: 16:41 Yeah. That's a really interesting question. And I think if I'm totally candid, I think as I mentioned earlier, we've got a new head coming in September. The current head who's leaving at the end of this term, I think she struggled with challenge from governors, which then made it quite awkward for governors to challenge because it wasn't the right environment.

17:10 She clearly was uncomfortable with challenge, didn't invite challenge, and when she received it, could be quite dismissive of it. Obviously, when you're challenging from a governor perspective, the teacher in the head are always in a position of knowledge. They will know more than you without a doubt.

17:31 Yeah So you're kind of relying on them to be able to not help form the question, but to help with the answer because that's our job to challenge, but we're not experts in education. So it can be quite off-putting, especially when you've got new governors, as we have, if they see questions being asked of the head and the head being dismissive or defensive or even slightly aggressive, then that will stop the whole challenge process.

18:05 And it's also when you're challenging virtually, it's a very different experience from challenging face-to-face because, obviously, when you're challenging someone, it can be quite awkward if you're doing it face-to-face. There's certain things in terms of body language and what have that can make it a lot more comfortable. When you're doing it virtually, it can be slightly more not aggressive, but gladiatorial, if you like.

18:34 So I think that will help as well. But I think certainly for new governors and we have several new governors at the moment, it can be quite daunting when you're talking to the head who's got X amount of years, education experience behind them, and you've just become a governor with a few months experience. You don't really know what you're doing. And then you're

	saying to this person, "Well, why isn't this like this and all the rest of it?" So I think it can be quite tricky.
19:01	I'm reasonably comfortable with it now because I've done it so long, and I do have a reasonably good idea of what I'm talking about. And then you can also when you're doing learning walks and things like that, that's always an opportunity to challenge as well when you're walking around talking to the teachers. It's a slightly more conversational type process rather than more of a kind of a holding to account type meeting.
19:34	But yeah, I think it can and some governors will embrace it, and other governors won't. And you often get that. You get a cohort of governors in a group who will be quite comfortable, challenging, and others who just won't. But they're good at doing other things. So as long as collectively you're doing it, I think it works.
Sarah Chung: 19:57	Okay. That's fair. So another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for the management of the staff.
20:06	How confident are you in this area?
Ronan: 20:11	Yeah. I mean, that's really interesting. So I will be sitting on the head teacher's performance management panel from September. And I've done that before. And it's interesting because certainly, as part of the headage performance management in the previous school, we asked for anonymised appraisal documents not just because of the pay awards, but also to hold to account as well.
20:48	Where it really comes into its own is when you've got underperforming teachers. And in my previous role, we had a couple of those. So you're talking to the head about what's the plan for this person. Have they improved? And if they don't improve, what's the next steps, and so on. So again, you know I did that as chair. And I think as chair, you can have those conversations. It all revolves around how strong your relationship is with the head.
21:17	I had a very good relationship with the head. So we could have a really honest, open conversation. And it became less about you know what are you going to do about this person who's not very good to, "Okay. So what's the plan? Let's talk about it. What do you think? What are the implications? And what are the wider implications? Obviously, very difficult to just get rid of teachers.
21:46	So I think, certainly, as chair and head, it's much easier to have those conversations than as the full governing body. You've also got to be mindful. You know You're talking about people's careers here. You're talking about people's livelihoods. You know You've got to be sensitive to that as well. A lot of the data, obviously, that we get is anonymised anyway.

22:06	But that can sometimes hide the fact that you are talking about an individual with a family and a career and someone who I don't know anyone who goes into teaching to be just okay. I think everyone goes into teaching to do the best possibly can for the children. So when they're not doing that, then I should imagine they're putting themselves under a lot of pressure.
Sarah Chung: 22:31	Yeah. Yeah. It must be quite difficult from a governor's point of view then to...
Ronan: 22:37	It is.
22:38	And you've also got to be very wary that you don't fall into being more operational than strategic. It's always a fine line that you have to walk. And I think you know if you start talking about individual teachers, I'd say from a chair's perspective, you can do that. So if you're meeting with the head every couple of weeks, you can have those conversations. I think as a governing body, it's a little bit different because you don't want to you don't want to well, you don't want to start trying to run the school because one, you're not qualified to do that, but that will start to annoy.
23:14	And then that's when the relationship starts to break down with the head and the SLC.
Sarah Chung: 23:19	Okay. Thank you. That was a really lovely explanation. So as well as setting the ethos and strategic direction of the school and also ensuring a clear level of accountability in pupil performance and staffing, probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight of your school. So how comfortable are you within that situation?
Ronan: 23:42	So at my current school, we have a finance committee that meets regularly and really does the deep dive on the finances. Finances is a big area of concern for lots of schools at the moment. And our school is no different. We've sort of had to juggle. We've not had a deficit budget as yet, but we're having to juggle with that in the future quite possibly.
24:11	So that's really tricky. We've just had a new school business manager as well. Our previous one has just left the school, which is a shame because she was fantastic. She was very experienced and worked very well with governors, actually. So you know she always responded to our questions however staffed they might appear. So it'll be interesting to see how the new school business manager gets along.
24:38	But that relationship is clearly very important. We also were very lucky. One of our governors who chaired that committee was a qualified accountant as well. Unfortunately, he's leaving at the end of this academic year, and we're trying to replace him at the moment. But that is a very big area of focus at the moment. I know the school has applied for a number of grants via the New School Business Manager, and we've just received one from one of the local colleges.

25:10	It's quite a significant amount of money, which I'm not quite sure what we need to use it for, but that will help hugely. But yes, you know and the systems are set up in the school. So if it's over you have to get three quotes for work that's over a certain amount of money and anything that comes through that's significant, needs to get governor approval.
25:37	So there's lots of checks and balances in place to make sure that things on the straight and narrow. One of the things that we've since discovered is obviously ordering things online, for example, through Amazon. You have to have a credit card to do that. So the school have got a credit card.
26:03	But we need to make sure that that doesn't get abused so that we've set up some specific processes around that as well. Again, we need to be careful that we're not tripping over into operational versus strategic tasks.
Sarah Chung: 26:22	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So do you think it helps then to have somebody with an external qualification as chair of that committee?
Ronan: 26:32	I do, yes. Yeah. Without a doubt. I just think it helps. Local authority and schools is very different from company finances. And my previous governing body, I sat on that finance committee. And I'm a [redacted] by trade and I actually place accountants. So I know a bit about how it all works.
27:00	So I think in terms of just understanding budgeting, forecasting, how all the numbers fit together, and the checks and balances and the governance that a lot of businesses have around finances just hold you in good gives you a kind of a good background. I don't think it's essential, but I think it really, really helps. And you can talk the same language as a school business manager.
27:32	Schools run a different system in terms of how they're actually accounting, how they do their accounting versus standard accounting in commerce and industry. But yeah, I think it is really useful, actually.
Sarah Chung: 27:48	Okay. That's fantastic. Thank you. So can you think of a time that you've challenged anything financial?
Ronan: 27:57	Yeah.
28:02	I think recently. Yeah. So earlier on this year, we needed to do some recruitment for some teaching assistants to come in and work one-to-one with certain pupils. We were hoping to get some local authority of funding for those pupils.
28:25	So the recruitment was in anticipation of that. But we were looking to my school was looking to recruit a whole bunch of people at the same time. And a couple of other governors and I suggested, "Well, why don't we stagger it? Because otherwise, we'll have a big hit to the budget. If we stagger it, then we can put it over two years because the school budget

system runs from March to March rather than the academic year.

28:58 And also recruitment-wise, it's going to be very difficult to hire four or five TAs in one go because it's difficult to find the people. So we challenged us into the school business manager on that. And I think she had that thought in the back of her mind anyway. So she agreed, and we ended up staggering that. We've recruited two or three, and then we're putting some off until after Easter, and then the rest off until September.

Sarah Chung: 29:29 Okay. Okay. So that challenge then, you feel it was met quite well.

Ronan: 29:34 Yes. Yeah. So the school business manager, the old school business manager, she was very experienced. She was very comfortable with challenge. She was very open. She had a really good relationship with the chair of the finance committee. So yeah, she saw the value of governors and also saw that you know the governors are there not to tell you off, but you know to help.

30:05 And sometimes you know other people can come up with things that you've not thought of yourself. So I think, yeah, that worked pretty well.

Sarah Chung: 30:14 Okay. Fantastic. So now we're going to move on a little bit again, and we're going to look at the eight elements of effective governance. So I'm going to read to you the list of the eight. It's a little bit like a word association for the description. So in your own words, can you explain what each of these mean to you?

Ronan: 30:35 Sure.

Sarah Chung: 30:36 So I'll start with A, which is the right people around the table.

Ronan: 30:41 Okay. Yeah. So basically, that's having governors with the right skills. So you obviously want those well, obviously, a governor who's got some sort of finance experience. Ideally, you want a couple of governors like that. If you have someone, a couple of governors with HR experience. If you have a couple of experienced governors that have been governors elsewhere, that's really good.

31:08 Governors that I mean, obviously, you want a combination of, depending on your instrument of governance, parents, co-opted governors, and what have you, staff governors. But if you can get a mixture of people that are working and people that are maybe retired as well, so then people retired can probably get into school a bit more easily. So it's making sure that you understand what sort of individuals you need, what sort of skills, and what sort of availability.

31:35 And then you have them you then go out and find those particular governors to fit that profile. So I think that's really important. I'm the development governor as well. So

	encourage governors to go and do training. So again, when you recruit governors, you need them to have a certain background. And then once you're there, you need them to go off and do the training. Now, everyone doesn't have to do all the training because that would be impossible. But as long as collectively, you've got it covered.
32:02	So two or three governors have done the training, and almost collectively, you've got it covered, then it works.
Sarah Chung: 32:10	Okay. That's wonderful. So B, understanding the roles and responsibilities.
Ronan: 32:17	So yeah. So basically, understanding what the role is as governor. And then if you're focusing on any other things as well. So for example, we've got a safeguarding governor. So they have to understand what the role entails as a safeguarding governor.
32:33	We're quite lucky. We do have some good job descriptions that the local authority have developed and job descriptions from the National Governors Association as well. So with those job specs, you can sort of identify what it is you need to focus on and then just be aware of the other parts of your role. So you'll be given a monitoring subject to make sure that you're arranging your monitoring once a term. Make sure that you're doing any learning walks.
33:04	So we try and have six learning walks a year. Again, we don't expect all governors to do those all the time, but as long as you're doing a couple of those, be responsible for your own training and so on as well.
Sarah Chung: 33:16	Okay. C, good chairing.
Ronan: 33:20	So yeah. So our chair, currently, he's quite new. He's about 18 months into the role. I joined the governing body to mentor him as I've been a chair previously.
33:32	And you know we're lucky because he's turned out to be really good. But yeah, good sharing is essential. One, not just for the meetings. You need to make sure that meetings are kept to time and don't stray off into other areas and kept focused on the topic.
33:54	But also in terms of going out and finding new governors, talking to existing governors, making sure that everyone's aware of their role, meeting the head once every couple of weeks as well, and building that relationship, and doing the extra, extra stuff as well. A lot of the kind of complaint stuff and what have you does fall to the chair. Again, meeting parents, making sure that the communication with all stakeholders and parents, children, local community happens as well.
34:28	So yeah, having a good chair, you know it's a big job. Absolutely essential.

Sarah Chung: 34:34 Okay. Professional clerking.

Ronan: 34:38 Again, we're really lucky. We've got a very good clerk. She's clerked for several schools. And yeah, she's very good at making sure that all the clerking stuff happens to her agendas and what have you, but also is very knowledgeable around points of governance, again, around complaints, around disciplinaries, around areas that you're not covering regularly.

35:13 So yeah, so our clerk is very good. Again, that's absolutely essential. I think you've got to have a good clerk. She keeps us organised. Everything's kept online where we can access documents, previous documents. When we get offstead coming in, she'll be very, very useful in making sure that we've got the right documentation to show offsed in terms of our reports, our minutes, agendas, monitoring, and so on.

Sarah Chung: 35:38 Yeah. Okay. That's fantastic.

35:42 F, oh, sorry. No, E, good relationships based on trust.

Ronan: 35:47 Yeah. I mean, really important. I've talked a bit about the relationships that certainly the head and the chair have to have, but also with the governing body with each other, but with the head, but with the teachers as well. So as I say, you know you have to work very hard to make sure you're walking the line between operational and strategic, but also that you're holding people to account, but in the right way.

36:11 Otherwise, you know that trust can very quickly break down and it can turn into a more adversarial type relationship, which you don't want it to be. So trust is really important, especially as we're now getting back into schools to do the monitoring. You've got to I know from our first learning walk, there was a lot of concern from teachers. Why are governors coming in? What are they looking for? You know I'm really uncomfortable about this.

36:39 But once we did it and explained to them what we wanted to do, and we went in there and it was a big success, you know they understood what we were all about. So that trust is really important, but it has to be built really face-to-face. Very difficult to do it virtually.

Sarah Chung: 36:57 Okay. Okay. F, knowing the school.

Ronan: 37:08 So again, I talk about monitoring and doing that on-site. To really know the school, you've got to be on site. I think there's only so much you can do virtually. And just the last few weeks we've been in school, it feels like quite a lot, actually, because we had the head teacher's recruitment. So I was there for two days for that. Deputy head teacher's recruitment. I was there for a day for that.

37:37	We met and met school council, and we had a learning walk as well. And then we had our first full governing body meeting on site for the first time in 18 months or whatever it was, two years. And you just get so much more feedback around the school by being there on site. So knowing your school, clearly, as a governor, it's essential you've got to. And the best way to do that is to be on site.
38:05	But then you've got to make sure that you know the right things. I think for some parents, it can be difficult for governors. You know They talk a lot about the class that their child's in or their friend's children and what have you. Those are there to represent all the children. So again, it's making sure that you know you know the school, but you know the right things about it.
Sarah Chung: 38:30	Okay. And asking challenging questions. Yeah.
Ronan: 38:36	Yeah. So I guess we've talked a bit about that. And I think getting back into school, that would become easier. I think with a new head teacher, that would be a different experience. And I think we know with a new head teacher, there's every likelihood that Offstead will want to come and see us over the next 12 months. So again, making sure that we're showing challenge through what we do is important.
39:03	So we definitely need to lift their game on that, but I think we know that, and we're working on it. Okay. And then having courageous conversations in the interests of children and young people? Yeah. And again, you know another really interesting question. And certainly, I've done that in the past, and certainly with one thing coming up in the future, I think that's going to be quite tricky.
39:34	So yeah, there will definitely be difficult or courageous conversations. But yeah, that's important as well. And I think one of the most important things we do as a governing body is kind of the whole safeguarding thing. And that's quite often where you have to have those courageous conversations where you know if you think something needs to be reported, it's no good saying, "Well, you know someone else will do it. That's not good enough.
40:01	You have to do it yourself." So I think that's really important in terms of the whole kind of courageous conversations.
Sarah Chung: 40:10	Okay. Okay. That's fantastic. So moving on again. The line between strategic and operational now, it can be seen as quite a grey area, can't it? And so how confident are you in knowing where governance ends and SLT responsibilities?
Ronan: 40:33	Yeah. That's a really interesting question. And I think I'm pretty strong at that, but that comes with experience. I think when you're a parent governor, as I said, it's much harder because of your connection to the school. And I think continually, you've

got to work at it. And again, the beauty of working as a collective.

41:02 If you're having a conversation and someone else in the governing body is present, they say, "Well, actually, I think you have you know I think you're straying into more operational there," then I think that's important. So yeah, I mean, it is a difficult line, and I think it's a difficult line to get right. And as a government body, we're always working at it. I'm always working at it.

41:30 And I think you've just got to be continually aware of it. I don't think there's any kind of training or anything that you can do, really, because every situation is different. Yeah So you just need to make sure you're thinking all the time, right? Is this operational? Is this day-to-day? Is this impacting on the data they run in the school, or is this truly strategic?

Ronan: 41:55 Okay. That's wonderful.

41:58 So the impact of COVID-19 now, we know that it was immense in education as everywhere, really. Yeah Can you describe your experience of governance during that time?

Ronan: 42:11 Yes. So I joined Present Going Body in November 2020. So first 18 months of meetings pretty much were all virtual.

42:26 So it was all online, telephone conversations. I found it really, really difficult because I didn't know the school. I didn't know the children. I find it really difficult to get a handle on things because I didn't know the cohort. I didn't know I didn't know the community. I didn't know how to locate it in you know yeah. I couldn't pin it down, basically.

42:56 I find it very difficult to develop relationships. I was quite lucky in that I knew the clerk. That was quite useful. And then the chair and I, we spent quite a lot of time on the phone discussing different things to gradually build things that way. But with the other governors, you know I didn't get to meet them, and you're not going into school, so you're actually doing slightly less meetings.

43:24 So one of the challenges of governance is it's very up and down. You could do nothing for several weeks, and then you have a cluster of meetings over two or three weeks, and then you have nothing for a little while. So it's kind of almost dipping in and dipping out, which can make relationship-building quite tricky. So yeah, it was, from a governance perspective, really difficult, difficult to hold the school to account because, one, you don't have any data. You only have internal data because there's no SATs going on.

43:52 But you know the school is working as hard as they can. I mean, they really did surpass themselves as teachers in making sure that the school was open and they were providing for the children. So it didn't feel right to really hold the school to account very rigidly during that time because they had so many other things to do.

44:17	So it really was a you know a lot of our meetings were focused around COVID and bubbles and COVID numbers and working from home. But I think, certainly, I felt as a governor a bit redundant because there wasn't a lot you could do. You weren't talking about strategy because the school was too focused on getting through the next day. You couldn't really do much hold into account because of the situation.
44:49	And around financial property, well, of course, you were still working around that. But that was a bit of an unknown because the school was getting a couple of grants from the government, government. But also, you know they had to have so much money for cleaning products, for hand gel, for all these kind of things. So yeah, I felt it was you know I had a lot of experience, and I really struggled during that time.
45:17	So yeah, it was yeah, it was difficult.
Sarah Chung: 45:21	Is there anything you feel that could have helped in terms of training, or was it literally just the situation?
Ronan: 45:28	I think it was literally just a situation. I don't know you know without going through it. I mean, looking back on it now, you know with hindsight, if you could have prepared governors, but no one could have prepared us because no one knew.
45:42	So to no, I don't think i think the chair worked pretty hard to try and keep you know the governing body together. We lost quite a few governors during that time. And I think you know one of the things that keeps going and body together is that sort of sense of community that you're all working for the same thing and you're all going in the same direction. But to achieve that, you have to be with each other.
46:09	You have to be face-to-face, you know just you know before meetings, after meetings, having a joke, talking about what you did at the weekend, or whatever it might be. It's just those kind of social conversations that keep you glued together. You're not having any of that, virtually. So no, yeah, I don't think there's anything really that could have been done to prepare governance for that.
Sarah Chung: 46:37	Okay. Okay. Thank you.
46:39	Were you generally kept up to date by your SLT in terms of what was happening at the school?
Ronan: 46:45	As much as they could. During COVID, you mean?
Sarah Chung: 46:47	Yeah.
Ronan: 46:48	Yeah. As much as they could. Yeah. And obviously, the chair had more regular updates because he was meeting virtually with the head. But yes, I think so. But again, how much do we need to know as governors? Because you know having the COVID figures and understanding the bubbles and the rest of it was great.

47:09	But not all we can do with that. And we didn't want to increase the work burden for the school because they were working so hard to make sure the children's education I mean, clearly, it did suffer, but suffered as less as it possibly could. So I know some of the SLT would be going out knocking on doors of people, the children who weren't coming to school and sometimes delivering food parcels and stuff like that because the family were struggling so much.
47:38	So you know asking them for lots of numbers and stuff like that when you're thinking, "Well, I should be doing this," just doesn't seem right. So I think we had enough information that we needed. But I think there were more pressing priorities without a doubt.
Sarah Chung: 47:58	Okay. Thank you. So now I want you to think about training in a more general sense in the UK, particularly England, perhaps.
48:09	If you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor, what would it be and why?
Ronan: 48:16	Well, the essential training has got to be safeguarding. That is the most important thing. All governors should have that, and all governors should do that in their first six months, and then should do it every couple of years. So yeah, safeguarding, without a doubt, is the priority.
Sarah Chung: 48:35	Okay. Lovely.
48:36	And so conversely, then, in your opinion, what is the least valuable piece of training for governors and why?
Ronan: 48:44	Gosh. I'm not sure. I mean, the local authority provides all our training, and it's really good. Yeah So I choose the things that are, one, of interest to me, but two, relevant for what I'm doing.
49:04	So I'm going to the training for the Head Teacher Performance Management panel. There's some training coming up for that. I've done the training before, but I need to make sure I'm keeping up to date with it. So you know there's stuff that I'm not necessarily interested in, like health and safety, for example, but our health and safety governor would be. So it's a difficult question to answer, really. I mean, there's lots of training out there, not just from the local authority, but from the NGA.
49:35	They do lots of online stuff. And I know we sign up to school bus and stuff like that as well. So there is a lot out there.
Sarah Chung: 49:47	Okay. That's lovely. Thanks. So now I want you to think about your initial year of governance, 11 years back. And did you feel supported?
Ronan: 49:58	No, I didn't.
50:05	So when I joined, the governing body wasn't particularly strong. The chair wasn't particularly strong. It was a kind of dysfunctional governing body. And it took me ages, really, to

understand what being a governor was all about. Governance has moved on an awful lot since then in terms of training, in terms of understanding, and in terms of the role of the chair.

50:33 The chair of the government body that I joined had been there for 20-plus years. You know Lots of kind of more old-school governors have left now, have moved on. For them, it was you know about having a cozy chat and some cake every half term or something like that. So no, yeah. My first year was a great experience, but I think it's probably a lot better now.

Sarah Chung: 51:02 Okay. Did you have a governor mentor or a governor buddy?

Ronan: 51:07 I did have a buddy, yes. But he was okay. He wasn't a huge help. Bless him. He was okay. Yeah. But I did have one, yeah.

Sarah Chung: 51:22 Okay. And from what you were saying, he was okay, was it more a case of that, like you mentioned, the old-school sort of chats?

Ronan: 51:33 So he sat next to me for the first couple of meetings and tried to explain things, but that was it. It would have been useful to meet for a coffee somewhere, to kind of give me an overview of the school and stuff like that, to talk about how the committees work, how governance works, any questions I had, and then to have sort of maybe before each meeting for the first few meetings, to have a debrief or a briefing beforehand.

52:10 Obviously, there's a routine that you get into. So there's an awful lot more he could have done, I think. But then again, this was a while ago, and things weren't as well-developed as they are now. He didn't stay a governor for very long, actually. He was only a governor for another two or three years, then he left, so.

Sarah Chung: 52:31 Right. Okay. So do you think then, in general, what are your thoughts on mentors for governors or chairs or clerks?

Ronan: 52:40 Yeah. I think it's I think it's almost essential, really. As I say, I'm a mentor to our chair at the moment. And in the early days, that helped him a lot. Obviously, now I've become more of a sounding board for different things. But I think for all new governors, they should have definitely a mentor or a buddy.

53:05 And I think where we can try and formalise what a mentor can do would make it easier. Because certainly, when I became mentor to the chair, it was a little bit difficult in terms of how to support him because, obviously, at that point, he didn't know what he didn't know. And I had to resist just to go download everything. It was also done virtually as well.

53:35 So it's quite difficult. You know It would be nice to go for a coffee and talk things through, but we couldn't do that. So we had to do it either on the phone or on Teams. And I know we've got some very experienced clerks in the local authority, and they will mentor new clerks, and that program works really

well. I think that's a little bit more formalised because, obviously, they're paid.

54:02 But I think the mentor program for governors is really, really important because it's such a difficult it's a difficult role. It's difficult to get your head around initially. It can be quite isolating. And I think to have someone there just to say, "Yeah, you know you're doing fine. Keep going is important.".

Sarah Chung: 54:22 Okay. So in that case then, do you think mentors should be internal within the governing body or external? Or is there no difference?

Ronan: 54:33 I think internal is better because then you can talk specifics about your particular school. If that's not possible, then external. I think internally, you're probably going to have more buy-in. And as a mentor, you'll probably be able to give up more time than external. One of the challenges around governance is everything happens at the same time for everyone. So you can't be in two places at once.

55:04 But no, I think and I've done a little bit of mentoring. We've had two or three new governance, and I've had a couple of conversations with them about different things to try and help them as well. And because I know you know the challenges and I know this school, we can have a more informed conversation.

Sarah Chung: 55:24 Okay. Wonderful. So we're on the final couple of questions now.

55:30 So the NGA have openly stated that they feel that induction training should be mandatory within the first year. And in Wales, it actually already is. In your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this and why?

Ronan: 55:43 Yeah. I mean, I think that's really important. You can't become a governor without the mandatory training. Again, our local authority are really good at that. They run two mandatory training introduction courses that all governors are booked on.

55:58 And I saw some stats recently that I think 96 or 97 percent of governors attended those. And they have to attend those. I think it's in the first six months. So yes, I think that's really important. And the local authority and the chair pushes to make sure that happens. But yeah, I think it is absolutely essential.

Sarah Chung: 56:22 Okay. So following on from that then, if mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following?

56:29 So content?

Ronan: 56:34 Well, I think a general overview of what being a governor's all about in terms of the three main focuses, if you like, and help around challenging, challenging questions, monitoring, the kind of basic stuff, understanding what governors do, what value

	that they bring, and supporting their governing body in terms of how the chair is running things.
Sarah Chung: 57:07	Okay. Lovely. So how do you think that training should take place in I mean, for example, a lot of it at the moment is through LEAs and in school, in-house training in schools. Do you feel online might be beneficial?
Ronan: 57:22	I personally don't like online training. So I've done a bit I've done quite a lot of it. My preference is always face-to-face because I just think, one, it just suits my learning style a lot more.
57:34	And two, you get to meet other governors and have chats about things, and you just develop your network, but you also get different ideas from different governors when you're having a chat over a coffee or something like that. So yeah. I mean, our local authorities doing all their training virtually at the moment, which means you've got no travel time, which is good. But for me, in my learning style, I don't think it's as effective.
Sarah Chung: 58:03	Okay.
58:04	So in that case, what are your thoughts on a modulated course delivered perhaps online, perhaps in person, or even a hybrid, which resulted in a certificate confirming a successful completion of an induction year?
Ronan: 58:18	Yeah. I think that'd be a good thing. I mean, I know our local authority provide training certificates when a course has been done.
58:27	So I think something like that to kind of formalise the training would be a really good idea because not only have you got evidence for the governing body and for Ofsted that you've done the training, but it is really well, it's essential, really, for new governance to have that kind of formal training alongside the training they'll get informally as well from the chair and the governing body.
Sarah Chung: 58:55	Okay. Well, that was the final question. So thank you ever so much for that.
Ronan: 59:00	My pleasure.

Sara

Sarah Chung: 00:00	Right. Okay. So firstly, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I am currently researching the importance of training for creating an effective governing body. As you will be aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted eight elements that create effective governance. So during our interview, we will discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this.
00:25	Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training. I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation you have signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date.
01:00	Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised, and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years. Should you wish a copy of the results, please do email me. Have you got any questions before we begin?
Sara: 01:23	No, not at this stage.
Sarah Chung: 01:24	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. Yeah. As I said, if any questions pop up as we go along, do feel free to stop me and ask.
01:32	So should we begin sort of very gently with how long have you been a governor?
Sara: 01:38	About 12 years.
01:40	Okay. What made you join?
Sara: 01:45	I was looking for something to get involved with in the school, and PTA wasn't really my thing. And I had three young children at the school and just thought I could keep my brain active.
Sarah Chung: 02:01	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So what has been the most enjoyable part of your governance?
Sara: 02:11	I think that no two years are the same. You know It's always different. It's always challenging. It's always moving forward. And I'm always learning things, I think. And you know it's nice to be able to see change over time in the school that I'm in.
02:28	So because I've been governor there for a long time, it's nice to see some of the things that we've had as aspirations become reality. So yeah, that's been the best things, I think. And just seeing staff grow and those sorts of things, yeah.

Sarah Chung: 02:45 Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. And so conversely, then, what is the least enjoyable part of your governance?

Sara: 02:55 Well, I think because I've been chair for the last six years, that's often been challenging.

03:02 And I think the biggest challenge has been I think the first thing is having a good clerk to work alongside has been really at times challenging because it's quite hard to find a good clerk. And the second thing would be engagement of other volunteers. So people come onto the governing body for lots of different reasons.

03:26 And sometimes their expectations of what governance is doesn't always match what perhaps is required of the role. So it sometimes takes quite a long time for that either to align or if people are kind of you know sometimes for one's a better way of putting it, you sometimes end up with people on the board who don't really want to do governance, really.

04:00 And yeah. And I think that's a consequence of people coming on for you know lots of different reasons. And sometimes I'm not willing to undertake training or won't read the papers or don't respond to emails and those kind of things. So yeah, sort of I don't know if that's sort of common, but that's my experience.

Sarah Chung: 04:23 Okay. Thank you. So the NGA described governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction.

04:32 The following questions are going to explore your understanding of all three vision, ethos, and strategic direction. So in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?

Sara: 04:46 I mean, for us, it's always been very much about sort of looking forward and trying to anticipate challenges and risks that we might encounter and to try and negotiate those things before they become problems, but also about sort of being aspirational for the children and for the school moving forward.

05:11 And for us, that's always been through the school development plan and having a kind of three to five-year strategy, which takes into account kind of the cohort of children that we've got, which is always changing. So yeah. And also, part of that is responding to what's happening nationally in terms of what's coming down from the Department of Education because that often sort of acts as a kind of pressure to move in a certain direction.

Sarah Chung: 05:46 Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So using your own experience now as a governor, can you explain how you've shaped your strategic direction?

Sara: 05:58 I mean, it was mostly through governor meetings, really. And you know as a governor, you're never making any kind of decisions alone.

06:12	You're always making decisions with your group of governors, with your board. And I'm just trying to think about the question. I guess you know it's through collaboration that that's happened through sort of back and forth with the senior leadership team, kind of but I would say that's developed over time, our understanding of that because I think that we've moved progressively towards a kind of more collaborative way of doing things through meetings and through responding to documents that were given.
06:52	Whereas I think that probably five years ago, it was a bit more sort of staff-led that a vision would be given to us to consider. So I don't know if that's what you mean. I'm finding it a bit difficult to answer the question, really.
Sarah Chung: 07:10	No, no, no. It was absolutely great. Thank you. So when you've been set in the strategic direction, have you found anything difficult?
Sara: 07:21	Have there been any difficulties or uncertainties whilst trying to set it? I think, well, it's been quite difficult over the last couple of years with COVID because, in a sense, anything that we had sort of as a plan was kind of hijacked by the pandemic, really. And so things have not looked as we wanted them to have got in the way. So that's definitely been a kind of spanner in the works.
07:53	And I think that sometimes I think sometimes we feel that we're going in a certain direction, and then often directives or policy kind of will push us in a slightly different direction. So sometimes you end up having to focus on things that perhaps you hadn't expected to focus on. So I can't really think of a good example for that, but I've definitely felt that.
08:24	And things that have gotten in the way. Can you repeat the question?
Sarah Chung: 08:30	Yeah. Absolutely. So have you faced any difficulties or uncertainties whilst trying to set the strategic direction?
Sara: 08:39	I think the other thing is that sometimes the direction that the board would like to go in isn't necessarily always the direction that the teachers want to go in or the staff.
08:53	And I think that sometimes the SLT can be slower to react than perhaps we would like them to be on certain issues. And I think that's partly because of the workload that the staff are under. And I think that they're often focused on teaching and learning rather than perhaps some more kind of high-level things.
09:21	Perhaps like, I don't know, future forecasting of you know strategic direction in terms of finances or something like that. But there's only so much you can do in a certain timeframe. And sometimes we'd like things to move a bit faster than perhaps they do. So I think that's a challenge.
Sarah Chung: 09:42	Okay. Is there anything you've noticed that could be improved by training? In terms of strategic direction? Yeah.

Sara: 09:51	I think it would be great if training gave more examples, I think, of what that actually looks like on the ground. Because often, strategic direction, it's just kind of words. And I think it's hard. I think some of my governors get it because in their day jobs, they bring their skills from elsewhere, from business, where they're very used to thinking about what it means to make a strategy and what that might look like in terms of their own business or job.
10:28	But I think that for some of the parent governors, for instance, they sort of come onto the governing body more with some of their lay skills, which might not necessarily be in business. And some of the other governors may not necessarily be used to kind of thinking about strategy. So it can be quite difficult to bring everybody with you because not everybody has a full and deep understanding of what strategy means.
10:56	So I think that it would be good for NGA or our local LA to give more examples of what that strategy might actually look like and sort of a case study or something like that, I think, would be really helpful.
Sarah Chung: 11:12	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So now, in your own words, can you describe what is meant by a school's ethos?
11:22	Well, I think in really simple terms, the kind of feel and experience of the school and its sort of core values is how I kind of put and sort of how the core values are kind of lived out.
Sarah Chung: 11:38	Yeah. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. And again, could you tell me how you've shaped or helped shape your school's ethos? How has it developed?
Sara: 11:50	Well, at several points in time, we've kind of had a workshop or kind of sessions to look at what those core values are that underpin everything that happens within the school. So we're a community school, so it's not underpinned by a particular faith, but our school is very embedded in our local community, and we have a certain kind of demographic, and that has changed over time.
12:28	But I think it steers us in a certain direction. And I think that there are certain values that we hold true. So our school sort of motto is learn to grow together. And so that kind of underpins everything that we're kind of doing.
12:49	And we kind of celebrate diversity, sort of inspire curiosity, and all of those things kind of try and come out sort of at each level, trying to get worked into what we're doing, into policies and into how we approach everything. So things like parental engagement. Sorry, I don't know if I've answered the question. No, the question is...
13:21	Oh, yes. How has it been worked out? In a kind of collaborative way, really. And by consultation with different groups, so governors, parents, staff, all having a kind of shared vision for what we hold dear in a way.

Sarah Chung: 13:40	Okay. Wonderful. And are you happy with your ethos?
Sara: 13:49	Yes, I think so.
13:50	Yeah. Yeah. I would say I was on board with it, yes.
Sarah Chung: 13:56	Okay. Wonderful. So is there any further training again around ethos that you feel would help governors?
Sara: 14:06	I think most governors have an understanding of what the school ethos is.
14:14	I think the question about whether or not you like it or if you're on board with it, I think is I think some governors would like the ethos to be slightly different to the ethos that we've got or would like to push things in a certain direction, but no individuals can do that. So it's obviously the board and the school and collaboration.
14:40	So I think we have quite a lot of sort of training on that sort of thing. And yeah, I think most of my governors and myself, I would say for myself, I think we get enough training on that or understand that quite well. So I don't know. I don't think so. I think the training we get, I think, is sufficient to understand what has to be done in a way.
Sarah Chung: 15:12	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So now, can you explain in your own words what is meant by vision?
Sara: 15:20	That seems a bit connected to ethos, really. Well, I guess your vision is where you want to go and where you want to head. It's kind of part of the strategic thinking, I feel.
Sarah Chung: 15:33	Okay. Are you happy with your school's vision?
15:41	I would say that I think I'd like it to be a little bit more aspirational than it is. Not that it's not aspirational, yeah but I think i think children are capable and have I kind of think if you don't set the bar high enough, then yeah, I just feel sometimes that we kind of make we sometimes make assumptions about things and perhaps we should be a bit more aspirational.
16:15	Yeah. I don't really know how to put it, really.
Sarah Chung: 16:19	Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thanks. So moving on now, can you explain a little bit about how your governing body oversees pupil performance?
Sara: 16:31	Let me think. So we discuss pupil performance in our committee meeting, which is a kind of standards teaching and learning kind of type committee.
16:47	So most of the time, the head teacher will give us some data drops on how things are looking, but also give us some narrative around how certain groups of children are doing and how certain year groups are doing overall and also in different subjects. And then we kind of triangulate that by making our

	own visits into school and seeing initiatives and interventions at first-hand.
17:17	And that's really helpful to kind of because I think the sort of remit of Ofsted has slightly changed, and they're now less concerned with data than they were sort of five years ago with the new inspection framework. So I would say that performance data has become slightly less of a focus for us and the sort of overall experience and all of those things that are in the EIF, the sort of intention, implementation, impact sort of stuff that's coming more to the fore for us.
17:56	So it's becoming more important than ever to sort of see what's happening first-hand. And so I think I'm just thinking how we think about performance. Yeah. I think that's how we are you talking about academic performance?
Sarah Chung: 18:13	Yes.
Sara: 18:13	I'm presuming. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. So I think that's the main two ways, either through information that's given to us and seeing that for ourselves first-hand. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 18:25	Okay. Wonderful. So how comfortable are you with understanding data presented to you?
Sara: 18:32	I feel quite comfortable with it. So I think speaking for other governors, I would say that they're less familiar with what's being presented because they have less of an understanding of the background to what's being presented to them. So over COVID, it's been very difficult to get into schools.
18:54	And we've had a number of new governors. So it's been difficult for them to kind of get a real hand unless they were parents of children in the school. It's been hard for them to get an understanding of the curriculum and sort of performance of people. And obviously, there's been so much home learning. And so that's sort of changed a lot of sort of what was kind of governor bread and butter of going into school and seeing what was happening and receiving kind of data because there's been no proper external data since 2019.
19:28	So it's been much more difficult in a way. But sorry, I've forgotten again what the question was.
Sarah Chung: 19:39	How comfortable are you with understanding the data presented to you?
Sara: 19:43	Yeah. So I think I'm quite comfortable because I'm quite familiar with as chair, I'm much more familiar with what's going on in the school. So it's quite easy for me to understand the data.
19:52	And also because I've been a governor so long, it all feels quite comfortable for me, but I do know it can be quite challenging for other governors joining the governing body because they don't necessarily have that education background as well. So they might not understand what

	phonics tests are, what's involved in that, or what the different key stage one, two tests are. So yeah. So just reflecting there a little bit on not having that educational background.
20:24	Even when you've got people that have come in with skills, do you find that the lack of understanding of educational you know situation can impact that understanding of data?
Sarah Chung: 20:37	Definitely. Yeah. Definitely. Okay. That's fab. Thank you. So do you feel able to challenge or raise questions when necessary?
Sara: 20:46	Yes. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 20:47	Okay.
Sara: 20:48	Yes. But I would say there's a caveat to that, which is that I think that that's been built over time.
20:55	So that ability to challenge because I think certainly in previous years, under a different head teacher, it was quite a defensive kind of culture. So it's kind of a culture that's been developed through trust and through sort of careful challenge rather than kind of, I think, through understanding as well of what the stresses and strains and background and sort of experience of the children is.
21:27	So there's lots of different components to being able to provide that challenge in a way.
Sarah Chung: 21:32	Okay. So now I'd like you to reflect and describe possibly, in your own words, a time that you have challenged and whether you felt the response received was adequate. Did it address your concerns?
Sara: 21:48	Yeah. So there was definitely a time when I felt the consistency of teaching across classes was perhaps not what we'd kind of expected.
22:04	And it was challenged over it was challenged over a period of time, really. And changes happened as a result. So yeah. Yeah. So could you repeat the question again?
Sarah Chung: 22:25	Yeah. Absolutely. So can you describe in your own words a time that you have challenged?
22:31	Do you feel the response received adequately resolved your concerns?
Sara: 22:37	Yeah. So I do feel that it adequately resolved the issue, but I would just say it took time and kind of well, it was a situation which needed to be carefully kind of you know managed in a way, so. Yeah.
23:00	So in terms of how it had to be carefully managed, was it a staffing issue? Yeah. So partly a staffing issue, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 23:12	Yeah. Okay. Okay.

Sara: 23:14	I think there were lots of components to it in a way. There was sort of the support of the teacher, the dissemination of kind of planning within the year group and kind of CPD needs.
23:34	So this is what I'm saying. There's kind of quite a few components to it which take time to unpick. So yeah. How long, roughly, did it take to resolve? Probably to fully resolve, I would say, a couple of years. Just because it wasn't a situation it wasn't a kind of situation where it was necessarily impacting hugely on the children.
24:05	But it was impacting we could see that it could have the potential to impact sort of in the longer term. So it was something that needed to kind of be dealt with. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 24:19	Yeah. Okay. Okay. Wonderful. So can you now think and describe a time where you felt uncomfortable challenging?
Sara: 24:37	In relation to teaching and learning or the curriculum?
Sarah Chung: 24:42	Well, any aspect of your governance. So if you can think of something.
Sara: 24:50	Yeah. There has been one occasion where I've tried to challenge something, and that's been quite difficult.
25:01	And again, it relates to a staff member who is a key part of the school who perhaps wasn't delivering what they were expected to deliver, and it impacted on our ability to govern the school, so.
Sarah Chung: 25:20	Right. Okay. So were they an SLT member?
Sara: 25:25	No. Well, they're a site manager.
25:30	And in terms of looking at health and safety of the school, so they weren't sort of they weren't delivering key reports to us at times when we expected to receive them. So in terms of considering what sort of training needs for the staff, you know in terms of health and safety and things like that. And again, it was a kind of slightly complicated situation.
26:00	So it felt that, in a way, it crossed over a bit more into operational aspects. Because in a sense, some of it was a kind of performance management issue for the SLT, for the head teacher. So it impacted on our ability to govern, but in a way, it wasn't for us to manage it. So if you get what I'm saying.
Sarah Chung: 26:26	Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah.
Sara: 26:29	So in a sense, we kind of needed the situation to be dealt with, but we weren't the people to deal with it. We were just kind of getting a bit of the impact of an ongoing situation.
Sarah Chung: 26:45	Right. Okay. Okay. So that discomfort that you felt in challenging there, why do you think that was?

Sara: 26:59	I think because it was quite a tricky issue. So it was genuinely quite a tricky issue. And we were kind of feeling the impact of something that was happening outside the meeting in a way. Because in a sense, it was for someone else to deal with, not for us to deal with, but it was impacting on us.
27:24	So there was a sense of frustration that perhaps it should be being dealt with a bit more swiftly and that it was kind of holding us back.
Sarah Chung: 27:38	Yeah.
Sara: 27:39	So yeah.
Sarah Chung: 27:40	Okay. Okay. So there was an element there then of it being completely out of your hands, and it was just.
Sara: 27:46	Yes. I guess so. Yeah. So it was a situation where it kind of needed time.
27:54	But in the meantime, it was kind of impacting on what we were trying to do. Because it's really sometimes we were getting papers tabled in a meeting, which was not then possible to do due diligence over the papers or to scrutinise the information that was being given to us and to then appropriately challenge. Or if the papers didn't turn up at all, then, again, we were unable to kind of move forward.
28:26	So yeah. So I think then there was, therefore, this kind of question of whether things were being whether the head teacher was managing appropriately or whatever, so. But to some extent, it's still an ongoing situation for us at our school.
28:49	So in a sense, I would say that if you're writing about this, that some kind of careful kind of yeah, I wouldn't want anyone to read anything that could highlight who they are or.
Sarah Chung: 29:05	Oh, no. Absolutely. I tried to make sure I don't use any....
Sara: 29:09	No, I know. I'm sure I've done research myself, so I know that you kind of can anonymise things and change details.
29:16	But I would say that it was as you kind of put it, it made us feel uncomfortable because it was outside our control. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 29:28	So it's not completely resolved, but is it?
Sara: 29:32	No, it is better. And we've managed to I've managed as chair to kind of try and help deal with the ongoing situation, which has helped.
29:44	But I think sometimes things just take time to work out.
Sarah Chung: 29:52	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. Okay. So another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for management of staff, which leads on nicely, doesn't it? How confident are you in this area?

Sara: 30:10	I feel quite confident now after quite a long period of time of being a governor and of being chair to challenge.
30:19	But I think I found that a bit difficult to begin with because I wasn't quite sure how far I could challenge. I think as a governing body, some people are good at being able to challenge in a way that doesn't upset people and other people aren't. So I've had to pick up quite a lot of situations where people have said or done the wrong thing.
30:48	So I think it is quite a difficult, tricky area, actually. I mean, obviously, we have each year the head teacher's performance management, and that can be a very robust conversation because you're there to do that thing. But I would say that that's kind of a moment in time. And you might have a kind of mid-year meeting, but it's then just only those kind of points where you can really challenge and then perhaps think about how you can try and change things.
31:23	But again, I would say it's something that takes time, so.
Sarah Chung: 31:28	Yeah. Okay. Okay. Let's see. So we talked, obviously, you mentioned briefly then the head teacher's performance management and things. What methods are used to examine the head teacher's management of staff within?
Sara: 31:46	That's a good question. I mean, I think we get a flavour of what's happening behind the scenes.
31:54	So through our resources meetings, we have a section, a sort of standing agenda item, which looks at kind of personnel type issues. So then we'll hear about sort of movements of staff and who's kind of resigned or who's staying on for another year or you know who's decided they want to move on. We hear about staff appraisals, not the details of them, but that it's happened and what tools they use to do that.
32:26	So we have some of that information. I think we don't I think it's an area that perhaps don't have as much of a handle on as perhaps some other areas because in some ways, it's sort of well, it is quite operational because it's between the head teacher and her staff. And we've kind of delegated that responsibility to a certain extent to the head teacher to kind of manage internal performance.
32:56	So is that kind of what you were thinking about or?
Sarah Chung: 33:03	Yeah. No. Absolutely. Yeah. Just generally your thoughts around it.
Sara: 33:08	Yeah. Yeah. I would say we don't get that much training on it either. So I was just thinking some of your questions about training needs. I think you know our local authority provides us with training on head teachers performance management.
33:23	But apart from that, we don't get very much input on kind of that side of school life, really.

Sarah Chung: 33:33	Okay. Okay. So do you find it difficult then to know whether you've got the right staff, or is that something you feel lies with the head teacher?
Sara: 33:44	I don't think it lies exclusively with the head teacher. I think we get an indication of how things sort of we can read the temperature of how things are going by just staff turnover.
33:54	That's one of the kind of indicators that we've kind of looked at across the years. So we've got a really stable, steady, dedicated, loyal staff, and we provide them with quite a bit of flexibility in some ways, and they're extremely dedicated to the school. So there's kind of a bit of give and take, which I think helps maintain staff, morale, and.
34:20	I think I'm involved with some other schools as well, and they have a much higher staff turnover. So I've always felt that if things weren't right in terms of the feel or the I feel that we might have more turnover if things weren't quite right in the school. And we always seem to not particularly struggle to recruit staff, although there's been some issues recently with the supply of staff.
34:57	We've always attracted good candidates when we've had jobs advertised. So I always feel it must be quite an attractive place to work if we're still finding fairly easy to recruit, so. But I think also I'm just thinking about it now. You know We do staff surveys and think about staff well-being and sort of ask about workload and things like that.
35:26	So I kind of feel that if there was anything that was kind of not going right, we would probably pick up those things as well, so.
Sarah Chung: 35:37	Okay. So you talked about allowing your staff some flexibility. What other developmental rewards and arrangements do you have in your setting?
Sara: 35:57	That's a good question. I don't know, actually. That's a really good question. I think I'm not really very aware of that because it often happens and we don't necessarily get told about that. Yeah I mean, we do have all the usual kind of you know kind of things like fruit tea and coffee and you know kind of, I don't know, staff events.
36:23	And I'm just trying to think. You know There seems to be quite a good ethos. And people are always encouraged to kind of be extending themselves and take up opportunities. But yeah, it's a good question. I don't know, actually. I need to think about that now. I need to I think yeah, I don't know. Beyond what I've kind of already mentioned, I don't know. I kind of have to think about that one.
Sarah Chung: 36:52	Okay.
36:52	That's wonderful. We can come back if it helps.
Sara: 36:54	Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sarah Chung: 36:55	Yeah. Thank you. So as well as setting ethos, strategic direction of the school and also ensuring there's a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil performance and staffing. Financial probity must clearly be displayed. How comfortable are you within this situation?
Sara: 37:17	I think of all the areas, I'm less confident because it feels like such a responsibility.
37:25	And I think that there are definitely people who are more comfortable with financial things than I am. And you know because we have people on the board who, in their day jobs, work with numbers on a daily basis. So I feel that it's something that I don't necessarily need to know in the same sort of depth that they do.
37:55	So I think knowing that there are other people who are more skilled at this area, I've taken all the training that I've been offered, and I can look at a budget sheet, and I can understand what's going on. But I think when it comes to being able to really interrogate and question things, I probably have less confidence than some of the other governors that we've specifically recruited to think about the finances of the school.
38:26	So yeah.
Sarah Chung: 38:28	Okay. So can you explain how you as a governor ensure that the school budget is well managed?
Sara: 38:37	Me personally or just our governors as general in general?
Sarah Chung: 38:42	Well, I suppose both. A little bit of both, really.
Sara: 38:45	Okay. So I mean, so we have regular meetings every term on the finances and in our kind of resources committee.
38:57	And we look at budget monitoring reports. We have narrative around those figures and those sheets. We have kind of terms of reference for each of our committees which spell out exactly what aspects we're going to look at term by term and what tasks we're going to carry out. So our finance governor will meet with our school business manager on a really regular basis to discuss how things are going and how things are looking.
39:30	Obviously, each year, we have to submit not only a one-year budget, but a three-year budget to our local authority. So we always have specific meetings to look at how that's all looking and sort of thinking about how different aspects impact on the budget. So how you know staffing is going to impact, how the curriculum is going to impact.
39:54	You know We always do we have lots of kind of checks and balances in place to make sure that we're looking at what we need to be looking at. So. And then kind of constantly looking at our policies to ensure that we're doing all the things that we should be doing and covering all the things that we should be doing. And you know we're completing the school value

standards document every year. And you know so I guess that because we've got a very specific cycle of review of everything, I think we all feel quite confident.

Sarah Chung: 40:27 Okay. Okay. Wonderful. So can you give any examples of questions that have been raised during financial meetings?

Sara: 40:36 Yeah. So at the moment, our school has so the last budget we submitted last year had a deficit for year two and three on the kind of future planning.

40:54 So we raised questions around how sustainable that was. And so therefore, how we were going to raise how the school was going to raise income, how the school was going to make cutbacks. So just sort of raising sort of quite specific questions around that.

41:15 And then we formed a working party to really interrogate that much more, which led to the school undertaking sort of some aspects of integrated curriculum financial planning. So yeah, I mean, we ask questions sort of at various different levels.

41:39 So we might ask questions about the spreadsheet and say, "Why is that number this when last year it was this?" And you know we might ask you know when we're recruiting, for example, at what level are we intending to recruit because that will have an impact on salary or whatever. So I think we ask a variety of questions.

Sarah Chung: 42:02 Okay. Wonderful. So generally, when you're raising the questions or making that challenge, how are they received by the head teacher?

Sara: 42:12 Usually well. Often, we always have our school business manager present in our finance meetings. So both the head teacher and the school business manager can answer those questions. So I think we feel fairly confident, challenging about the finances. And I think that's because we have people who are used to making those kind of decisions in their day jobs.

42:37 And so I think the only thing that holds us back well, not holds us back. But one thing that can be a challenge is that those people that have come onto the board with skills from elsewhere often don't understand the structure within which you work as a school. So again, it goes back to that kind of understanding of education.

43:03 So we've had governors come in who say, "Oh, can't the local authority give us a bit more money for this?" And you're like, "Well, no, because we've had our delegated budget, and there isn't more money available for that." So no. But I don't have that understanding of the way that school finances necessarily work, and it takes some time for them to learn that.

43:25 Or sometimes when we've thought about a particular project, somebody who's come from the business world will say, "Oh, well, can we hire somebody to do a kind of project plan for that?" And we'll say, "No, we don't have the money to hire a person to plan the project. If there's any planning, it will be

done by us," kind of thing. So they don't necessarily understand the constraints within which the school is working, I suppose.

Sarah Chung: 43:50 Okay. Wonderful.

43:52 And training, in that case, how do you feel training would benefit them?

Sara: 43:59 So I think our local authority is excellent at providing training on financial aspects, but governors don't necessarily take them up. And I think it's often assumed that they kind of know and understand, and sometimes they don't.

44:19 And actually, they would benefit from more training because I think that school finances is quite a you know I think it is an area where the training can really make a difference. So our local authority offers training on kind of financial management for governors and sort of various aspects of that. So those sort of workshops where they kind of show you a budget sheet and kind of show you how to look at it and what the different columns are.

44:50 And so it's quite I think I feel that everyone would benefit from going on it, but at the moment, there's no kind of powers to say you've got to go on it because people are governors, and there's no sort of top-down directive to say, "You must complete this training." So yeah.

Sarah Chung: 45:09 So I think you briefly mentioned then that some people almost don't see that they have a lack of understanding.

Sara: 45:17 Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 45:19 Is that the main reason, do you think, for the lack of attending training, or is that?

Sara: 45:25 I think people are just so pushed for time that they don't often prioritise the training. So I think i think training has been a bit easier in our local authority because of COVID. And that's because everything has moved from being face-to-face to being online.

45:50 So I think and the timing at which the training was delivered was always kind of 6:30 till 8:00 or 6:00 till 7:30 or 7:00 till 8:30. And that was often a very tricky time for people to make it across to where the training was. And I think that put people off attending. So I think everything kind of being on Zoom has been much easier for people to access the training.

46:18 But I still think that there's kind of I think there are people who are willing to do the training, who want to and I think this all comes back to the motivation for wanting to be a governor in the first place. In my observation, over 12 years, there are some people who want to do everything they can do and will give up their time and will give their time to becoming a really good governor.

46:45	And because things change over years, you know kind of responding to changing training needs. And there are other people who don't. And you don't necessarily know when you take people on board which of those two people you're going to do. But that's just been my experience. Maybe other people's experience has been different.
Sarah Chung: 47:07	Okay. Okay. That's absolutely brilliant. Thank you. So we're going to move on again now. We're going to look at the eight elements of effective governance.
47:16	So we know they've been identified as essential to group governance. So we're going to do a sort of word response here. I'm going to tell you one of the eight elements, and then if you tell me what it means to you, that would be great. So we'll start with A, the right people around the table.
Sara: 47:42	What does it mean to me?
47:45	I think it's the most crucial thing about your governing body, having the right people around the table. And I think what it means to me is having the right people with the right skills, with the right enthusiasm and passion and energy to what's being asked of them.
Sarah Chung: 48:05	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. And B, understanding the role and responsibilities.
Sara: 48:17	Sorry. I'm not quite sure what you're wanting when.
Sarah Chung: 48:24	Oh, when I read the element of effective governance to you, if you could tell me what it means to you. What it means to me?
Sara: 48:32	Do you mean how I understand it or?
Sarah Chung: 48:38	Yeah, I suppose, yes.
Sara: 48:39	Yeah. Okay. Okay.
48:41	So sorry. Remind me what it was? It was something to do with was it training or something?
Sarah Chung: 48:48	No. B is understanding the roles and responsibilities.
Sara: 48:58	Yeah. I mean, I think understanding the roles and responsibilities just means understanding the responsibility you have in your role as a governor.
49:09	And well, just kind of responding appropriately to that. Just sort of accepting that with that responsibility will come certain things, like putting in a certain amount of time into the role or whatever.
Sarah Chung: 49:31	Okay. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So C, good chairing.
Sara: 49:40	Yeah. I mean, I think good chairing is crucial to keep everybody on task and to ensure that the cycle of governance is kind of carried out and that you don't get sidetracked into

	issues which are, in a sense, not part of the remit of being a governor.
Sarah Chung: 50:03	Okay.
50:06	D, professional clerking.
Sara: 50:10	I think this is I personally feel very passionately about this. I've worked with three different clerks, and it's really difficult to get a clerk. And I feel good clerking is crucial to the success of your governing body, is what I would say.
50:34	Just to keep everything on track, to carry out a lot of the compliance and procedures and you know to ensure all of that background to being able to govern is taken care of.
Sarah Chung: 50:50	Okay. Wonderful. E, good relationships based on trust.
Sara: 50:56	Yeah. Again, I think this is really crucial. And I think that.
51:04	It's really important to have good relationships between all the governors and between the governors and the SLT and also that you have good relationships between everybody and your clerk. I think that ensures everything kind of just works more smoothly, I think, if you have that in place. But I don't really know if I'm answering your question.
Sarah Chung: 51:31	No, you absolutely are, actually.
Sara: 51:32	Okay.
Sarah Chung: 51:35	So F is knowing the school.
Sara: 51:41	Yeah. Again, I think well, all of these things are so crucial, and they're all so linked with each other. Yeah I think knowing the school is really important because you have to understand the context within which the staff are working and the pupils are attending the school and the context of the children's lives who are attending the school as well.
52:04	It's all related, isn't it? And yeah.
Sarah Chung: 52:13	Okay. That's great. G, asking challenging questions.
Sara: 52:22	Yeah. I mean, there's always been this thing of being the critical friend, and I don't really like that, really, because I think friend is the wrong word, really.
52:37	And I just don't like that phrase, critical friend. But I think being able to ask challenging questions is, again, it's crucial because you're not just there to kind of rubber stamp things. You're there to kind of challenge and interrogate and to encourage and champion. And I don't know, to sort of, in a way, act as a foil to the head teacher in a way.

53:09	And also to help them well, I think to take some responsibility as well because I think it's very hard for the head teacher to be in that role. It can be quite a lonely role. So I think governors who are there not just challenging. The flip side of challenge is support. So I think, yeah, that's how I would understand it, really.
Sarah Chung: 53:38	Okay. Wonderful. And H, having courageous conversations in the interest of children and young people?
Sara: 53:49	Yeah. I think there's not enough my response to that is to that phrase. And thinking about it as part of one of the aspects of governance is that, in a way, there's not enough time often to have as many of those conversations as you would like to.
54:07	Because although children are at the heart of everything, often individual children or children, it can kind of be lost in the sense that as a board or as a governing body, you're kind of more remote from that. And certainly, over the last two years, we've been much more remote from that because we've not been as visible in the school, and we've not been so engaged with the pupils, and we've not attended events and those things.
54:38	So that's yeah. Can't remember what the two was. I'm terrible. I just start rambling off.
Sarah Chung: 54:47	No, it's absolutely great. It was just about having courageous conversations in the interest of children and young people.
Sara: 54:53	I think we often have courageous conversations in the sense of challenging. But I think sometimes that can I think sometimes you don't have as many conversations about being aspirational for children as you might like to have is what I would say.
55:12	My reflection would be.
Sarah Chung: 55:13	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now, we've already discussed, haven't we, that the line between strategic and operational can be seen as a bit of a grey area for some.
Sara: 55:23	Yeah. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 55:25	How confident are you in knowing where governance ends and head teacher SLT responsibility begins?
Sara: 55:31	Again, I think I'm quite clear as chair and being a quite experienced governor.
55:38	Yeah But I often find that my governors really struggle with this, and particularly governors, not necessarily the parent governors, but governors who are parents or who have children at school often struggle with it. And I think also governors who haven't got a vested interest in the school sometimes struggle with it because they sometimes overstep the remit of being a governor and want more control over some of the operational things.
56:17	So I think i think from what I've observed over the years is that that struggle or that tension is it can often be that

	understanding is often very well served by training. So I think those governors I've seen who've really taken on board training get that split between operational strategic.
56:49	But then sometimes it also comes down to people's particular motivations to come into being a governor. So sometimes people have come into being a governor specifically because they would like to change operational things. So yeah. Or come in with a particular mindset of my child's experience has been this. Therefore, I would like this to change, so.
Sarah Chung: 57:13	Okay. So almost their own agenda then, have they?
Sara: 57:16	Yes. Yeah. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 57:17	Okay.
57:18	So you're saying about the wanting to change the operational aspects. Can you think which operational aspects they were challenging or trying to change?
Sara: 57:33	I can't think of any specific things off the top of my head just that are examples right now.
57:39	But in the past, we've had situations where perhaps a governor has had a child with special needs, and they had perhaps felt that their experience hadn't been entirely positive, so wanted to be part of the governing body because they wanted things to be better for other families. But that often went beyond the kind of thinking about everything from a kind of governor point of view.
58:13	So yeah, yeah. I can't think of any active examples.
Sarah Chung: 58:20	Okay. No, that's wonderful. Thank you. So the impact of COVID-19, it's been quite immense, really, hasn't it?
Sara: 58:28	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 58:29	Can you describe your experience of governing during this time?
Sara: 58:33	Because I was chair of governors.
58:36	I felt that I had to spend a lot more time governing than I did before because there were quite a lot of challenges and times where there was a need to consider new policy. So often, policy was delivered by the Department of Education at short notice, and things changed very rapidly.
59:06	And because there was a lot of confusion and a lot of things which were unknown at certain points in time, it meant that often I was spending time with the head teacher trying well, we were trying to get our heads around what was happening and what the implications of that was and therefore what needed to be done or what needed to be set up or making decisions around things.

59:35	So often, the head teacher we were reflecting back and forth on how certain things would be best done or best delivered. So for me, personally, as chair, it meant I spent a lot more time kind of in a sense. Being slightly more involved in operational than I would normally be as well, although and then often then feeding back things that had to have a decision from the governing body.
01:00:06	And obviously, governance changed quite a lot during that time because people couldn't get into school. So often, I was the only person who was talking to the head teacher about certain things or whatever. So it had a huge impact, really. And the way we worked as governors changed completely you know because we went online, and then that took a while to kind of figure out. And yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:00:35	So how did you communicate as governors?
01:00:37	And I know you said you're online. Was that via a certain platform, or?
Sara: 01:00:42	Yeah. So initially, I was speaking to the head teacher by phone disseminating information via email. But then when our meetings moved online, we moved to we were using Google Meet from the beginning.
Sarah Chung: 01:01:01	Okay.
Sara: 01:01:04	And then so we moved to completely virtual meetings, so.
Sarah Chung: 01:01:09	Okay. Did you feel that your head teacher or SLT in general kept you up to date?
Sara: 01:01:16	Yes. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:01:18	Okay.
Sara: 01:01:19	Very much so.
Sarah Chung: 01:01:20	And did governing during a pandemic highlight any areas that you felt under qualified or undertrained for?
Sara: 01:01:32	Now, in my particular experience, no. Because my background is that I used to be a doctor, so.
01:01:41	But I felt that I could understand quite a lot of the information that was being delivered with some limits to that. But I know for other schools, it was I think the fact that the school was dealing with a kind of medical infection control situation, I think, was very challenging and quite scary, particularly in the early times.
01:02:07	So I think that our situation was not maybe typical because perhaps we had some I had some more personal knowledge to bring to bear into the experience. But I think we all felt that we were always on the back foot in the sense that things were just changing so rapidly.

01:02:33	And often, I think the most awful thing for us, for myself and the head teacher, was the fact that I would often learn about policy change through Twitter at 6:00 p.m. on a Friday night because that's when the director had come out. And then it was public knowledge, and then we had parents expecting certain things of us, which we hadn't necessarily been able to prepare for.
01:03:03	So actually, we ended up experiencing, I think, more challenge and negativity than actually needed to happen if we just had some forewarning of what might have you know if we'd have had information before the general public could have been really good.
01:03:26	So I think that whole situation was extremely challenging for us as a school because I mean, for instance, the whole situation around you know who was a key worker and therefore whose children would be able to access childcare within a situation where we were struggling to kind of support that kind of provision yeah given that staff had COVID or whatever.
01:03:56	I mean, that was an extremely challenging thing that we had to sort of put into place very rapidly, but it would have been better if we had more pre-warning of things, in a sense. Even though it was a rapidly changing situation, it still would have been good to have more pre-warning of things.
Sarah Chung: 01:04:16	Okay. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now, thinking about training more generally, if you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be?
01:04:27	And why do you think this is essential?
Sara: 01:04:40	That's a really good question, and I don't know if I've got an answer. I mean, the way I feel is that I think that every governor should have to have proper training.
01:04:54	And I think the induction training, although it covers kind of you know things in the basics of the governance handbook and you know our local authority has fantastic sort of governor CPD. But the issue is my governor's actually committing time to undergoing that training.
01:05:19	So I feel my personal feeling is that there should be a kind of compulsory kind of four-week kind of you know sort of succession of trainings on the different aspects of governance. So actually having not just a kind of quick intro to what it is to be a governor, but something which is quite structured so that people can have a session on school finances.
01:05:49	People do get a session on understanding the curriculum rather than that kind of being optional because I've had governors who have been governors for three or four years who still don't know what the competency framework is.
Sarah Chung: 01:06:02	Oh, okay. Yeah.

Sara: 01:06:04	Or just have no idea what's in that document because even though I've said it a million times, even though they've heard about it, they still don't actually know what's in there.
01:06:15	And I might say something like, "Oh, we're doing the terms of reference," and you know we have to have a finance governor, and they'll say, "Oh, how do you know we have to have a finance?" Because it's in the competency framework. And they'll go, "Oh, right. Okay." So I'm just saying because there's no onus to attend it, I think some people don't. And then they're unprepared for the role. So yeah, that's my personal feeling anyway.
Sarah Chung: 01:06:43	That's wonderful. Thank you.
01:06:45	So thinking about it now from a different aspect, what is your opinion the least valuable training that a governor could have?
Sara: 01:07:03	I don't know. I mean, I've always found that any training which has case studies or scenarios in it is really helpful.
01:07:18	And I mean, I don't think there's any training which I thought is kind of like the worst training or training that I shouldn't have got. But I do feel that training, which included more kind of real-world illustrations would be really helpful. And often, sort of CPD is presented as a kind of bunch of PowerPoints and with a kind of list of directives of what we should and shouldn't do.
01:07:48	But often, there aren't enough real-world grounded examples of in this school, this was the challenge. And I know that MGA is trying to do much more of that. So in a lot of their kind of learning link videos now, training videos, they've got more scenarios of which of these things would you do? And that's really helpful because it helps you to understand what's being asked of you rather than just saying, "Oh, yeah, be strategic," actually trying to flesh out what does it mean to be strategic and how would you act in this particular situation?
01:08:24	That's always been very helpful to me, so.
Sarah Chung: 01:08:27	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So thinking back to your first year now, your initial year of governance, did you feel supported?
Sara: 01:08:37	Yeah. I think I felt supported by the other governors and the head teacher. Yeah, I did. Yeah. I think our governing body was quite at the time, it was quite welcoming, but I think I had no real understanding of what I was letting myself in for.
01:08:55	So at that time, yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:08:57	Okay. So in that first year, did you have a mentor or a governing buddy?
Sara: 01:09:03	Yes, I did, yeah.

Sarah Chung: 01:09:04	Okay. What was the experience like?
Sara: 01:09:08	Yeah, no good. They kind of helped guide me through things and met with me kind of more in a kind of friendly capacity than a kind of delivering governance, information kind of way.
01:09:22	But yeah, we're just kind of a supportive person to talk to and to become friends with, really.
Sarah Chung: 01:09:30	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So what are your thoughts then on mentors for governors, chairs of governors, and clerks?
Sara: 01:09:40	I think it's a good idea for governors, although I am seeing an increasing difficulty in people being able to have the time to meet up just because the demands on all of us have grown so much, and we're also time poor.
01:10:00	I mean, I'm speaking about myself and my governors, really. And I see that I mean, that has become much more of a challenge over time, that I see people less willing to give time. And so becoming a mentor to somebody is another bit of your time that you're giving away. And I think it's helpful, but I'm not sure how much it adds.
01:10:32	And I think if you're saying that another amount of time is to be given to a new governor, in a sense, as chair, I would rather they spend that hour doing some training than being mentored because I'm not sure how much they I don't know. I'm not sure how much they benefit from being mentored at that point, in a way. I don't know. I don't know. But I think for being chair, I think that would have been really helpful because a lot of the things that I've learned, I've learned through experience of doing it.
01:11:06	And to have had somebody I could talk to or ask questions about or would have been really helpful. And when I became chair, although I'd been on the governing body and had been vice-chair, when you step up into the chairing role, it's so different. And so many more things are kind of landed on your plate. And it would have been good to have more support with that, in a way, somebody that you could regularly bounce sort of things off, so.
01:11:37	the clerk, you asked about the clerk as well, didn't you? I mean, I mean, I just feel I mean, in our local authority, we have a kind of Clark's sort of CPD training group, which meets every term or every half-term, even. And I think that, again, it's quite good support, and that's really valuable.
01:12:06	But I think that that has really come to the fore, again, through COVID because people could meet online, and it wasn't so hard for people. But I'm not sure how widespread that is from my kind of involvement with other NGA sort of things. I'm not quite sure how widespread that support for Clerks is. And each clerk has a different role in each separate school.

01:12:31	So particularly the differences between maintained and academy schools are quite different for different clerks. So each clerk is in a sort of different situation. So yeah, I don't know. I don't know. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:12:46	Okay. Thank you. So I mean, I know we touched on it being somewhat beneficial, didn't we? Do you think it would be better if a mentor was used that it should be external to the governing body or somebody within your own?
Sara: 01:13:02	Yes. I think being external would be really good, actually. Somebody who's got governance experience in a different place rather than the same place that you're a governor. Because if you do have concerns or questions, you might not necessarily want to ask the people that are around you. Yeah I mean, some questions will be school-specific about, well, who is that teacher that does that or whatever.
01:13:28	But a lot of the questions are more kind of general questions about governance, and it would be good to be able to talk to somebody who's not in your situation. So say, "Oh, this works like this, but I thought that it should work like that. And is that normal?" Or you know it would be easier to kind of reflect on your experience, I think.
Sarah Chung: 01:13:47	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now we're on to the last couple of questions. And it's the NGA have openly stated that they feel that induction training should be mandatory within the first year.
01:14:00	And indeed, in Wales, it actually is. So in your own words, can you explain whether you agree with this and why?
Sara: 01:14:06	Yeah, I agree with it because I think that it I think it would I think it would help have greater consistency in the skills which all the governors have rather than relying on governor's only initiative to take the training and therefore some governors not necessarily having been exposed to certain aspects of training.
01:14:32	So you know it can be a bit hit and miss in a way because if you've got someone who's really keen, they'll take the course and they'll bring the knowledge back with them. But if somebody decides, "Oh, I probably already know about that," there's no onus on them to do it, so.
Sarah Chung: 01:14:47	Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Wonderful.
Sara: 01:14:50	And I think you know i think there should be updates as well in a way that you should have to refresh your because policy changes all the time.
01:14:58	So to sort of have a one-hit you know induction evening is just, I think, not really adequate for the challenges of the role because yeah. And the responsibilities of the role, really.
Sarah Chung: 01:15:13	Okay. Wonderful. So thinking a little bit more then about mandatory training, if it was introduced, what would you like to

	see in relation to and I'm going to give you a little list here the following. Content.
Sara: 01:15:30	So definitely financial management plus plus plus because I feel that is a weak area and definitely some articulation around education because I feel often people don't I think it's often assumed that people understand the context within which they're governing and sometimes they don't.
01:15:55	So I think we all assume that people kind of read the BBC news, and we all assume that people know about certain events and how they then therefore impact schools. So I think some narrative around the background of British education system would be really good and what you know the policy context is because I feel that some people just don't understand.
01:16:24	And I can give you a really clear example of this. So for example, a lot of governors don't understand when we talk about British values in schools and don't understand that the policy context to that is prevent and terrorism and sort of all that stuff that happened kind of five years ago or whatever, which then kind of precipitated that policy change in schools and sort of anti-radicalization policies and how that's then therefore impacted on governors having to attend prevent training as part of safeguarding.
01:17:04	And so all of those things are interlinked. But unless you kind of understand that, you don't understand the significance of why you might be wanting to ask about in a school visit into school about British Valleys. How does your school teach British Valleys? So that's kind of why I think it's really important to have that education sort of knowledge.
Sarah Chung: 01:17:26	Okay. That's wonderful. So then how should the training take place?
01:17:31	So for example, currently, most training is conducted within the LEA or in-house within schools. Would online training be beneficial, for example?
Sara: 01:17:45	I think so, yeah. I mean, I find online training really easy to access and you know has huge benefits in terms of trying to fit it into your you know time commitments. Yeah. Definitely.
Sarah Chung: 01:18:00	Okay.
01:18:00	Wonderful.
Sara: 01:18:01	And I think if there was so I was just thinking about that prevent training. So there's prevent training online for governors all over the country, and then you get your certificate in prevent, it would be really good if there was like a national kind of induction for governors and you have to you know it's kind of online and you work through it or something like that. I think that would be really good. But that's just me.

Sarah Chung: 01:18:30	It kind of brings us nicely to the final point. You know What are your thoughts on a modulated course delivered online and resulting in a certificate?
Sara: 01:18:38	Yeah. I think that would be brilliant.
Sarah Chung: 01:18:42	So do you think then that sort of system could be used as a completion of an induction year, for example?
Sara: 01:18:51	I mean, from my experience, it takes at least a year for people who come on the governing body to understand a cycle of governance because there's a whole kind of governance year.
01:19:03	And so something that happened over a year, I think, would be great. I think the only problem with that is people's level of commitment and people's kind of time. I'm not sure whether it would deter people from becoming governors or not if there was something like that. I don't know. I mean, I think people would if there were maybe it would help in a way because people would know upfront part of what the commitment was, but yeah.
Sarah Chung: 01:19:38	Okay. Well, that's the final question, Sara. Thank you very much. Is an opportunity for you to add anything that you think we've missed or?
Sara: 01:19:50	No, I've probably talked enough. No, I think it's really interesting that you're doing research on it

Zoe

Sarah Chung: 00:00	So Zoe, firstly, let me thank you for taking time to participate in the study. I'm currently researching the importance of governor training for creating an effective governing body. As you are aware, the National Governing Association has highlighted the eight elements of effective governance as sorry, eight elements that create effective governance.
00:30	And during our interview, we'll discuss whether the training you have received has helped you to achieve this. Additionally, we will explore the three core functions of governance and whether you feel that you have received appropriate training to help you address the strategic direction, accountability, and financial oversight expected within your role. We will also discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your role as a governor, how it has impacted participation, duties, and training.
01:01	I would like to remind you that as stressed in the letter of participation you have signed, you are completely free to withdraw at any point during the interview and up to one month after the interview date. Furthermore, I would just like to assure you that all information is confidential and anonymised and that all interview tapes will be erased after a period of six months with anonymized data destroyed after a period of 10 years. Should you wish a copy of the results, please email me.
01:30	Do you have any questions before we begin?
Zoe: 01:33	No. No.
Sarah Chung: 01:34	Oh, that's wonderful. Okay. Shall we jump in with something nice and easy then? How long have you been a governor?
Zoe: 01:45	I think about six years. Yeah, maybe about six years.
Sarah Chung: 01:52	Okay. Wonderful. What made you join?
Zoe: 01:56	Well, initially, I've always been linked to school.
01:59	So I chaired the PTA at what was my children's primary school. So I've always been Linked in with the school and conscious of what goes on in schools. And I work in social housing. I'm a [redacted] officer. So they sent something round asking for people to volunteer to be governors. So that's how I Linked in. I linked in through work, really, to become a governor.
Sarah Chung: 02:27	Okay. Wonderful.
02:30	Are they quite supportive then of taking on that role as a governor?
Zoe: 02:34	Yeah. Yeah. So basically, I've not always been, but where the school I'm at at the moment, I actually manage the properties

	that surround that school at the minute. I used to. I used to know the properties, but I didn't manage the ones around it. But they've kind of linked me in with the properties around that. It's quite a deprived area.
02:56	So it works really well working with the school, linking with lots of the families through the school. So it's like a win-win kind of thing.
Sarah Chung: 03:07	Yeah. Okay. That's wonderful.
Zoe: 03:09	Yeah. So they give me time off. So if I'm invited into school, I just let work know and they'll give me time off. If it's a prolonged period of time, so say I need to be there for like a full day. They're a bit flexible with me, so I'll work some of the hours back.
03:26	But you know I'm happy to do that. And you know it works well.
Sarah Chung: 03:32	Oh, that sounds really supportive.
Zoe: 03:35	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 03:36	So what has been the most enjoyable part of your governance? I've liked learning new skills, blinking in with other people from different backgrounds, you know the other governors.
03:52	Seeing the children achieve, you know watching children. So obviously, because I've been there for quite a few years now, I've seen some of the children going through the school and the progress and monitor the progress. You know We get special reports on pupil premium children and SEN children. And you can see them progressing through the school and them achieving. And you feel part of that, really, you know in a good way.
Sarah Chung: 04:22	Yeah. Well, that sounds wonderful. Conversely, then, in the interest of fairness, what's been the least enjoyable part of your governance?
Zoe: 04:33	Well, it's a bit complicated because they actually govern two schools.
Sarah Chung: 04:37	Oh, okay.
Zoe: 04:38	Right. So I was chair of governor at [redacted], which is the school that's linked with work. And then I'm now a governor at the primary school that my children attended. And they're completely two different so one's quite an affluent area.
04:53	So my children's is in quite an affluent area. And the one I govern is linked in with work is, like I say, it's quite a deprived area. And the budgets and the different things they face to both schools is quite interesting. So the one in the affluent area has got a very tiny budget, and the one in the more deprived

area has got a massive budget. You can see the pros and cons of both.

05:20 It's quite interesting, but quite sad at the same time. You know So it's quite sad seeing that that you know children are being judged kind of thing. And the opportunities they're given are based on their parents' income in a way. Yeah So it's quite sad in some ways to see that. So yeah, that's what I would say has been the flip side of it.

05:52 And yeah. I think what else would say? Yeah. I enjoy it. On a whole, there's not much negativity to it, really, because I do enjoy it. Yeah. Oh, that's lovely to hear. I think it does help, doesn't it? Yeah.

Sarah Chung: 06:09 Okay. So moving on a little bit now. The NGA have described governors as being responsible for ensuring clarity, vision, ethos, and strategic direction.

06:20 The following questions now will explore your understanding of all three of those.

Zoe: 06:25 Right.

Sarah Chung: 06:26 So in your own words, can you describe what is meant by strategic direction?

Zoe: 06:32 So as a governor, I wouldn't have any say in some of the decisions that well, [redacted] [redacted]'s is the head. So the head makes a lot of the decisions or makes all the decisions and brings them to us.

06:51 So she makes the day-to-day decisions and kind of and drives the way she wants the school to go. So she'd make decisions on and employing a teacher kind of thing and things like that and how she'd like to spend the budget. And we'd have more of a say over how many teachers the school would employ given the budget, if you know what I mean? Not which teachers were employed.

07:21 Yeah. Does that make sense? I know what I mean, but it's hard to explain. Yeah. We kind of have some saying, but [redacted] has we kind of govern what [redacted] decides kind of thing. We govern what she does. You know.

Sarah Chung: 07:41 Okay. Yeah. I understand. Okay.

07:44 So using your own experience now as a governor, can you explain a little bit more how you've reached that strategic direction for your school?

Zoe: 07:58 Yeah. So I would answer that. So as a governing body, we've tried to make sure that the governing body is made up of people. I've got different sets of experience, different skill sets.

08:16 And together, we kind of if there's anything can I give you an example. So with the pandemic, all children had to go into classrooms for lunches because they couldn't be together. And the school found that that was convenient for them. Yeah So

as a governing body, we had a conversation and when things went back to kind of normal, as normal as normal can be because it's still a bit up in the air, isn't it?

08:46 They said they wanted to leave it like that because it was easier for them to manage the children in classrooms, eating the lunches. Now, as governors, we had a conversation about this. And we said, "Well, the children aren't getting the experience of being together, actually going into the serving hatch, conversing with the dinner ladies, asking for what they want, and sitting down, and like that kind of canteen experience." So we said it's going to be a big shock when they go to senior school, being in that environment.

09:20 So we kind of challenged [redacted] over that. So it's kind of challenging the interest of children. Obviously, it's easier for the teachers and the school for the children to be in the classrooms, but we didn't think that was right for the children. So we challenged over that. That's kind of an example of governance. And I don't know.

Sarah Chung: 09:43 Yeah. How was that received?

Zoe: 09:48 Well, I don't think they'd actually thought about it, and it was well received.

09:52 So we kind of come to a compromise at first. So first, years five and six started going back into the can team because, obviously, they were going to be the first ones to go to senior school and go into that bigger canteen kind of environment. But now, they've actually seen the whole school are back in the canteen, staggered because the whole doesn't allow for them all to be there together. But I think they've seen that it is needed, and then you do need to have that experience, especially coming where they come from.

10:25 So you know the children in the school don't often perhaps go out to eat at restaurants or cafes and things like that. So they need that interaction, learn how to do that interaction and things like that. So I think you know as governors, you know the head and the senior leadership team will make decisions of which way they want the school to go.

10:49 But we're there as governors to kind of think outside the box and see you know I think to share that and bring a different point of view you know and things like that. Bring different experiences to the table and share different points of view kind of thing.

Sarah Chung: 11:12 Okay. Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. That was a really great explanation.

11:18 So now, in your own words, can you describe what is meant by a school's ethos?

Zoe: 11:25 So, the ethos is how could you put this? Like The kind of belief and the kind of belief of the school and the direction the school

	wants to go in is the foundation of the school and it's kind of vision and thought behind how it operates day-to-day.
11:51	So [redacted] is like a family kind of ethos. So, they want to nurture and grow the children. And that's the kind of ethos. It's like kind of a family. It's based on a kind of family ethos, growing together and learning together, and that that's the kind of ethos.
Sarah Chung: 12:16	And did you, as a governing body, have a say in how that ethos was developed?
Zoe: 12:22	I didn't personally that was already in place when I became a governor. There was quite a lot of change that happened just before I joined the governing body. So, I think a lot of that was set in place. Then there was quite a lot of change happened. New head and it was all just revamped. I think they got a kind of bad Ofsted report. So, they needed a full turnaround.
12:51	It was just there was a full, so I wasn't in the initial one. But I do think the ethos fits well with the school and the people that it serves. So you know I wouldn't be looking to change, but I wouldn't have any problem approaching senior leadership if I did think it needed to be changed.
Sarah Chung: 13:12	Okay. Okay. That's lovely. So if we move on to the third one now, in your own words, can you describe what is meant by vision?
Zoe: 13:21	So vision is, obviously, all schools need to be looking forward. Even if you're an outstanding school, you don't rest on your laurels. You've got to be forward-looking. So vision is where you want that school to be in X years, 4 years, 2 years, 10 years. So having a vision and where you want that school to go and how you want the pupils in there to achieve and how they're going to achieve.
13:48	So it's like kind of looking forward, not just saying, "Oh, we're outstanding," or, "We're good," or you know this works now. We'll leave it at that. It's looking to make things better and how you're going to improve on what you've already got in place. And vision's always also like looking what you've done well and how you can use that for something else. That kind of thing, I'd say.
Sarah Chung: 14:16	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you.
14:18	So now we're going to move forward a little bit more, and we're going to look at a little bit about pupil performance. So can you explain a little about how you and your governing body oversee pupil performance?
Zoe: 14:32	Yeah. So we get a report. We can ask at any point for any kind of information that we want. And we set the agenda for the meeting.
14:44	So recently, we've asked for every subject lead to give us a little presentation on where they're at and where they're going.

So we get feedback from in that way. We also have link governors, and we'll get feedback. And then the link governors will bring that information back to the meetings and feed that back.

15:10 Like I said too before, any information we get, we ask for it to be broken down into pupil premium, SEN, you know girls, boys. We ask for full breakdowns of any information. So the next meeting, we're getting the results of you know the tests that have just taken place. So we'll be given those beforehand to have a look at.

15:38 And then we'll get some feedback at the meeting and be able to ask any questions and ask for any more information if we need any further information at the meetings.

Sarah Chung: 15:50 Okay.

Zoe: It has been a bit you know hit and miss with COVID. So it's quite difficult to compare really. But yeah, there's never a problem. We readily ask for information quite regularly, to be honest.

Sarah Chung: 16:07 Okay. Okay. That's wonderful.

16:08 So how comfortable are you with understanding the data as it's presented to you?

Zoe: 16:17 I'm fairly comfortable. I know there are quite a few governors that aren't as comfortable. There's me and a couple of others that tend to ask the majority of the questions and probe.

16:33 I think So this is why we introduced the Blink governors because I think some of the governors are more confident one-to-one, and they'll ask more questions on a one-to-one basis. So when they go in and see the link governors, when they're going to see the subject leads, they'll ask more questions then. And we have an acronym page on Governor Hub so that they can familiarise themselves with any acronyms that are on any of the information that we get.

17:06 But we're really quite an open governing body. So no question is a stupid question, really. You know We're all from different backgrounds. There aren't many on this broad governing board. They're from an education background. Whereas on the other governing board, which is Bleak Hill, there's quite a lot from an education background. So I see difference in the meetings and the questions that are asked.

17:36 My knowledge has grown the longer I've been a governor, I think. And confidence is growing in asking questions. So I'm conscious of that with new governors and always try and encourage them and say if there's anything you don't understand, please ask because obviously it's all new if you've not come from education. Just ask kind of thing. And [redacted], the head is really open and will answer

anything. She says email me if there's something you want to ask further after the meetings and things like that.

Sarah Chung: 18:07 Okay. I know that you said you're fairly comfortable, but there were some governors who maybe weren't as comfortable. Are they newer governors?

Zoe: 18:19 Yes. They tend to be newer governors. Well, I seem to find the longer they're on the governing body, yeah the more questions they seem to ask, the more familiar they become. I also try and encourage them to attend training.

18:34 The local authority run quite a lot of training. So I encourage them to attend that because I think that rolls the confidence as well. You know It gives them informed you know information that they need to ask the questions and what questions they should be asking and just gives them a bit of confidence, really, when they are asking the questions.

Sarah Chung: 19:00 Okay.

19:01 So I know as well that you said that you've grown in confidence since you've initially joined. And I know that you've actually said already that as a governing body, you challenge the dinner hall versus classroom. Are you able to challenge do you feel able to challenge in a more general sense as a governing body or as an individual governor?

19:25 Yeah, yeah. [redacted] who is the head.

19:28 Yeah I kind of noticed that she's quite settled. She's been there for a couple of years now as head. And she's quite settled and quite happy to kind of not challenge herself anymore, not stretch yourself. So we had her appraisal.

19:52 I brought that up, and I said that she needs to kind of continue to challenge herself and set herself new goals and kind of yeah you know mix with some of the other heads and you know so she became a mentor for one of the new heads in the authority. And she did some kind of another project kind of thing for the LA.

20:26 So she has stretched herself. But yeah, I'm quite happy. I've got no climbs in challenging anything.

Sarah Chung: 20:35 Okay. Wonderful. So another area of governance is holding the head teacher to account for the management of staff. How confident are you in this area?

Zoe: 20:49 Very. So recently well, not recently, it was about a year ago now.

20:57 When we do when we go into you know oh, what's it called? When they're doing the progression, you know the pay progression and things like that.

Sarah Chung: 21:12 Oh, yeah. Sorry. Performance management.

Zoe: 21:14	Yeah. When we're doing those, it's quite a large school, so there are quite a lot of files. So we used to go in and we used to all the files were there for each member of staff.
21:26	Yeah And we used to like [redacted] would tell us that she was happy with them all, and she was happy with them all to progress and this, that, and the other. And I said, "Well, really, we haven't got enough time to analyse every single folder. So I'm happy to go with what you say." So we just, like, cherry-picked a few and just sampled a few of them. But what I asked her to do was to look for a system where it could be online so that we could view things anonymously.
21:57	She didn't have to put obviously the staff names, but we could view it anonymously prior to the meeting, which would give us more time to actually look more in-depth and check. So that was a challenge. And she has now got a system in place where we can do that.
Sarah Chung: 22:17	Okay. So the sampling, did it feel a little bit like quality control?
Zoe: 22:23	Yeah. Yeah.
22:25	We were reading through, you know obviously, their appraisals Mm-hmm. and, and looking at what targets had been set and how they'd achieved them and that. But I don't feel that we were given enough it was enough time to do that in any great depth. And I said that if we were ever challenged over a pay progression would we have enough knowledge as governors to, to, to, you know, to show that we've given it enough consideration?
22:56	So obviously, like I say, I challenged her over that, and something has now been put in place.
Sarah Chung: 23:03	Okay. And that's an online system?
Zoe: 23:07	Yes.
Sarah Chung: 23:08	Okay.
Zoe: 23:09	Online. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 23:13	So what type of system is that? Sorry.
Zoe: 23:17	I'm not 100% certain. Yeah. I'm not sure what it's called, but yeah, the school procured it, and it is.
23:27	We have had a look, but I wouldn't know what it was called.
Sarah Chung: 23:30	There's so many now, aren't there?
Zoe: 23:32	Yeah. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 23:34	Okay. That's wonderful. Thank you. So would you be able to explain you may not have had to go through this already, and

	that's fine. But if asked, could you explain the process involved with appointing a new head teacher?
Zoe: 23:49	Oh, I've done that.
Sarah Chung: 23:50	Oh, you have. Oh, wonderful., ok.
Zoe: 23:53	Yes. But not at the school.
23:56	I'm chair of governors at the other school. Yeah So we appointed a head and the business manager within the same couple of months. So it was like quite a challenging time. Yeah. So as governors, we got together and we all put forward some questions that we'd like to ask and the kind of areas we'd like the questions to cover. So we collated those and we whittled them down a bit.
24:27	We contacted the LA and asked for some guidance as well. And they gave us some guidance, and they were involved in recruiting the head as well. So they were going to come along. So we had the head of HR within the LA fought for schools. And we also had a head teacher from another school who was kind of overseeing she was like I don't know what was explained.
24:58	She was like yeah, like a group of head groups. She was like chair of the head teachers group. So she came along as well. And we decided on the questions we wanted to ask. And then we decided that we wanted a presentation and the heading for that presentation. And then we decided on a written exercise that we thought they would need to do a financial exercise.
25:27	And as a group, we all agreed exactly what we wanted to do. And then, obviously, we asked the local authority to advertise, and we put it out to the national press as well. And then we obviously got all the applications in and were past any that you went through. Obviously, the LA did the checks on them and things like that. And then we got the shortlist, like the ones that had passed the criteria that were set.
26:00	And we went through those as there was like a subcommittee kind of thing, and we went through those, and then we invited who we thought were suitable candidates to interview. So it was over two days, the interviews. And following the first day, we decided that two candidates would it wasn't worth calling them back to the following day.
26:27	So the first day was interview questions, and the next day was going to be oh, it was interview questions and the exercise the first day. And then it was a presentation the second day and final questions and you know final roundup questions. So after the interview questions and the exercise, the two candidates that we decided weren't worth taking through, were going to be suitable candidates.
26:52	So we advised them that they didn't need to return, and we just took the others through. And yeah. And then we deliberated,

	scored based on the interview, the interview, the exercise, and the presentation. And obviously, we found a candidate.
Sarah Chung: 27:14	Okay. Okay. Did you have specific training to support you with that, or is that something that you brought with you from your own job?
Zoe: 27:26	It was a mixture, really. Like I said, the other school that I'm a governor at, there's quite a high level of people with educational backgrounds there. So you know they do kind of give quite a lot of direction. And obviously, you know we all did give some input, but it did help to have the LA there as well, giving us some direction. And obviously, these people with their experience.
27:56	So yeah.
Sarah Chung: 27:58	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So now, as well as setting the ethos and strategic direction of the school and also ensuring that there's a clear level of accountability demonstrated in pupil performance and staffing, probity must be clearly displayed in financial oversight of your school. How comfortable are you within that situation?
Zoe: 28:24	That would probably be I'm fairly comfortable.
28:27	I mean, I work with figures daily. So I'm fairly comfortable with figures. And we do challenge when we've done budget setting before. I'm happy to challenge. If I see any disparities, you know where perhaps in the narrative, we're told that a certain system is going to be used. And then I notice it's not in the budget. I'll say, "Well, how are you going to use that system if it's not in the budget?" And that will be explained to us.
28:59	So you know I can understand figures and I can read balance sheets and things like that. So you know I'm quite happy to challenge. But we do have somebody with a banking background on the board. So you know like I say, we make sure the governing board body have got different skill sets, and we all tend to draw on that.
29:25	So you know we'll all challenge, and we'll all but we do tend to turn to the person with that specific skill set for advice and leadership around that area.
Sarah Chung: 29:35	Okay. Now, do you have a more traditional model of governance where you have committees in addition to full governing bodies? Or do you have a circular model without committees unless necessary?
Zoe: 29:51	Yeah. Circular model on both governing bodies.
29:54	And they both changed around the same time. We were finding it difficult to get to corrupt with the subcommittees. I think people have got lots of other commitments and demands on time. So it was finding it more and more difficult for people to make every single meeting and subcommittee meetings as well.

30:20	So now what we do is if there's something in part two that we think may bring up where we know we might be challenged or you know like something to do with staffing or something like that, we decide who's going to stay in the meeting and who's going to leave so they could form another committee if need to be. Okay.
Sarah Chung: 30:45	Okay. Lovely. Thank you.
30:48	So now we're going to move on and look at the eight elements of effective governance. As we've already talked about, they've been identified as essential to good governance. So what we're going to do now is it's a little bit like a words association almost. I'll read the element of governance to you. And if you tell me what that means to you, does that sound okay?
Zoe: 31:13	Yes, I'm fine.
Sarah Chung: 31:14	Okay. Wonderful.
31:16	So A, the right people around the table.
Zoe: 31:19	Like I said, it's all about doing your skills audit like we do regularly and checking that you know you've got a good set of skills and that those people want to be governors and are interested in governance for the right reasons. So recently, one of the local councillors asked to come back on the committee. He'd previously been on the committee. And because he stopped being a counsellor, he left the committee.
31:46	So we didn't feel that he was there for the right reason. He was kind of there for the wrong reasons. He didn't want to govern the school. He just wanted to do it as part of his counsellor duties kind of thing. When he came back, we said, "Well, no, we don't think you're the right person to be on our governing body." Because he just kind of dropped us when he dropped being a counsellor. And then when he became a counsellor again, he wanted to come back on. So yeah.
32:15	So it's making sure that people are there for the right reasons. And like I said, they've got the right skill set, but you know there's a broad spread of skill sets.
Sarah Chung: 32:23	Okay. That's lovely. B, understanding the role and responsibilities.
Zoe: 32:34	So this is where I think training is important, and this is why we encourage all members of the governing body to undergo some kind of training.
32:44	And we also do group training. So I think it's important that they undertake the training so they understand why they're there and what they're there for and what they're governing. And like I said, they're making informed questions and informed decisions. And yeah, there's something behind it. You know They can back up what they're saying and what they're doing.

Sarah Chung: 33:09	Okay. Wonderful. C, good chairing.
Zoe: 33:13	Oh.
33:15	I think it's about, like I said, as chair, I think it's about being conscious of the skills that are on your governing body and drawing on those. So if I know there's a member of the governing body that can be quite quiet sometimes, but I know they've got some good skills in certain areas. So I'll make sure I'll say, and what do you think X and draw them into the conversation and let them know that you know their input is valued.
33:48	And I think it's about encouraging them to progress or training again is important. I think time management is also important because sometimes when a meeting is too long, it can lose focus.
34:07	So I think being conscious of the time that you're using on each other and being willing to park something, move on, and then perhaps come back to it next time or ask for the head to go away and produce a report or produce something that can you know be put online or something just to cut down the time of the meeting kind of so it's compact and people don't lose focus.
Sarah Chung: 34:35	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you.
34:37	D, professional clerking.
Zoe: 34:41	All right. So we've had an LA clerk. We've had somebody who was self-employed. So I think it's good to have a professional clerk and to make sure they're knowledgeable and to draw on that knowledge, not to be scared to ask them, which we often do. So things around what have we asked her recently?
35:09	You know When we're looking at pay offers and things like that, we will sometimes draw on some of her knowledge there. And there's various different things where we will go to the clerk and draw on their knowledge and ask them, "Can we do this?" you know Would you suggest we do that? And sometimes they will go away and look back. Oh, yeah. We had a governor that hadn't turned up to quite a few meetings.
35:33	So we drew on their knowledge of we drew on her knowledge and asked her, "What's the process now of, do you know how long do we have to give this person before we can remove them from the governing board because they're not attending?" So she informed us of the process, and we followed that. Yeah. So yeah, it's important to make sure that the minutes are correct and that what you want is on those minutes.
35:59	So in the other governing body, the amount that doesn't often record every question and every challenge. So we've had to

raise that with them. So yeah, it's about making sure that they're working for you and working with you.

Sarah Chung: 36:22 Okay. Lovely. Thank you. E, good relationships based on trust.

Zoe: 36:31 Yeah. So I think it's important to have a good relationship with the head and with the school and with the same relationship and the teachers. Even the office staff, I think it's good to have a good relationship. And with the whole governing body, I think it's important that you're able to trust. But there has got to be not over-friendly.

36:57 So you're able to challenge. Like I said, you know [redacted] had made that decision about the dinners, but we were still able to challenge her. And she took that challenge well because I think she trusts us that we would only be challenging her if it was in the best interest of school. There's nothing malicious or you know it's done in the right way.

Sarah Chung: 37:21 Okay. Okay. Lovely. F, knowing the school.

Zoe: 37:28 Yeah. So like I say, I think it is important to know the school and know the circumstances. Like Because I'm a neighbourhood officer in that area, I know the backgrounds that these children are coming from and the challenges that the school face based on the backgrounds of these children. So I have a greater empathy with some of the decisions that the head makes and why she makes them.

37:56 I have an understanding of that and the needs of the children that are at the school. And I think quite a few people on the governing body are also aware of going into the school and visiting pupil voice, actually meeting with the children, not just going to meetings where there's no children attending, actually going in and seeing the pupils and seeing the school and the area that school's in. I think that's all important as well.

Sarah Chung: 38:26 Okay. Lovely. G, asking challenging questions.

Zoe: 38:31 Yeah. I think I've always been conscious of asking those. I think before I joined the governing body, I think it was a bit stale. I think it was ready for a change. And I'm conscious of that. And because I'm conscious of that, I'm conscious of when I'm going to move on from the school because I wouldn't want that to happen while I was on the governing board.

38:56 So I think it's good for change to happen because I think sometimes you can become a little bit complacent if you're there for a long time. And I think that challenge can die down a bit after a bit if you become too over-familiar. So I think it's good for change to happen.

39:17 And I do think you do need to ask those challenging questions because I think if you don't, it's easy for the head and the senior leadership to kind of rest and lay back sometimes if you

	don't offer that challenge. And if they think they're not going to be challenged.
Sarah Chung: 39:38	Okay. That's wonderful. Okay.
39:45	So H, having courageous conversations in the interest of children and young people.
Zoe: 39:52	Yeah. So an example of this is [redacted] has always been she'd never wanted to do read-writing. She was always against it. She didn't seem to think there was a need for it at the school. She was happy with what they were doing, but it wasn't achieving the results.
40:16	So we had to challenge her over that. And you know as a governing body, we said, "Look, but the results aren't happening. Can we not have a look at something else?" And she has adopted it now, and it's working. So yeah, it's not being afraid to challenge. The head doesn't always know best, but then again, we don't always know best, but it's what's in the best interest of the children. And you've got to look at the bigger picture kind of thing.
40:43	And it would have been easy just to say, "Oh, yeah, well, we'll give it a few more years," or whatever, but it wasn't working. So we had to challenge.
Sarah Chung: 40:54	Okay. That's lovely. Thank you. So now we'll chat a little bit about strategic and operational. So we know that the line between strategic and operational can be seen as quite a grey area, I think.
41:11	How confident are you in knowing where governance ends and SLT responsibilities begin?
41:20	Like you say, it's a bit of a grey area. I don't know how to answer that, really. I mean.
Sarah Chung: 41:30	That's okay.
Zoe: 41:31	I don't really get involved with some of the things, but and I listen to what they've got to tell me.
41:38	And as a governing board, like I say, we invite the SLT in and we invite subject leads in to talk to us. And that's where we'd challenge if there was something from what they told us, or if we saw a set of results that weren't quite right, then we'd challenge. But we wouldn't go in and say, "You need to do this.
42:03	You need to do that." We'd say, "What are you going to do about it?" So I don't know.
Sarah Chung: 42:12	Yeah. Okay.
Zoe: 42:13	Whether that will cover it. I don't know. I'm not quite sure.

Sarah Chung: 42:16	Oh, no. It's absolutely fine, honestly. So I mean, in terms of policies then, with your governing body, can you explain a little bit about your role in those as a whole governing body or as an individual governor?
Zoe: 42:31	Right.
42:32	So as a whole governing body, policies are obviously brought to us and we're given them before the meeting to read. And I encourage the board to try and read through them because, obviously, going through them page by page within a meeting would drag on forever. So I just ask them all to go through and highlight any questions they've got. And that's what they do. But they do challenge. We don't just agree.
43:01	We often use the LA policies. So obviously, we're aware that sometimes there's things that can't be changed or it will be more complicated if we change them, which obviously the client points that out. Recently, there's been challenge over bits in the uniform policy. And there was also challenge over school prayer, which was in one of the other policies. So we do challenge, and we don't just agree to everything.
43:32	We will have discussions about it or ask for an explanation or reasoning behind why something is in a policy. Yeah. So yeah.
Sarah Chung: 43:41	Okay. Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So now we'll talk a little bit about COVID. And we know that the impact of COVID has been immense, hasn't it? It has. Can you describe your experience of governance during that time?
Zoe: 43:57	Oh, it was like yeah, I had great empathy for the head because it was like constant emails and constant updates and changes and everything. So yeah, I tried to just kind of support and be there kind of thing. It was quite difficult. Obviously, she was you know constantly onto the LA and you know the health team and that.
44:31	So yeah. So it was more obviously, we got informed all the time. Our school was asked to take in open a nursery kind of thing for emergency workers. You know I can't think what they call now. All the terms have gone. Key workers. That's it. That's it. Yeah. So yeah. So the school had to be open for key worker children.
44:57	But extra key worker children from other nurseries that had to close you know private nurseries. So it wasn't just the schools. They were children from other areas throughout the borough. So they were open for those in a nursery setting. Yeah. I don't know what else. What other information did you want?
Sarah Chung: 45:26	How did you find or were you able to monitor during that time at all?
45:34	I challenged a lot because I wasn't necessarily happy with the offer. Given that it's in quite a deprived area, yeah the online offer wasn't we had to adapt the offer.

45:55	The school had to adapt the offer. So it was quite a difficult time, really, for the school because the school became more of like a welfare refuge. It was offering food parcels, and there's lots of people with mental health. There was quite a number of parents actually committed suicide during the time. So I think they had about eight, eight families that were affected by suicide during the period.
46:24	So it wasn't an easy ride for the school or the head or anybody at the school. So it was quite a difficult time, really. And like I say, it was difficult to monitor. So we asked for how many children had logged on and things like that. And they gave us figures on how many families had collected. So they did paper versions because, obviously, not everybody had access to digital media straight away.
46:56	So we had to work on that. So they did a paper offer where people could come and collect a pack from the school. So we got feedback on how many children collected packs and how many vulnerable children because there was about 50% of the school were in school most of the time because they were quite vulnerable. Yeah So school was kind of kind of open, but not open yeah with 50% of the pupils in.
47:29	So yeah. So, it was running through safety measures for those in school because obviously there was more children in school than there were in most schools. So yeah, it was kind of running through figures like that. And then obviously, once children were back for school, we asked for monitoring to be done and they did rag ratings of where they were up to and what gaps were there and things like that.
Sarah Chung: 47:57	So the monitoring then during the pandemic was more of a general oversight in terms of the provision that was being given and safety measures?
Zoe: 48:09	Yeah yeah.
Sarah Chung: 48:11	It progressed when you went back to more of a monitoring, but this time in catch-up terms.
Zoe: 48:17	With catch-up terms, yes. It was quite difficult because we understood.
48:27	The difficulties they were facing and getting that information out and the families just weren't engaging you know online if it was very minimal.
Sarah Chung: 48:37	Okay. Okay. And do you feel that you were kept up to date by the SLT?
Zoe: 48:44	Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I got emails at least once a week. And at points where I was able to go into school, I went in and we discussed things.
48:57	So yeah, me and the vice chair work really closely with the SLT during that time and got regular updates and things like that, yeah.

Sarah Chung: 49:08	Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Is there anything that governing in a pandemic highlighted for you in terms of areas you felt underqualified for or undertrained for?
Zoe: 49:30	I don't know. That's okay. It was the unknown for everyone, wasn't it? So it was kind of offering support to the SLT. Really, it was how to do that in the right way. But it was just one big old unknown, wasn't it?
49:51	It was just so difficult. It was. It was a hard couple of years. Yeah. Still going, yeah. It's rearing its head again. The other school that I'm a governor at, that they've had to send a letter out this week that they're being affected again. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 50:09	Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.
Zoe: 50:11	Yeah. So that's one school. And like I said, the other school, yeah in the deprived area, they just don't test.
50:21	I know testing is reduced now, but they weren't testing. So we were having lots of staff going off because the pupils weren't testing at home. So when there was the return to school, staffing levels were really difficult because staff were obviously picking it up off children that had COVID but weren't testing. And that was a difficult time. You know I'd say staffing was one of the main issues over COVID, to be honest.
Sarah Chung: 50:49	Okay.
50:49	Thank you. So now thinking more generally about training, if you were to have one essential piece of training for every governor in the UK, what would it be? And why do you think that it's essential?
Zoe: 51:04	I think new governor training, a kind of welcome to governance and an overview, what it means to be a governor, what will be expected of you.
51:15	And just like a confidence builder kind of thing, learning the terminology because that's one of the biggest shocks. You know SLT, you know NQTs and you know all the different acronyms. You're just like in a meeting sometimes and you're like reeling from the acronyms and what the heck's then and what's this? And so just like a little introduction to governance I think would be helpful.
Sarah Chung: 51:45	Absolutely. Okay. Thank you. So conversely, then, what, in your opinion, is the least valuable piece of training for governance and why?
Zoe: 51:55	The least valuable piece of training. Oh, I don't know.
Sarah Chung: 52:09	It's absolutely okay to say you don't know, by the way. That's fine.
Zoe: 52:12	Yeah. No.

52:13	I can't think of anything. Most training's good in one way or another. You always pick a little bit of something up, even if some of it is rubbish. There's always a little bit of something even if it's sharing with another governor, you know like the chat afterwards. You always pick something up.
Sarah Chung: 52:35	Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Sometimes that's the best bit, I think, isn't it?
Zoe: 52:39	Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 52:40	Okay. So lovely.
52:41	So now I'd like you to think back to your first year of governance. Did you feel supported?
Zoe: 52:52	Yeah, I'd say on the whole. Yeah. Yeah. I think I did.
Sarah Chung: 52:56	Okay. Did you have a mentor or a governor buddy?
Zoe: 53:02	So I was taken around the school and interviewed to see if it was a suitable candidate.
53:11	And then I was kind of the chair kind of yet used to have a quick work with me before the meetings and say, "How are things going?" And things like that. I do think he was lining me up to take over his role. I think that's why he took me under his wing. But yeah. So yeah.
Sarah Chung: 53:35	So what are your thoughts in general on mentors for governors or chairs of governors or even clerks?
53:42	Do you think it's useful?
Zoe: 53:44	I think it's important I think it will be useful, and it's important, yeah. Because like I say, often you know people come from other industries. And if you've not got children in education and you've not got any kind of link in with education, education's moved on from when you were probably in education. So there's lots of changes.
54:09	So it is good to have someone there that you can ask because often, like I say, people won't ask in the full governing body meeting because you don't want to feel stupid, which you wouldn't. And I don't think anybody would make you feel stupid, but you would yourself just feel stupid asking it. Whereas if you had somebody you could go to later and say, "They weren't about that. What did they mean and why did they say it?" you know That kind of thing. I think it's good to have a buddy for that. And somebody can point out what training it will be good to go on and just to have somebody there really.
54:43	And kind of I think it helps form a link to the school and to the governing body to become more of a team. You know If you've got someone and it seems more friendly, it's not just something you go to for a couple of hours every few months

	kind of thing. You feel more like you'd belong, wouldn't you? Yeah. I think.
Sarah Chung: 55:08	Okay. Lovely. Thank you.
55:10	So do you think then if a mentor system was in place, do you think it would be better to have a mentor from within the governing body that they're on or an external mentor from perhaps a different governing body?
Zoe: 55:25	Oh, right. I've never thought of that. Perhaps an external one would be quite good.
Sarah Chung: 55:30	Okay.
Zoe: 55:31	Yeah. I think either would be good, yeah but it would bring something different to the table, wouldn't it? If it was somebody external.
Sarah Chung: 55:38	Yeah.
55:40	Okay. Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So we're on the last couple of questions now. Are you still okay for time?
Zoe: 55:50	Yeah, yeah, I'm fine.
Sarah Chung: 55:52	Wonderful. Okay. So the NGA have openly stated that they feel that induction training should be mandatory within the first year. And indeed, in Wales, it already is. In your own words, can you explain with you agree with this and why?
Zoe: 56:08	Yeah. I would agree with that. And like I've said before, I think i think it can sometimes be a shock if you're from out of an education background or you've been out of education for some time. And I think you need to familiarise yourself with terminology and process to be able to govern effectively. So yeah, yeah. That's why.
56:37	And I think it would give you confidence. It will give you confidence to challenge.
Sarah Chung: 56:43	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So final question. It's broken down into a couple of parts. So if mandatory training was introduced, what would you like to see in relation to the following content? What would I like to see? Yeah. So if it was mandatory induction training.
Zoe: 57:09	I think, obviously, if you're not from a finance background to look at how figures will be you know presented to you and what those figures mean. Just an overview of the actual curriculum you know and the different elements of the curriculum. You know I mean, only touch on it.
57:35	It just gives you like a slight you know you don't have to go into any great depth, but just to give you some background. Just the kind of what's the word I'm looking for? The makeup of a school. So like how the senior leadership team and then you

	have subject leads. Every school is kind of slightly different, aren't they?
58:01	So you have a business manager, a head, deputy head, assistant, head, just the different kind of forms that they can take and what the responsibilities are of those people. Just a basic overview of how schools run. Really, just a background. Because I think if you've got that basic overview, yeah it just gives you that because people can then adapt their knowledge from outside or from whatever background they're from to schools.
Sarah Chung: 58:37	Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So if the training was to take place, how should the training take place? So for example, currently, a lot of training is done within LEAs or in-house even in schools themselves. Would you consider online training beneficial at all?
Zoe: 58:57	I think live online training or a mixture of perhaps a couple of sessions you have to go through.
59:06	But I think to link in with other people is important and other new governors and discussion, I think, is important. Because often somebody will ask a question you wouldn't think to ask, but you'll gain knowledge from that question. And also, sometimes you'll think like, "Well, you know I was thinking that, but I didn't dare ask." And somebody else has asked it for you.
Sarah Chung: 59:32	Yeah. Okay. That's wonderful.
59:35	So what then are your thoughts on perhaps a modulated course delivered either online or in person or a hybrid of the two, which resulted in a certificate confirming completion of an induction year?
Zoe: 59:51	Yeah. Yeah. That would be good. Yeah.
Sarah Chung: 59:55	Okay. That's wonderful. Zoe, thank you ever so much. We've reached the end now. But is there anything else that you think I've missed or that you'd like to add?
Zoe: 01:00:05	No, no

Appendix 6 - Governor Training UK

List Of Training Providers And Training Provision

Provider	Course	Link	Modules	Format	Qualification	Free or Paid
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	School governor development	School governor development opportunities (barnsley.gov.uk)	Governor briefing Finance for LA maintained schools: comprehensive understanding of the schools financial value standard (SFVS) Handling complaints Local Area SEND Ofsted Inspection Safeguarding for governors Suspension and exclusion - the role of the governor The graduated approach and the importance of early identification Welcome to governance	Online/In-person	No	Free
Birmingham City Council	School & Governor Support	https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/16978/sgs_governor_training_offer_2020_to_2021	Induction Training for New School Governors Being Strategic Providing Effective Challenge Evaluating Pupil Premium Spend Introduction to School Finance Managing Financial Resources Mental Health and Wellbeing Safeguarding Children: Role of the Safeguarding Governor Prevent Training for Governors Headteacher Appraisal Headteacher's Performance Management Introduction to Chairing a GB Complaints Management for Governors Curriculum Introduction to Chairing a Governing Board Role of the Safeguarding Governor Role of the SEND Link Governor Role of the SEND Link Governor: Webinar Role of the SEND Link Governor: an Interactive Workshop-Style Session Role of the SEND link Governor in Special Schools Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) Termly Briefing for Chairs and Vice Chairs of GBs Termly Briefing for Clerks and Governance Professionals Young Carers in Schools – What Governors Need to Know The Single Central Record – the Role of Governors in Ensuring Compliance Governing Board Training and Development	Online	Certificate	Paid
Bolton County Council	Governance Training Programme	Governance Training Programme 2024-25 - Bolton Governance Services - Bolton Governance Services	Keeping Children Safe – (Online Course) PREVENT Duty – (Online Course) Suspension and Exclusion Guidance and the Role of the Board: Pre Recorded: Course A School Complaints Process for Schools and Academies : Pre Recorded: Course A Domestic Violence and Safeguarding – An overview of Support and Strategies for Families and School Settings Training and Development Briefing Autumn 2024 – Pre Recorded People Matter – An overview of HR and staffing procedures : Pre Recorded : Course A Chairs Briefing Autumn Term 2024 – Session 1	Online/In-person	No	Mix

			Chairs Briefing Autumn Term 2024 – Session 2 (recorded) Safer Recruitment Module 1: Introduction to Safer Recruitment and Selection: Pre-recorded: Course A Safer Recruitment Module 2: Managing Allegations: Pre-recorded: Course A Safeguarding and the Role of the Board : Course A Governance Induction: Course A Partnership Forum Autumn Term 2024 Safer Recruitment Module 3 (Accredited): Course A Primary Data for School Improvement Academisation Structures and Processes – An Introduction to Academy Governance: Course A Practical Chairing : Course A Bolton Governance Conference 2024 Strategic Chairing: Pre Recorded: Course A Health and Safety and the Role of the Board: Course A Cyber Security and the Role of the Board: Course A Ofsted and Governance – Preparing your Board for Inspection: Course A Workshop: The Role of the SEND Governor working with your SENCo Widening the Governance Lens on Attendance : Course A Governance Workshop – Foundations for Effective Working: For New Chairs and Leaders Safer recruitment Refresher (Accredited): Course A School Complaints Process for Schools and Academies : Pre Recorded : Course B People Matter – An overview of HR and staffing procedures: Pre Recorded : Course B Suspension and Exclusion Guidance and the Role of the Board: Pre Recorded: Course B Roles and Responsibilities – Governance Refresher: Pre Recorded Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – The Role of the Board : Course A Governance Induction: Course B Effective Financial Management Safer Recruitment Module 1: Introduction into Safer Recruitment and Selection: Pre-recorded: Course B Safer Recruitment Module 2: Managing Allegations: Pre-recorded: Course B Chairs Briefing Spring Term 2025 – Session 1 Chairs Briefing Spring Term 2025 – Session 2 (recorded) Early Years Foundation Stage and the Role of the Board: Pre Recorded Safer Recruitment Module 3 (Accredited): Course B Partnership Forum Spring Term 2025 Governance Workshop – Governance Visits & Monitoring Strategies Ofsted and Governance – Preparing your Board for Inspection: Course B Health and Safety and the Role of the Board : Course B Monitoring the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Staff, Children and the Board Safer Recruitment Refresher (Accredited) : Course B Governance Induction: Course C Safeguarding and the Role of the Board : Course B Widening the Governance Lens on Attendance : Course B Practical Chairing : Pre-recorded : Course B Education for Looked After Children and the Role of the Board : Pre Recorded Strategic Chairing: Course B Safer Recruitment Module 1: Introduction to Safer Recruitment and Selection: Pre-recorded: Course C Safer Recruitment Module 2: Managing Allegations: Pre-recorded: Course C Chairs Briefing Summer Term 2025 – Session 1 Safer Recruitment Module 3 (Accredited): Course C Chairs Briefing Summer Term 2025 – Session 2 (recorded) Partnership Forum Summer Term 2025 Cyber Security and the Role of the Board : Course B Academisation Structures and Processes – An Introduction to Academy Governance: Pre Recorded: Course B Governance Induction: Course D : Virtual Pre-recorded Session Training and Development Briefing Summer 2025 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – The Role of the Board : Course B School Complaints Process for Schools and Academies : Pre Recorded : Course C People Matter – An overview of HR and staffing procedures: Pre Recorded: Course C Suspension and Exclusion Guidance and the Role of the Board: Pre Recorded : Course C Safer Recruitment Refresher (Accredited): Course C A Guide to Bolton's Achievement, Cohesion and Integration Service: Pre Recorded Governance Workshop – Induction, Retention and Succession Planning, Future Proof Strategic Governance!			
Brigend County	Governor Training	https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/residents/schools-and-education/school-governors/	Induction Understanding Data	Onlin e/In-	No	Free

Borough Council				person		
Brighton & Hove City Council	Governor Training	Training & Events | BEEM	Governor Induction Aut 24: Part 1 of 3 Welcome and introduction (1)Governor Induction Aut 24: Part 1 of 3 Welcome and introduction (2)Governor Induction Aut 24: Part 3 of 3 Plenary (1)Governor Induction Aut 24: Part 3 of 3 Plenary (2)Lead Safeguarding Governor TrainingHeadteacher Appraisal & Objective SettingAnti-racist education: Foundation training for GovernorsHealth & Safety Roles & Responsibilities for governorsGovernance Leadership Programme - Welcome and introductionGovernance Leadership Programme: Module 2 Working with the HeadteacherChairs and Vice Chairs of Governors' Induction MeetingAn Introduction to SEND for GovernorsSchool Finance: Part 1 The School BudgetSchool Finance Part 2: Budget Monitoring and ForecastingCo-chairing in practiceGovernance Leadership Programme: Module 1 Effective Strategic GovernanceLead SEND Governor ForumUnconscious Bias and Conscious Inclusion TrainingNGA Learning Link - Effective financial governance in schools and trustsNGA Learning Link - Health and SafetyNGA Learning Link - Pupil PremiumNGA Learning Link - Safeguarding: how to fulfil the governance roleNGA Learning Link - Safer RecruitmentNGA Learning Link - The Governance of SEND	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Camden Learning	Bespoke Training	Governor services - Camden Learning	School data (reviewing Ofsted inspection dashboard and school performance) Safeguarding Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) including adaptive teaching methods School finances – understanding school budgets Preparing for an Ofsted inspection Governing body panels, including exclusions Roles and responsibilities of the Governor Governing body effectiveness – evaluating your governing body Support and training can also be commissioned on other topics.			
Camden Learning	Governors for Schools Training Programme	Governor services - Camden Learning	Induction Health and safety, school finances, financial efficiencies, headteacher performance management Safeguarding, SEND, behaviour, trauma informed practice, mental health Curriculum and data for secondary and for primary phases (separate sessions) Effective chairing, succession planning, effective governance, inclusive practice			
Carmarthenshire County Council	Governor Training & Development	School governors	Induction Training Understanding data Training for Chairs of Governors	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Central Bedfordshire Council	Governor Training Programme	centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/sites/Communications/Website and intranet/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FCommunications%2FWebsite and intranet%2FWebsite Documents%2FSchools and education%2FSchool governors%2FSchool governor training programme summary%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FCommunications%2FWebsite and intranet%2FWebsite Documents%2FSchools and education%2FSchool governors&p=true&ga=1	Recruiting and Inducting New Governors Recruiting and Appointing a new Headteacher Who's Who in the LA and What's the Point Finance, Managing the budget (maintained schools) Holding Executive Leaders to Account Health and Safety Vision, ethos, strategic direction, and curriculum Taking the chair (3 sessions) Good Relationships Based on Trust Planning Monitoring and evaluation Understanding your schools performance academic year The Governing Board's role in promoting the personal development of pupils Internal accountability and governance Improving attendance, reducing persistent absence, and addressing children missing education – a whole school approach – the changing role of the local authority Governors' monitoring visits Pupil Premium and other funding External accountability (LA and Ofsted) including the Ofsted Toolkit Support and Challenge and asking challenging questions Staff well-being Governors' role in headteacher wellbeing Keeping Children Safe in Education Suspension and Permanent Exclusion – The Governors' Role SEND/vulnerable learners - the role of the SEND Governor Appraisal of the headteachers performance Face to face sessions - Termly sessions for governors to attend virtually for surgery type questions	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland	Certificate in Academy Governance	Certificate in Academy Governance	Module 1 is common across a number of our Level 4 certificates and covers core governance knowledge and skills. This will give students an in-depth grounding in the principles of good governance.Module 2 provides a broad understanding of the background to the academies sector, the common governance structures and the variety of internal structures for local governance.Module 3 examines the legislative background to the academies sector and the different external agencies who regulate Trusts, including the key regulatory bodies within the Department for Education.Module 4 provides a broad understanding of the	Online	Certificate	Paid

			key principles affecting financial management in a Trust and its academies and how they affect the trustees and office holders as they seek to discharge their legal duties and responsibilities in practice.			
Cheshire East	Modern governor e-learning	https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/info-for-schools/governor-resources/school-governors.aspx	**Governance Collection** Academy governance Academy management account Asbestos in schools Careers guidance: board responsibilities Church schools governance Clerking 1: understanding governance Clerking 2: administration Clerking 3: people and relationships Clerking 4: advice and guidance Data for governors Disciplinary hearings - be prepared Effective governance Effective minute writing Effective scrutiny of school budgets Exclusions refresher EYFS: effective teaching and learning Equalities FGM: Female genital mutilation Financial Management – academy and maintained settings GDPR for schools - Updated Governing board meetings Governor visits Headteacher recruitment Headteacher / board relationships Headteacher wellbeing - Coming soon Health and safety Honour-based violence & forced marriage HR: an introduction for governors Introduction to governance 1 Introduction to governance 2 Investigations - best practice Joining a trust (formerly converting to academy status) Monthly budget monitoring Ofsted Prevent - includes radicalisation Pupil premium RSE: relationships and sex education Safeguarding and governance Safeguarding and child protection: an introduction Safer recruitment refresher School complaints refresher School federation SEND: special educational needs and disabilities SFVS: schools financial value standard Social media for school governors SMSC: spiritual, moral, social & cultural development Strategic leadership: obligations, opportunities and pitfalls Teacher pay The curriculum and beyond The modern apprentice Understanding multi academy trusts - New What to expect from your chair What to expect from your clerk Young carers and the role of governors **Working effectively with others** Giving and receiving feedback	Online	Certificate	Paid

			Meeting skills Questioning techniques Transgender awareness **Facilitation skills** Facilitation skills Being assertive Conflict resolution **Communication Skills** Public speaking Working with the media Getting started with social media Plain English Information security Spelling, grammar and punctuation Effective writing **Podcasts** A range of topics covered to support strategic governance **Personal effectiveness** Managing yourself & your time Managing your priorities Stress awareness Healthy lifestyles Personal resilience Emotional intelligence Finance for non-financial managers **Leading Change** Becoming an effective leader Developing your leadership style Change management 1: introduction Change management 2: change and people Change management 3: the change process Change management 4: change tools Communicating change			
Cheshire East	Annual conferences	https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/info-for-schools/governor-resources/school-governors.aspx	Cheshire East Annual Governors' Conference	In-person	No	Paid
Conwy County Borough Council	Hwb or E-learning	https://www.conwy.gov.uk/en/Resident/Education-and-Families/School-Governors/School-Governor-Courses/School-Governor-Courses.aspx	New Governors* (to be completed within 12 months of appointment) New Chair of Governors* (to be completed within 6 months of appointment) New Clerk of Governors* (to be completed within 12 months of appointment) Understanding Data* (to be completed within 12 months of appointment) Safeguarding - Keeping Learners Safe Online Safety for Governors GDPR Training for Schools Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Modern Slavery and Adult Safeguarding The Effective Governing Body	Online	No	Paid
Cornwall County Council	Governor Training	Training and Events | Cornwall Services for Schools	GOV1 - Induction for New Governors - An Introduction to Governance (Day 1) GOV1 - Induction for New Governors - An Introduction to Governance (Day 2) GOV1 - Induction for New Governors - An Introduction to Governance (Day 3)	Online	No	Paid
Cyngor Gwynedd	Governors Support Unit	Microsoft Word - Rhaglen Hyfforddiant Llywodraethwyr Gwynedd 2019-20 - Saesneg.docx	**Mandatory** Induction for New Governors Role of the Chair Interpretation of Data **Optional** Redundancy and Finance Child Protection			
Denbighshire County Council	E-learning for School Governors in Wales	Training for governors and clerks | Denbighshire County Council	National Training Programme for Understanding Data A Training Programme for Governing Body Chairs A Training Programme for Governing Body Clerks A Training Programme for Governor Induction Complaints Procedures The Effective Governing Body	Online	No	Paid

Derbyshire County Council	Governor Training	Training & Events | Derbyshire Services for Schools	Virtual Training - Safeguarding Training for School GovernorsVirtual Training - Welcome to Governance: 2-module course Safer Recruitment Training Virtual Training - Course for New and Prospective ChairsEducation Data Hub: Data Protection Governor TrainingVirtual Training - Headteacher Performance ManagementSchool Finance Training for GovernorsVirtual Event - SEND governor networkVirtual Training - School Complaints ProcedureVirtual Event - Networking for chairsIn-person Event - Governor Strategic Briefing Autumn 2024Virtual option of: In-person Event - Governor Strategic Briefing Autumn 2024Virtual Training - Preparing for OfstedCyber Security Awareness Training for School Staff	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Edsential	Governor Training	Governance Services (edsential.com)	Know your school – Effective use of Pupil Premium in your school and the role of the Pupil Premium Governor Online Training for Chairs of Governors SEND Workshop – knowledge for governors and SEND governor – Online Training Effective Governance – are you asking the right questions? Know your Team – What are the Strengths and Development Areas for your GB and how to make the Team Work Better – Online Training The Safeguarding Responsibilities of Governors Understanding school finance and Asking the Right Questions Effective Headteacher Performance Management Performance Related Pay for Governors Governor Responsibilities in Health and Safety Understanding School Finance – Schools Financial Value Standard Being an Effective Governor in Understanding Curriculum and Pedagogy Governors Safer Recruitment Training Preparation for Inspection: What Governors Need to Know Governors – Handling Staffing HR Matters in School A Governors' role in understanding Fraud and Audit within schools – Online Training New Governors' Induction Training	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Education & Training Foundation	Being an effective board member	Being an effective board member | Learning | Education and Training Foundation (etfoundation.co.uk)	Understanding your role and the role of the board Recognising effective board behaviours Safeguarding for Governors and Trustees Prevent for further education (FE) and training Leading a committee Virtual governance Understanding your role as safeguarding governor	Online/In-person	Certificate	Free
Education & Training Foundation	Strategy and educational character	Strategy and educational character | Learning | The Education and Training Foundation (etfoundation.co.uk)	Introduction to strategy, mission and values Understanding the sector, policy and change inspection Developing educational character Supporting effective risk change management Scrutinising strategic change	Online/In-person	Certificate	Free
Education & Training Foundation	Curriculum	Curriculum | Learning | The Education and Training Foundation (etfoundation.co.uk)	Introduction to curriculum design and planning Understanding of your curriculum offer and student profile Developing the curriculum Partnership working	Online/In-person	Certificate	Free
Education & Training Foundation	Quality and standards	Quality and standards | Learning | The Education and Training Foundation (etfoundation.co.uk)	Delivering effective teaching, learning and assessment The self-assessment and quality at inspection improvement process Supporting improvements in teaching, learning and assessment Board involvement	Online/In-person	Certificate	Free
Education & Training Foundation	Finance, risk and audit	Finance, risk and audit | Learning | The Education and Training Foundation (etfoundation.co.uk)	Financial management for board members Introduction to audit Strategic financial management and understanding funding Audit for audit committee members Board assurance frameworks Advanced financial decision making	Online/In-person	Certificate	Free
Education & Training Foundation	Board leadership and organisational development	Board leadership and organisational development | Learning | The Education and Training Foundation (etfoundation.co.uk)	Understanding board responsibilities Creating inclusive organisations change Culture, people and organisational development Board responsibilities and duties for senior postholders Leading significant organisational	Online/In-person	Certificate	Free

Education Authority Northern Ireland	CSSC Governor Training	CSSC Governor Training | Education Authority Northern Ireland (eani.org.uk)	Governors and Ethos One (Improvement Ethos) Governors and Ethos Two (Community) Governors and Ethos Three (Supporting Whole School Resilience)	Online	No	Paid
Entrust Education	Governor Training	https://entrust.education/Training?Id=2800	Chairs and Vice Chairs Briefing Autumn Term 2024 (Staffordshire Schools Only) Introduction to the Role of Link GovernorChairs and Vice Chairs Briefing Autumn Term 2024 (National)Effective Headteacher and Staff Performance ManagementThe Role of the Chair of Governors - for those who are new or aspiring to the role)How do you know your Board is Effective?Welcome to Being a Governor - Part 1Exclusions - The Role of GovernorsFinance for Governors - Maintained SchoolsUnderstanding Your School's Curriculum for GovernorsWelcome to Being a Governor - Part 2Finance for Governors - AcademiesChairs & Headteachers - working as partnersComplaints - the role of GovernorsIs Your Board Ready for Ofsted?Preparing for Ofsted - Special SchoolsStrategic Leadership and Vision for GovernorsAn introduction to external performance dataStrategic Leadership and Vision for GovernorsHalton Governor Conference 2024 – Preparing for the future!Evaluating the use of Pupil Premium and Recovery FundingEffective Support and ChallengeSEND in mainstream schools - the role of GovernorsHow do you know your Board is Effective?Finance for Governors - Maintained SchoolsExclusions - The Role of GovernorsFinance for Governors - AcademiesChairs & Headteachers - working as partnersUnderstanding Your School's Curriculum for GovernorsStrategic Leadership and Vision for Governors (2 day)Introduction to the Role of Link GovernorPreparing for Ofsted - Special SchoolsSEND in mainstream schools - the role of GovernorsAn introduction to external performance dataExclusions - The Role of Governors	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Flintshire County Council	E-learning for School Governors	Governors (flintshire.gov.uk)	National Training Programme for Understanding Data A Training Programme for Governing Body Chairs A Training Programme for Governing Body Clerks A Training Programme for Governor Induction Complaints Procedures The Effective Governing Body	Online	No	Paid
Flintshire County Council	Governor Development Unit	Governors (flintshire.gov.uk)	Variety	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Governors for Schools	Webinars	Online training and support for school governors - Governors for Schools	How we can support you with school governor and academy Trustee recruitment Introduction to Governance webinar (September 2024) Better governor webinar: Hot topics for autumn 2024	Online	Certificate	Mix
Governors for Schools	E-learning	Governors for Schools eLearning - Governors for Schools	**Starting out on your journey** Become an effective new school governor Become an effective new governor in maintained schools Become an effective new governor in academies An Introduction to School Governance An Introduction to School Governance in Wales – the governor journey Cyflwyniad i Lywodraethu Ysgolion yng Nghymru — taith y llywodraethwr The English School System **Starting out as an academy trustee** Becoming a Trustee **Developing your skills and knowledge further and specialist topics** Wellbeing governors: building a wellbeing culture in school Reducing avoidable exclusions Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Driving School Improvement Anti-bullying: the role of governance Recruiting a headteacher: a practical guide for governors	Online	Certificate	Mix
GSS	Training	Recent course handouts - GovernorSupport	Introduction to Governance – Part 1,slides Introduction to Governance – Part 2,slides Understanding and monitoring the curriculum – slides & additional resourcesPreparing for OfstedHeadteacher Appraisal course for governorsUnderstanding the curriculumAsking the right questions Core Governor Induction Training, Part 3Core Governor Induction Training, Part 2Core Governor Induction Training, Part 1Governing the finances (maintained schools)Meeting with the InspectorGovernor Safeguarding Responsibilities and KCSiEHeadteacher Performance ManagementAn Inspector Calls-Preparing for OfstedAsking the right questionsUnderstanding your school – looking at dataHandling ComplaintsChairs Network MeetingSchools Admission Appeals courseUnderstanding school DataExclusion Appeals TrainingGovernors`Roles & Responsibilities for School ImprovementSpecial Educational Needs (SEND) courseMental Health and Wellbeing – The Governors Responsibilities	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Hampshire Governor Services	New to Governance: Essential courses for	Training courses we offer | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)	Induction for New Governors Safeguarding Children Understanding Data in Primary Schools Data Masterclass for Secondary Governors	Online/In-person	No	Paid

	all governors		Ofsted Understanding Finance in Schools Introduction to Academy Finance Understanding Personnel Matters Understanding the Governors' Role in Monitoring and Evaluating SEND Understanding the Special School Governors' Role in Monitoring and Evaluating SEND Understanding the Primary Curriculum Secondary Curriculum Workshop Holding Leaders to Account			
Hampshire Governor Services	Leadership Roles: Key courses for those with a designated leadership role	Training courses we offer | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)	Essentials of Chairing Chairs' Seminars **Development Programme for Chairs** Leadership Development Workshop Coaching Skills Chairs and Headteachers: Effective Partnerships Soft Skills and People Management Leading Effective Virtual Governance Structures and Compliance Leading in Challenging Circumstances Development for DTGs Development and Training Governor (DTG) Meetings	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Hampshire Governor Services	Continued Training and Development: Courses relevant to committee roles or designated governor responsibilities	Training courses we offer | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)	Strategic Leadership Effective Questioning Workshop Policies – Evaluating Their Impact Handling and Resolving Complaints Exclusion Practice and Procedures Improving School Attendance (Primary) Improving Schools Attendance (Secondary) Effective Use of Pupil Premium Behaviour Management – The Governors' Role Supporting Success for Pupils Experiencing Vulnerability Promoting Equality and Diversity Pupil Wellbeing in Primary Schools Pupil Wellbeing in Secondary Schools Pupil Voice (Primary) Pupil Voice (Secondary) Careers Guidance in Secondary Schools Early Years Foundation Stage Tackling Bullying in Schools – The Governors' Role **Safeguarding and child protection training and resources** Monitoring and Evaluating Safeguarding Culture Essential Training for Safeguarding Governors and Chairs of Governors Safer Recruitment Workshop Performance Management Training The Governors' Role in Employment Matters Staff Wellbeing Personnel in Academies Strategic Finance in Schools Academy Finance Workshop Effective Local Governance in a Multi-Academy Trust Academy Governance Network Meeting School Buildings Understanding Health and Safety in Schools	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Hampshire Governor Services	E-learning	Training courses we offer | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)	**Welcome programmes** Welcome to Hampshire Governor Services Welcome Programme for Governors **Roles and responsibilities** Parents as Governors – Getting it Right Staff as Governors – Getting it Right Clerking in an Academy Forming or Joining a Multi-Academy Trust Ensuring Effective Governor Visits **Supporting committee roles or designated governor responsibilities** An introduction to Safeguarding Introduction to School Finance for Maintained School Governors Understanding SEND Developing Careers Provision in Schools Promoting the Educational Achievement of Children in Care **Support for Handling Emergency or Difficult Situations** Conducting Investigations Dealing with Pay Appeals Dealing with Child Protection Allegations Governor Hearings on Staffing Matters Governors' Discipline Committees Complaints Handling Reconstitution Guidance	Online	No	Paid
Hampshire Governor Services	Whole Governing Body Training	Training courses we offer | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)	Committee EffectivenessCommunicating with the CommunityComplaintsCurriculum – Intent, Implementation and Impact in Your SchoolDeveloping Outstanding GovernanceEffective GovernanceEffective QuestioningEnsuring Robust Pay and Performance DecisionsEqualitiesEvaluating School PoliciesEvaluating and Developing Your School's Christian CharacterEvaluating Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC)FinanceGoverning Body Self EvaluationGovernors and OfstedThe Governors' Role in School ImprovementGovernors' Visits to the SchoolGovernor Recruitment and Succession PlanningHeadship SelectionHolding School Leaders to AccountImproving Attainment in Vulnerable GroupsInclusion, Attendance and WellbeingManaging the Work of the Governing	Online/In-person	No	Paid

			BodyMonitoring BehaviourMonitoring and EvaluationMonitoring Safeguarding in Your SchoolMoving the School to GoodMoving the School from Good to OutstandingPersonnelPupil PremiumPupil Wellbeing and AttainmentRelationships and Sex Education and Health Education (RSHE)Revisiting Your School's Christian ValuesRisk Management in Maintained SchoolsRoles and ResponsibilitiesSafeguarding ChildrenSchool Self EvaluationSetting the Strategic DirectionSpecial Educational Needs and DisabilitiesSupporting Higher AttainersUsing Your School's Data to Improve Pupil OutcomesWorking as a Team (Co-acting Styles)Working with Parents			
Herefordshire Governance Association	HGA Governor Events & CPD	HGA - Governor & Clerk training & CPD Herefordshire (herefordshiregovernors.org.uk)	Governor Core Development Training (Induction, New Govs & Refresher) HT Performance Management & Appraisal Panel training Governor Safeguarding & KCSiE 2024 updates Making Sense of School Data Understanding School Finance Mental Health & Wellbeing in School - the governors' responsibility Understanding & Monitoring the Curriculum Governors' Role & Responsibilities in School Improvement Joining an Multi Academy Trust Governance Professional (Clerk) Induction Clerks' Briefing Chair Training Governors' Roles & Responsibilities in School Improvement Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) Requirements Pupil Exclusions & Appeals - panel, clerk & HT training School Admissions & Appeals panel & clerk training HR Matters for Governors Safer Recruitment GB Responsibilities for Looked After Children (LAC) EAL and the impact on whole-school outcomes Asking the Right Questions Ofsted Updates & Inspection Guidance How can Governors make sure Sports Premium's effective? Articles of Association: What you should know; including how & when to update Diversity & Equality Awareness Local Gov/Advisory Board Trustee induction training	Online/In-person	No	Mix
HfL Education	Governor Training Courses - LA Maintained	governor-training-courses-2023-la-maintained_0.pdf (hfleducation.org)	Admissions AppealsAdmissions and the School Admissions CodeA whole school approach to mental health and wellbeingDealing with Difficult People and Courageous ConversationsDisciplinary HearingsEffective GovernanceEffective Listening and Effective QuestioningEffective use of Pupil PremiumExclusionsHandling School ComplaintsHeadteacher Performance ManagementHealth and Safety (introduction to)Improving Outcomes for All ChildrenInduction for GovernorsKnowing your School & Ofsted – governanceMeeting with the Ofsted InspectorNew to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)Prevent DutyRecruitment, Education and Training GovernorRole of the Safeguarding Link GovernorSafeguarding ChildrenSafer RecruitmentSafer Recruitment RefresherSchool Finance OverviewSchools Recruitment – An overview of best practice in Leadership RecruitmentSuccession Planning & StrategyUnderstanding Assessment DataUnderstanding the LandscapeVision, Mission and Strategy	Online/In-person	No	Paid
HfL Education	Governonr Training Courses - Academies	governor-training-courses-2023-academies_0.pdf (hfleducation.org)	Academies Finance Overview – Trustees and Governors Admissions Appeals Admissions and the School Admissions Code A whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing Dealing with Difficult People and Courageous Conversations Disciplinary Hearings Effective Governance Effective Listening and Effective Questioning Effective use of Pupil Premium Exclusions Governor Visits Handling Academy Complaints Headteacher Performance Management Health and Safety (introduction to) Improving Outcomes for All Children Induction for Governors Knowing your School & Ofsted MAT governance for Trustee Board and Local Governing Boards Meeting with the Ofsted Inspector New to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Prevent Duty Recruitment, Education and Training Governor – link role	Online/In-person	No	Paid

			Role of the Safeguarding Link Governor Safeguarding Children Safer Recruitment Safer Recruitment Refresher Schools Recruitment Course – An overview of best practice in Leadership Recruitment Succession Planning & Strategy Understanding Assessment Data Vision, Mission and Strategy			
Isle of Angelsey County Council	Governors' Developme nt Programme 2023/24	School governor development and training programme	Make effective use of information sources Health and Safety in Schools (and educational visits) Exclusions: HWB – Maximum use of resources Additional Learning Needs The Role of Governors / Critical Friend Effective Finance Management Trauma Informed Schools School improvement guidance Supporting Welsh in Education Data Protection in Schools Governor Training: Promoting Good School Attendance A whole school approach to wellbeing and inclusion	In-perso n	No	Paid
Isle of Angelsey County Council	E-learning for School Governors	E-Learning for School Governors in Wales (e-learning-governors-in-wales.org.uk)	National Training Programme for Understanding Data A Training Programme for Governing Body Chairs A Training Programme for Governing Body Clerks A Training Programme for Governor Induction Complaints Procedures The Effective Governing Body	Onlin e	No	Paid
Isle of Angelsey County Council	Open Learn	OLCreate: Wales school governor collection | OLCreate (open.edu)	Cyflwyniad i arweinyddiaeth i lywodraethwyrAn introduction to leadership for school governors (Wales)Gwaith Tîm: Hyfforddiant i LywodraethwyrTeamwork: an introduction for school governors (Wales)Addysg gynhwysol: deall yr hyn a olygwnInclusive education: knowing what we mean (Wales)	Onlin e	No	Free
Isle of Angelsey County Council	Bespoke Training	School governor development and training programme	Getting the Call – Estyn How to be a Critical Friend Effective Use of Data Book scrutiny – explaining the process School Treasure Hunt – what should you expect to see when walking around the school?	In-perso n	No	Paid
Leeds for Learning	Training & Events	Training & Events | Leeds for Learning	Virtual: Governor Information Session, Autumn Term 1 2024 Virtual: Governor - Induction Course Module 1 for Governors Virtual: Prevent awareness training for school governors Safeguarding training for lead safeguarding governors H&S Bitesize Training - Health and Safety Fundamentals for Senior Leaders (Module 3) Virtual: Senior leader and governor briefing Virtual: Governor - Induction Course Module 2 for Governors Virtual: Governor - Supporting the Education of Children Looked After (CLA) Governor Training Virtual: Governor - Headteacher Performance Management Virtual Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) risk and threat training Virtual: Governor - School Finance for Governors Governor HR Training Virtual: Governor - Preparing for Ofsted and Effective Governance Safeguarding training for lead safeguarding governors Virtual: Governor - training for new chairs of governors (NEW COURSE) Virtual: Governor - Handling Complaints to the Governing Body Mathematics Conference and Exhibition 2024 Virtual: Governor - Headteacher Performance Management Virtual: Governor Information Session, Autumn Term 2 2024 English and Literacy Conference and Exhibition 2024 Virtual: Governor - Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Virtual: Governor - Effective curriculum monitoring Virtual: Governor - Early Reading and Phonics Virtual: Governor - Induction Course Module 1 for Governors Governor - Effective Chairing network (NEW COURSE) Virtual: Governor - Induction Course Module 2 for Governors Virtual: Governor - Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Virtual: Prevent awareness training for school governors	Onlin e/In-perso n	No	Mix

			Virtual: Governor Information Session, Spring 1 2025 Virtual: Governor - Induction Course Module 1 for Governors Safeguarding training for lead safeguarding governors Virtual: Governor - Induction Course Module 2 for Governors H&S Bitesize Training - Health and Safety Fundamentals for Senior Leaders (Module 3) Governor - Effective Chairing network (NEW COURSE) Virtual: Senior leader and governor briefing Virtual: Governor - Pupil Premium and Diminishing the Difference Virtual: Annual launch of 2025/26 offer - what's new on Leeds for Learning Virtual: Governor - Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Virtual: Governor - Improving Pupil Attendance Virtual: Safeguarding training for lead safeguarding governors Virtual: Governor - Preparing for Ofsted and Effective Governance Virtual: Governor Information Session, Spring Term 2 2025 Governor - Effective Chairing network (NEW COURSE) Virtual: Governor - Induction Course Module 1 for Governors Virtual: Governor - Induction Course Module 2 for Governors Virtual: Governor - School Finance for Governors Virtual: Governor - Effective curriculum monitoring Governor - Effective Chairing network (NEW COURSE) Virtual: Governor - Supporting the Education of Children Looked After (CLA) Governor Training Virtual: Governor - Improving Pupil Attendance Virtual: Governor - Induction Course Module 1 for Governors Virtual: Governor Information Session, Summer Term 1 2025 Virtual: Governor - Handling Complaints to the Governing Body Virtual: Governor - Induction Course Module 2 for Governors Virtual Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) risk and threat training Virtual: Governor - Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Governor - Effective Chairing network (NEW COURSE) Virtual: Governor - Preparing for Ofsted and Effective Governance Virtual: Governor Information Session, Summer Term 2 2025 Virtual: Safeguarding training for lead safeguarding governors Virtual: Governor - Induction Course Module 1 for Governors Virtual Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) risk and threat training Virtual: Governor - Induction Course Module 2 for Governors Virtual Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) risk and threat training Governor - Effective Chairing network (NEW COURSE) Virtual: Prevent awareness training for school governors Virtual Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) risk and threat training eLearning: Fraud awareness for Leeds maintained schools staff and governors On demand: Bespoke Ofsted Training On-demand - Governing Body Briefing			
Leicester Council	Training and Development	School's Extranet (leicester.gov.uk)	**Leicester City Council** Safeguarding for Governors Health and Safety **The Mead Institute for Professional Learning** Multiple external **Learning Link** Multiple NGA **Safer recruitment training** Safer recruitment training - NSPCC	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Lewisham Services for Schools	Training and Events	Training & Events | Lewisham Services for Schools	FREE Briefing for Chairs - Autumn Term 2024 Mental Health and Well-Being of School Staff and Students: What Do Governors Need to Know? – ONLINE Induction for New Governors (2-part course) - ONLINE Induction for New Governors (2-part course) - ONLINE School Self-Evaluation/ School Improvement and the Role of Governors - ONLINE Safer Recruitment (face to face session) Finance Update for Governors including the Autumn Statement and Staff Pay - ONLINE The Governors' Role in Managing Grievance and other Human Resources Management Issues – ONLINE The Responsibilities of Governors for Health and Safety – ONLINE The Strategic Role of Governors - ONLINE Helping Primary and Secondary Governors to Understand Pupil Data Using the Inspection Dashboard	Online/In-person	No	Paid
London Borough of Bexley	Governor Training	Training & Events | Bexley Services Network	The Role of the Safeguarding Governor Contextual Safeguarding and Prevent Training Safer Recruitment (one day course, physical attendance required at Civic Offices)	Online/In-	No	Paid

				person		
London Borough of Hounslow	Governor Training	Training & Events | Hounslow Services for Schools	GS: Achieving a broad and balanced curriculum in special schoolsGS: An Introduction to the Prevent Duty for GovernorsGS: Chairing Disciplinary & Grievance PanelsGS: Chairs'/LA BriefingGS: Clerks' BriefingGS: Effective governors' monitoring visits to schoolGS: Employment LawGS: Equality Duty TrainingGS: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion on your Governing BodyGS: Finance for the more experienced GovernorGS: Getting your head around finance (basic)GS: Governance for Special Schools and Specialist SettingsGS: Headteacher & Senior Leadership AppraisalGS: Health and Safety Essentials for GovernorsGS: HR Overview - Terms and Conditions and PayGS: Making Sense of Data - "What's my school's story?"GS: Managing concerns to Avoid ComplaintsGS: Managing Conflict & Dealing with Difficult PeopleGS: New Chairs InductionGS: New Governor EssentialsGS: Preparedness for OfstedGS: Pupil focussed Wellbeing & Mental Health: The Governors ResponsibilityGS: Safeguarding Training - required to meet statutory requirementsGS: Safer RecruitmentGS: Self Evaluation TrainingGS: SENDGS: Strategic Governance in 2024GS: Strategic Governance in 2025GS: Suspensions and Exclusions- what governors need to know in 2025GS: Taking SEND Governance to the Next LevelGS: The CurriculumGS: The EYFS for Governors	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Luton School Support Services	Training and Events	Training & Events | School Support Services (luton.gov.uk)	Ofsted Update Briefing for Governors 24/25 Briefing for Chairs of Governing Bodies (Autumn Term 2024) Exclusions, Behaviour & Discipline Briefing for Clerks to Governing Bodies The Role of the SEND Governor Governor Induction Training – Part 1 Online Safety for Schools and Governors Workshop for Governors Governor Induction Training – Part 2 Staff Recruitment, Wellbeing and Retention Finance Overview	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Narional Governance Association (NGA)	E-learning	Training directory | National Governance Association (nga.org.uk)	**Safeguarding** Essential safeguarding for governors and trustees Safer Recruitment **Policies and procedures** Handling complaints in schools and trusts Interactive NGA Skills Audit Governing board evaluation Introduction to local governance **Greener Governance** Environmental sustainability: the governance role **Equality, Diversity, Inclusion** Equality, diversity and inclusion e-learning programme Equality and diversity: a practical guide for governors **Induction** Effectiveness: governance making an impact, changing lives Working together: building the team and improving the organisation Your organisation: understanding school structures and what children should learn Strategy: living your values, reaching your vision, managing the risk Effective financial governance in schools and trusts Compliance: assuring your organisation, keeping it safe, secure and solvent Progress and Attainment: using your data Governance: your role, responsibilities and organisation **Governing Board Roles** Effective MAT Governance Getting it right as a staff governor Different models of governance Handling difficult situations Holding to account: how to conduct a courageous conversation **Strategic Planning** Ethical leadership: a planning tool Creating a new vision for your school or trust Recruitment Succession planning **Monitoring and Outcomes** Monitoring and evaluation Monitoring performance data and targets Governance monitoring: a tool to help drive improvement Holding to account: how to question and challenge	Online	Certificate	Paid

			Governance visits to schools **Pupils & Learning** Arts, culture and creativity: improving your school or trust and its curriculum Pupil premium Early years education Minimising exclusions **SEND** The governance of SEND **Staff** Recruiting a senior executive leader Headteacher appraisal and capability Setting performance objectives for executive leaders **Governance Workload** Management of workload and wellbeing: the governance role **Compliance & Legislation** Health and safety **Finance & Resources** Using Integrated curriculum and financial planning (ICFP) **Stakeholder engagement** Stakeholder engagement: the governance role **Ofsted inspections** Ofsted inspections: step-by-step Ofsted: the inspection framework			
Narional Governance Association (NGA)	Training & Development	Training directory | National Governance Association (nga.org.uk)	**Chairing**Development for chairs of Maintained SchoolsDevelopment for chairs of Single Academy TrustsDevelopment for chairs of Multi Academy TrustsDevelopment for chairs of Local Governing BodiesWelcome to Governance LIVE – for new governors in maintained schools**Strategic Planning**An introduction to being strategicCreating a new vision and strategy for your organisationSuccessful governance visits**Monitoring & Outcomes**An introduction to data and performance measuresSenior leader performance management**Induction**An introduction to governance: multi academy trusteesAn introduction to governance: MAT academy committee membersAn introduction to governance: maintained school governorsAn introduction to governance: single academy trustees**School & Trust Leaders** Board dynamics and good relationships**Finances & Resources**Financial oversight in maintained schools: fulfilling the governance roleGenerating income: the governance role**School Structures**Forming or joining a MAT**Governing Board Roles**Getting the right people round the tableYour governance framework: understanding your role and responsibilitiesThe governance role in managing risk**Greener Governance**Greener governance: environmentally sustainable schools**SEND**Effective governance of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)**Safeguarding**Safeguarding: fulfilling the governance role**Policies and procedures**Panel work: exclusions, complaints and employment**Ofsted Inspection**Navigating Ofsted – what governors and trustees need to know	Online/In-person	Certificate	Paid
Newcastle City Council	Governor Training	Training & Events | Services to Schools	Being the early years link governor Being the safeguarding link governor Being the safeguarding link governor - bitesize session Being the SEN link governor Effective Chairing Effective Challenge Effective Challenge - bitesize session Equality and diversity - an introduction Equality and diversity - an introduction bitesize training How to handle complaints How to Review Board Effectiveness Induction Introduction to Headteacher Performance Review Knowing your school - children in care Knowing your school - data (first, primary and middle) Knowing your school - stakeholder engagement Knowing your school - stakeholder engagement - bitesize session Preparing for Ofsted Prevent Briefing Priorities for the term Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) Termly Briefing Understanding School Finances (maintained schools) Wellbeing for headteachers and chairs	Online/In-person	No	Paid

Norfolk County Council	Training Courses	Training courses - Norfolk Schools and Learning Providers - Norfolk County Council	Academy Trustee Induction Attendance - The Governors Role Behaviour and Exclusions Cyber Security Effective Complaints Management in Schools Governor Induction Monitoring in Practice Ofsted for Governors Pupil Premium Safeguarding Children in Education - The Governors Role SEND - The Governors Role The Chair of Governors - Role and Responsibilities Understanding Attainment and Progress Data Workload and Wellbeing	Online/In-person	No	Paid
North Lincolnshire Services for Education	Governor Development Services	Training & Events | North Lincolnshire (servicesforeducation.org.uk)	Governors' Leadership BriefingUnderstanding Teaching and Learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)KCSIE 2024 Update - Understanding Current Legislation and Statutory GuidanceThe Role of LADO - Governor ResponsibilitiesEffective Governance - Introduction/InductionGovernors' Role in the Appraisal ProcessData/IDSR: Asking the Right QuestionsStrategic Approach to FinanceHow Safe is Your School? Safeguarding Audit Toolkit for Governors (Ofsted Readiness)Understanding the North Lincolnshire Big Six and Providing Appropriate Support and ChallengeAttendance MattersPupil Premium and the Use of Research Based EvidenceHow Safe is Your School? A School Approach to Anti-bullyingGovernor Networking SessionChairs' Development CourseUnderstanding Curriculum Intent and How that Impacts on the Development of the Delivered CurriculumOfsted Update 2024-25 - Key MessagesHow Safe is Your School? Living in a Digital AgeOrdinarily Available Provision and Escalating Additionality-SENDUnderstanding the School Financial Values Standard and Assurance StatementExclusions and Behaviour - Governor UpdateEffective Governance - Monitoring/EvaluationBritish Values & the Wider Curriculum: What Does It Look Like & How to Monitor Impact?How Safe is Your School? ExploitationUnderstanding the SEND Review Process and DataGoverning Body Self-ReviewHow Safe is Your School? PreventEffective Governance - Accountability	Online/In-person	No	Paid
North Tyneside Education Services	Governor Support	Training & Events | Education Services	Governors: Headteacher Appraisal Training Effective Management of Health and Safety Wellbeing Session for Headteachers and Chairs Governors: Headteacher Appraisal Training Effective Management of Health and Safety Wellbeing Session for Headteachers and Chairs Governors: New Governor Induction Day 1 (Over 2 sessions *must attend both*) Governors: New Governor Induction Day 2 Governors: Understanding school finance for maintained school governors Governors: Appropriate Challenge - The Governors Role Governors: Educational Visits Management Governors: A Governor's Guide to the Early Years Foundation Stage	Online/In-person	No	Paid
NSPCC	Training	Safeguarding training for school governors | NSPCC Learning	Child protection for school governors training Child protection for school governors and trustees (2.0)	Online	Certificate	Paid
One Education	Governor Training	Govenor-Brochure-2023-24.pdf (wpdns.site)	Governors' briefing Safeguarding Holding the HT and staff to account - your role in performance management New governor induction (part 1) New governor induction (part 2) Link Governor Network - Safeguarding Ofsted Understanding your data Primary governors Understanding your data Secondary governors Governor Visits Academy Finance Governor Panels Link Governor Managing behaviour – including suspensions and pupil exclusions Attendance School Finance Trust governance Improving your effectiveness as a governor – Keynote update and workshop for experienced governors to support improved personal practice Meeting the needs of vulnerable children including pupils with SEND and those meeting 'Pupil Premium' eligibility criteria	Online	Certificate	Paid

			Link Governor network - SEND Link governor network - Curriculum Strategic planning and monitoring framework			
Open University	An introduction to leadership for school governors (Wales)	An introduction to leadership for school governors (Wales) | OpenLearn - Open University	An introduction to leadership for governors 1. What is educational leadership? 2. The context of leadership in Wales 3. Leadership and school improvement 4. Types of leadership 5 Leading professional learning development (PLD) 6 Review of your learning	Online	Statement of Participation	Free
Oxfordshire County Council	Governor Training	Governor training and development | Oxfordshire Schools	Safeguarding Children Level 2The Special Educational Nedds and Disabilities (SEND) Lead GovernorInduction Part 1 - Schools, Governors and BoardsInduction Part 2 - The Strategic RoleThe Complaints ProcessThe Appraisal ProcessHealth and Safety: the boards roleGovernor MonitoringEarly Years FinanceEarly Years GovernanceFinance: budget construction and monitoringSuccessful ChairingPractical ComplaintsUnderstanding the Primary CurriculumInclusion: what does this mean for governors?Safeguarding in Early Years and Foundation StageThe Safeguarding Lead Governor Level 3Understanding External Performance Data: Primary SchoolsExclusions and Suspensions: information for governing boardsHolding the School to AccountSafer Recruitment	Online/In-person	Certificate	Paid
Oxfordshire County Council	Governor Bitesize Training	Governor training and development | Oxfordshire Schools	Risk Management Introduction Governance Organisation for Maintained Schools Governor Visits School Governance in Oxfordshire Pupil Inclusion: an overview for governors School Finance: the basics The School Improvement Cycle Vision, Ethos, and Strategic Direction	Online	Certificate	Paid
Powys County Council	Governor Training Programme	Governors Training Programme - Powys County Council	Chairs Induction Data Training	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Reading Council Governor Services	Governor Training	Training & Events | Reading Education Services	Headteacher's Performance Management Panels Safeguarding for Governors: How to Strategically Support your DSL and the SLT Chairing the Board New Governor Training Completing the SFVS - A Workshop for Governors and Clerks Finance Training for Governors Exclusions Panels - the Governors' Role Building the Budget - A Workshop for Governors and Clerks	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Rhondda Cynon Taf	Governor Training Programme	https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/SchoolsandLearning/SchoolGovernors/RelateddocsGovernorTrainingProgrammeAutumn2024.pdf	Attendance Careers and WorkRelated Experiences (3 – 16) Children Looked After Complaints Human Resources - Staff Discipline Human Resources - Managing Staff Reduction Human Resources - Staff Sickness Health & Safety and Risk Assessment and Compliance Pupil Exclusions Finance	Online	No	Paid
Royal Borough of Greenwich	Direct Services to Schools	Royal Borough of Greenwich (royalgreenwich.gov.uk)	Chairs' Training Role of the Safeguarding Governor and KCSIE 2024 Understanding the Governors role in Headteacher Performance Management and The Pay Committee Managing deficit budget Getting to know your school's Inspection Dashboard Summary Report (IDSR) Induction for New Governors The changing role of SEND Governance Complaints Training for Governors Sustaining High Quality Governance for Experienced Governors Managing a school budget during challenging times and preparing for a school audit	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Salford City Council	Structures, roles and responsibilities	National Governance Association (NGA) Learning Link•Salford City Council	Governance: Your role, responsibilities and organisation Getting it right as a staff governor Key functions of the governing board Different models of governance	Online/In-person	Certificate	Paid

Salford City Council	Good governance	National Governance Association (NGA) Learning Link•Salford City Council	Effectiveness: Governance making an impact, changing livesWorking Together: Building the team and improving the organisationGovernors' visits to schoolsHandling difficult situationsSuccession planningOfsted and the new inspection frameworkGovernance monitoring: A tool to help drive improvementHolding to account: How to question and challengeHolding to account: How to conduct a courageous conversationEthical LeadershipOfsted inspections: Step by step	Online/In-person	Certificate	Paid
Salford City Council	Vision, ethos and strategic direction	National Governance Association (NGA) Learning Link•Salford City Council	Strategy: living your values, reaching your vision, managing the risk Monitoring and evaluation Equality, diversity and inclusion: First steps Equality, diversity and inclusion: Beyond compliance Equality, diversity and inclusion: Taking action Creating a new vision for your school or trust	Online/In-person	Certificate	Paid
Salford City Council	Pupil success and wellbeing	National Governance Association (NGA) Learning Link•Salford City Council	Your organisation: understanding school structures and what children should learn Progress and attainment: using your data to improve educational outcomes Early Years education Looked after children Pupil Premium Arts, culture and creativity: improving your school or trust and its curriculum Monitoring performance data and targets The governance of SEND Minimising exclusions Panel work: An introduction How to: review suspensions and exclusions How to: run an effective admissions appeal panel How to: run an effective HR review panel How to: run an effective complaints review panel	Online/In-person	Certificate	Paid
Salford City Council	Staffing	National Governance Association (NGA) Learning Link•Salford City Council	Headteacher appraisal and capability Setting performance objectives for executive leaders Recruiting a senior executive leader Managing staff workload and wellbeing: The governance role	Online/In-person	Certificate	Paid
Salford City Council	Stakeholder engagement	National Governance Association (NGA) Learning Link•Salford City Council	Stakeholder engagement: The governance role	Online/In-person	Certificate	Paid
Salford City Council	Finance	National Governance Association (NGA) Learning Link•Salford City Council	Managing Academy Finance Understanding schools finance Finance: Making the most of what you have got Using integrated Curriculum and Financial Planning (ICFP)	Online/In-person	Certificate	Paid
Salford City Council	Compliance	National Governance Association (NGA) Learning Link•Salford City Council	Compliance: Assuring your organisation, keeping it safe, secure and solvent Equality and diversity Health and Safety Safeguarding: How to fulfil the governance role	Online/In-person	Certificate	Paid
Salford City Council	MATs	National Governance Association (NGA) Learning Link•Salford City Council	Effective MAT Governance			
Schools Alliance for Excellence	Governor Training	Governor Events | Schools Alliance for Excellence	Governance Insights Webinars 24-25 Attendance Webinar Autumn 24 Governance: Developing Chairs 24-25 Surrey Outcomes Data Webinar Cyber Security Webinar Autumn 24 Governance Essentials: Enhancing Effectiveness 24-25	Online/In-person	No	Mix
Sefton County Council	Governor Training	Training & Events | Sefton Education	Ofsted Awareness and Roles & Responsibilities Chair of Governors: Role of the Chair An Introduction to School Governance - Part 1 An Introduction to School Governance - Part 2 Energy Efficiency For all your governor training needs. Chair of Governors: Managing Relationships Safer Recruitment in Education - Part 1 Safer Recruitment in Education - Part 2 eSafety Awareness for Governors	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Smart School Services	Governor Training Progamme 2023-2024	Training for Governors | Wandsworth | Services for Schools	Leading in Governance Governors' role in exclusions School Budget Monitoring for Governors Governors Safeguarding Training	Online/In-person	No	Paid

Wandsworth			School Budget Monitoring for Governors Governors' Essentials – Understanding Your Role Understanding behaviour - Key principles for governors School Budget Monitoring for Governors Complaints handling: Effective approach to investigating complaints and drafting an outcome letter Safer Recruitment for school staff & governors Governors' Responsibilities - Equality, diversity and inclusion			
Smart School Services Wandsworth	Governor Training & Support Programme	Training for Governors | Wandsworth | Services for Schools	Governors' responsibilities in relation to Headteacher Performance ManagementNew Governors' Essentials – Understanding Your RoleGovernors' Responsibilities - Equality, diversity and inclusionEffectively Using Key Performance Data Training - Primary SchoolGovernors Safeguarding TrainingComplaints handling: Effective approach to investigating complaints and drafting an outcome letterBriefing - Governors' role in exclusionsEffectively Using Key Performance Data Training - Secondary SchoolHigh Quality SEND GovernanceComplaints handling: What Governors need to know, ask and doLeading in GovernanceGovernors' Essentials – Understanding Your RoleBriefing - Governors' role in exclusionsGovernors Safeguarding Training - Roles and responsibilitiesNew Governors' Essentials – Understanding Your RoleComplaints handling: Effective approach to investigating complaint	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Solihull Governor Services	Governor Training (Summary)	https://www.solgrid.org.uk/education/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2020/02/GOVERNOR-SERVICES-TRAINING-SUMMARY-2022-23.pdf	**Termly** New governor training – three evening seminars - summer and autumn term, one day event spring term Chairs' briefing Clerks' briefing SEND updates **Twice a year** New clerks' training Understanding teacher/headteacher appraisal Preparing for Ofsted Understanding school data (primary) **Annually** Governance of the pupil premium Governance of the PE and sport premium Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Introduction to Solihull LA - School Finance – Part 1 School Finance – Part 2 – the governor's role in school finance School Finance – Part 3 – fraud awareness and the governor's role Refresher course for experienced governors Supporting looked after children Health and safety briefing Mentally healthy schools Understanding school data (secondary) Safeguarding briefing Peer on peer abuse – role of governors **Every two/three years** The governor's role in setting the school's strategic vision statement Equality and diversity Being an effective chair Holding a governing body complaints' panel Performance management for governing body clerks Supporting children with medical conditions in schools Monitoring and challenge for effective governance On-line safety in schools Data protection/Freedom of information – implications for governors Exclusions	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Somerset Council	Governor Training	Global Search | Somerset Council | Training Portal (somersetcounciltraining.co.uk)	Role of the Governance Safeguarding Lead Safeguarding for Governance Boards Safer Recruitment refresher Safer Recruitment New to Governance - Maintained schools - face to face session Understanding a strong curriculum New to governance - maintained schools - online session plus e-learning Governing the pay in your school Special Education Needs: the role of Governance Boards New to governance - academies - online session plus e-learning Navigating Complaints for Governors & Trustees Health and Safety for Governors & Trustees	Online/In-person	No	Mix

			Suspension & permanent exclusion - the role of the Governance Board Governance Board responsibilities for HR in Schools School Governors Financial Management Information School Governance Investigations Chairs' Meeting Preparing for Ofsted Accountability through data Chairs' Meeting (in person) Headteacher performance management and appraisal New and aspiring Chairs Strategic Governance & Monitoring Cybersecurity in education - what the Board needs to know Safer Recruitment			
Southwark Council	Training & Development Programme	Training and development programme 2024 - 2025 | Southwark Schools	New governor induction programme Governors' ForumAchieving a broad and balanced curriculum in special schoolsBudget planning and monitoring in maintained schoolsComplaintsEffective governing body self-evaluationEffective governors' monitoring visits to schoolEmployment law for Governors Equality DutyExclusions - the role of governorsGovernance for Special Schools and Specialist SettingsHeadteacher's appraisal and payHealth and safety in schoolsHR panel training Leading in partnership - a practical workshop for Heads and Chairs of GovernorsOnline safety including the DfE cyber security standardsPersonal development (PSHE) and Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) - UpdatePreparing for an education inspection (primary and secondary schools)Prevent Duty - safeguarding from extremism and radicalisationPromoting the wellbeing of headteachers and SLTs in educationProspective Governor Event Safeguarding: Intermediate levelSafeguarding: Practical applicationSafer recruitment School data for governorsSchools Safeguarding ForumTaking the Chair - induction for new or prospective chairs of governors and committeesTaking SEND Governance to the Next LevelThe strategic role of governorsWorking Together to Improve School Attendance	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Swansea Council	Governor training and development course descriptions	Governor training and development course descriptions - Swansea	Finance and budgets New governor training (mandatory) Child protection Premises maintenance Disciplinary New chair of governors (mandatory) English as an additional language (EAL) learners training Redundancy Attendance Exclusions and role of the PDC Governors using Hwb for admin Headteacher performance management Health and safety HR policy review and safer recruitment Looked after children Management of absence Managing complaints New clerk to governors (mandatory) Keeping safe online for governors RVE (Religion, Values and Ethics) in the new curriculum for Wales Understanding school data Update on RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) in the new curriculum Swansea Music service Bilingualism The ALNET Act - the Swansea ALN strategy and the response required by schools Assessment Curriculum GDPR Diversity and Anti-Racist Professional Learning for Governors	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council	Governor Training	https://www.tameside.gov.uk/governor-training-calendar	New Governor Induction – Module 1Attendance TrainingNew Governor Induction – Module 2New Governor Induction – Module 3Virtual School Training -AutumnHealth & Safety TrainingCurriculum TrainingSafeguarding TrainingFinance Training – Part 1Finance Training – Part 2New Governor Induction – Module 1New Governor Induction – Module 2New Governor Induction – Module 3Role of the Chair TrainingVirtual School Training – SpringCurriculum TrainingNew Governor Induction – Module 1New Governor Induction – Module 2Virtual School Training – SummerNew Governor Induction – Module 3Curriculum Training	Online/In-person	No	Paid

Telford Education Services	Continuing professional development for schools	SchoolPerformanceDocs | Telford Education Services	Meeting the OFSTED Requirements for Equality and Diversity for Governors Induction Training for New Governors Safeguarding Induction Training for Governors Virtual School Conference for Designated Teachers and Nominated Governors for Children in Care Meeting the OFSTED Requirements for Equality and Diversity for Governors Designated Teachers & Governors for Children in Care Network (compulsory school age) Taking the Chair Governors' Responsibilities for Exclusions Safeguarding Refresher Training for Governors Designated Safeguarding Leads' and Safeguarding Governors' Termly Update Governors' Responsibilities for SEND AET Making Sense of Autism – an introduction to Autism for Governors	Online/In-person	No	Paid
The East Midlands Education Support Service	Governor Learning and Development - Scheduled events	Governor Learning and Development | The East Midlands Education Support Service (em-edsupport.org.uk)	New Governor Induction (3 Session Event) Health and Safety HR: Safer Working in Schools - Responsibilities of the Safeguarding Governor Governors Guide to Ofsted HR: Introduction to Pay, Appraisal and Capability for Governors Understanding the Role of the SEND Governor New Governor Induction (3 Session Event) HR: Governors' Role in HR Processes Understanding the Role of the Chair (2 Session Event) NGA Learning Link - Briefing Session HR: Safer Working in Schools - Responsibilities of the Safeguarding Governor Governor Conference 2025	Online/In-person	No	Paid
The East Midlands Education Support Service	Safeguarding	Governor Learning and Development | The East Midlands Education Support Service (em-edsupport.org.uk)	Safeguarding Governor Focus Group meeting Autumn 2024	Online	No	Paid
The East Midlands Education Support Service	Governor Learning and Development - On-demand videos	Governor Learning and Development | The East Midlands Education Support Service (em-edsupport.org.uk)	Governors Guide to the Curriculum Understanding the Role of the EYFS Governor Understanding Statutory Assessment Understanding the Personal Development Curriculum Understanding School Attendance Governors Guide to Early Reading The Role of the Governing Body in Spending, Monitoring and Evaluating the Pupil Premium Information for Governors - British Values GDPR for Governors Information for Governors - Supporting English as an Additional Language Pupils Information for Governors - The Equality Act 2010 Information for Governors - Protected Characteristics in School and the Role of Governors Information for Governors - Refugee and Asylum Seeking Pupils	Online	No	Paid
The Education People	Board Development	Board Development (theeducationpeople.org)	Governing Body Annual Conversation Toolkit Governor Induction Toolkit Clerks Performance Management Toolkit	Online/In-person	No	Paid
The Education People	Chair's Development	Chair's Development (theeducationpeople.org)	How the chair is key to successful and strategic effective governance The chairs' role in ensuring the board fulfils the three core functions An observation to see the chair in action with feedback to support practice and board development How developing professional working relationships based on trust contributes to school improvement and better outcomes for pupils.	Online/In-person	Certificate	Paid
Tower Hamlets	Guidance and training for governors	Guidance and training for governors (towerhamlets.gov.uk)	Directors MeetingAccountability, Support & Challenge: using evidence and asking good questions Governor inductionOftstedPoverty ProofingOrganisational Change (Poss move to Feb)Complaints - panelHeadteacher Performance ManagementSustainable LeadershipDirectors MeetingWellbeing sessionTHEP - FinanceH&S in GovernanceRoles and ResponsibilitiesExclusions trainingDirector meetingGovernor Induction	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Vale of Glamorgan	Governor Training Programme Spring 2024	Spring 2024 Vale of Glamorgan Governor Training Brochure	Curriculum drop-in session Headteacher Performance Management Induction (Welsh) Redundancy Curriculum drop-in session New Chair Induction	Online/In-person	No	Paid

			Data (Welsh) Induction Pupil Exclusions Data (Welsh) Safeguarding (Welsh) School summary report drop-in session Data Food in Schools Enabling Equity & Excellence (Welsh) Headteacher Performance Management Supporting your school through inspection Children Looked After Enabling Equity & Excellence Information Governance Designated Safeguarding Governors (DSGs) Equality			
Wakefield Council	Governor Training	Training & Events | Wakefield Traded Services	The Role of the Chair - Becoming a Chair New Governor Training Handling Complaints The Role of the Chair Part One The Role of the Chair Part Two The Role of the Chair Part Three Making Effective Use of Pupil Premium Safeguarding for Governors SEND and Inclusion for Governors School Finance - Part 1: Setting and Monitoring the School's Budget School Finance - Part 2: How Schools are Funded School Finance - Part 3: SFVS, Benchmarking & Financial Controls (maintained schools) An Introduction to the Early Years Foundation Stage for Governors Governance in Practice RSHE, RE, SMSC – Governor Oversight and Responsibilities Ofsted Readiness PODCAST - Episode 1: Hot Topics – Education & Inclusion PODCAST - Episode 2: Strategic Safeguarding for Governors PODCAST - Episode 3: Education Welfare & Governor Responsibilities PODCAST - Episode 4: Children In Care & Governor Responsibilities PODCAST - Episode 5 - SEND PODCAST - Episode 6: School Finance PODCAST - Episode 7: EDI PODCAST - Episode 8: Wakefield on Board PODCAST - Episode 9: Smokefree PODCAST - Episode 10: Health and Safety	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Warwickshire Governor Services	Safeguarding Training Courses	Professional development for governors, trustees, headteachers and school governance professionals – Warwickshire County Council	Child Protection & Safeguarding Safeguarding Governor's Responsibilities & Monitoring Safer Recruitment Prevent Duty	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Warwickshire Governor Services	Core Topic Training Courses	Professional development for governors, trustees, headteachers and school governance professionals – Warwickshire County Council	Effective Governance in the Early Years & Foundation StageEffective Monitoring, Remote Monitoring & School VisitsEngaging with Parents & The CommunityEquality and School Governance- NEW COURSE FOR 2024/25Finance for Maintained SchoolsGovernor's Role in School Improvement Part 1 of 2 – Self Evaluation & Improvement PlansGovernor's Role in School Improvement Part 2 of 2 – Monitoring & EvaluationGovernor's Role in Staff Performance ManagementGovernor Panels: What Governors Need to KnowHandling Complaints Part 1: Good practice in dealing with School ComplaintsHandling Complaints Part 2: Complex Complaints ManagementHeadteacher Appraisal & Teacher Pay & PerformanceHealth & Safety for Maintained SchoolsJoining a Multi-Academy TrustLeading the Board: The Role of the ChairMarketing your School - NEW COURSE FOR 2024/25Preparing for an Ofsted InspectionPupil Premium – The Performance of Vulnerable Pupil GroupsQuality of Education - NEW COURSE FOR 2024/25Using School Performance DataSchool Website ComplianceSpecial Educational Needs & The Governing Board - NEW FORMAT FOR 2024/25The Governor's Role in School Improvement Part 1 of 2 – Self Evaluation & Improvement PlansThe Governor's Role in School Improvement Part 2 of 2 – Monitoring & EvaluationUsing School Performance Data	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Warwickshire Governor Services	In-house Training - Additional Services	Professional development for governors, trustees, headteachers and school governance professionals – Warwickshire County Council	External Review of Governance Headteacher Induction Programme Challenging Conversations Staff Training Mediation Support	Online/In-person	No	Paid

			Panel Management Support Package Panel Member Support School Website Audit Staff Survey Development Opportunities for Chairs Development Opportunities for Governance Professionals			
Warwickshire Governor Services	Academy Specific Training Courses	Professional development for governors, trustees, headteachers and school governance professionals – Warwickshire County Council	Finance for Academy Schools Health & Safety for Academy Schools Managing Risk: Risk Registers	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Warwickshire Governor Services	Induction Training	Professional development for governors, trustees, headteachers and school governance professionals – Warwickshire County Council	Induction to School Governance Induction to School Governance - Academy Governors Induction for Trustees	Online/In-person	No	Paid
West Sussex County Council	Governor Training	Training & Events | West Sussex Services for Schools	An Introduction to Data for Governors An Introduction to Governance in West Sussex Being Strategic: Vision, Values and Strategy Chair module - Supporting the wellbeing of your headteacher Chair module: Ensuring a focus on impact Chair module: Leading the Board's Monitoring of School Improvement Chair module: Managing the agenda to enhance the board's knowledge of school improvement Chair module: Roles and procedures: Dealing with the 'what ifs' Chair module: Securing assurance - compliance matters! Chair module: Securing assurance - compliance matters!Spotlight on Secondary Data: Making sense of Key Stage 4 & 5 performance measures Chair module: The chair's role in an Ofsted inspection Chair module: The chair's role in leading the board's monitoring of school improvement Chair module: Working in partnership with the vice chair Developing Good Practice: Monitoring Developing Good Practice: Questioning Exploring values in an educational context GB Monitoring in the Early Years: School Reception Year GB Responsibilities in Relation to Emotional Wellbeing Governance and the Equality Act 2010 Governing Board Responsibilities in Relation to Attendance Governing Board Responsibilities in Relation to Disadvantaged Children Governing Board Responsibilities in Relation to Inclusion and SEND Governing Board responsibilities in relation to Safeguarding Governing Board Responsibilities in Relation to the Curriculum Governing Board Responsibilities: Complaints, Exclusions, Capability, and Grievance Panels Governing Board Responsibilities: Disadvantaged Children Governing Board Responsibilities: Health and Safety Governing Board Responsibilities: Safeguarding Governing Board Responsibilities: Safeguarding Governing Board Responsibilities: Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) in a mainstream setting Governing board responsibilities: The Quality of Education & the Curriculum Headteacher Performance Management Panel: Understanding the Processes and Procedures Inclusion in West Sussex Schools Introduction to chairing - 2 part course Lead Governor Training - Attendance Lead Governor Training - Curriculum Lead Governor Training – Curriculum Lead Governor Training - Disadvantaged Lead Governor Training - Safeguarding Lead Governor Training - Wellbeing Link Training Governor New Governors: Part One - Getting Started New Governors: Part Two - Being Effective Preparing for Ofsted Inspection Prevent Training for Governors Promoting Equality and Celebrating Cultural Diversity in Schools for Governors Reconstitution session for clerks and chairs Safer Recruitment in Schools School Finance: An introduction to a Special School Budget	Online/In-person	No	Paid

			School Finance: An introduction to the School Budget School Finance: Planning, Monitoring & Compliance Self-review for governors So what exactly does a chair do? Spotlight Live - Behaviour in schools and the role of governance Spotlight on Primary Reading: Effective Approaches to Governor Monitoring Spotlight on Prioritising Reading in Secondary Schools: A Guide for Governors Talking with confidence about your school with external partners: a webinar for governors. Therapeutic Thinking Approach for Governors Understanding the Role of the LADO in Allegations Against an Executive Leader Working Together: Chair & Clerk			
Wiltshire County Council	Induction Courses for new Governors/ Trustees	Training and Development for governors and trustees | Right Choice (wiltshire.gov.uk)	Induction Training for Governors/trustees (Online) Induction Training for Governors/trustees (Face-to-Face) New Governors/Trustees Q&A	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Wiltshire County Council	Introductory Courses for newer Governors and Trustees/ Refresher courses to help build your confidence and development	Training and Development for governors and trustees | Right Choice (wiltshire.gov.uk)	Safeguarding For All Governors/Trustees (Online Live)Safeguarding For All Governors/Trustees (Pre-recorded eLearning)Introduction To Monitoring (Online live)Asking Challenging Questions (Online live)Role of the Parent Governor (Online live)Role of the Staff Governor (Online live)Introduction to Ofsted (Online live)EYFS Information Session for Governors/Trustees (Online Live)Understanding School Performance Data –Primary Governors/Trustees (Online Live)Focus on Managing Attendance (Online live)What All Governors/Trustees Need to Know About the Pupil Premium (Online live)Protected Characteristics and Governor/Trustee Responsibilities (Online live)SEND for All Governors/Trustees (Pre-recorded eLearning)Finance Overview for Maintained School Governors (Online Live)Demysifying Academy Finance (Online Live)School Funding: The Naked Truth, Q&A session (Online live)Health and Safety Overview (Online live)Introduction to School Staff Wellbeing (Online live)	Online	No	Paid
Wiltshire County Council	Development for more experienced Governors and Trustees Including those who are taking on specific roles, or certain areas of interest on the board	Training and Development for governors and trustees | Right Choice (wiltshire.gov.uk)	Experienced Governors/Trustees - How to Develop Your Role (Online live) How To Monitor Effectively – the LinkGovernor's Role (Online Live) Governor Briefings* (Online Broadcasts/ Online live) Positive Relationships on The Board (Online Live) How to be Strategic, The Governors/ Trustees' Role (Online live) Stakeholder Engagement – Consulting Your School Community (Online live)	Online	No	Paid
Wiltshire County Council	Development and network courses for Link-governors on the Body/Board	Training and Development for governors and trustees | Right Choice (wiltshire.gov.uk)	Safeguarding Training for Nominated LinkGovernors/trustees (Pre-recorded eLearning) Safeguarding - Nominated Link-Governor Forum (Online live) Disadvantaged Learners – LinkGovernors/Trustees Network Meeting (Online live) SEND – Link-Governors/Trustees Training Network (Online live) SEND Link-Governors/Trustees Updates and Q&A sessions (Online live) Preventing and Managing Exclusions – (part 1) Exclusions as a Last Resort! (Online live) Preventing and Managing Exclusions – (part 2) Managing A Governors/trustees Disciplinary Hearing (Online Live) Promoting Children's Health and Wellbeing in School (Online live) Promoting Children's Health, and Staff Wellbeing (Face to Face) Understanding the Governors' Role – Staff Wellbeing (Online live)	Online/In-person	No	Paid
Wiltshire County Council	Development and network Courses suitable for Chairs and Vice-Chairs	Training and Development for governors and trustees | Right Choice (wiltshire.gov.uk)	Chairs/Vice-Chairs – Development Training Network (Online live) Succession Planning for The Board (Online live) Governing Board Evaluation (Online live) Managing Complaints, the Governing Board's Role (Online Live) Head Teacher Performance Management (Prerecorded eLearning) Head Teacher Performance Management, Q&A (Online live)	Online	No	Paid

			Managing Complaints, the Governing Board's Role (Online Live) Complaints: An Overview for Governors (Prerecorded eLearning)			
Worcestershire Children First Continuing Professional Development	Governor Training	Courses Search (worcestershire.gov.uk)	New Governor Induction Understanding the Single Central Record requirements Promoting positive Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools – A Governor's Guide Safeguarding Children in Education - Governors' Roles and Responsibilities Schools Finance management - A good practice guide for governors Pupil Premium Governor Training Headteacher's Appraisal Chair of Governors training Governors and the requirements of the SEND code of practice	Online/In-person	Certificate	Paid
Wrexham County Borough Council	E-learning for School Governors	E-Learning for School Governors in Wales (e-learning-governors-in-wales.org.uk)	National Training Programme for Understanding Data A Training Programme for Governing Body Chairs A Training Programme for Governing Body Clerks A Training Programme for Governor Induction Complaints Procedures The Effective Governing Body	Online	No	Paid

Examples of Training Documents

Solihull Training Summary

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Governor Services Training Summary 2022 - 2023

Get more information about this document

Name	Natasha Chamberlain
Email	governorservices@solihull.gov.uk
Telephone	0121 704 6403

GOVERNOR SERVICES TRAINING SUMMARY 2022-23
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Short on time? Ask for a quick summary

Termly

- New governor training – three evening seminars - summer and autumn term, one day event spring term
- Chairs' briefing
- Clerks' briefing
- SEND updates

Twice a year

- New clerks' training
- Understanding teacher/headteacher appraisal
- Preparing for Ofsted
- Understanding school data (primary)

Annually

- Governance of the pupil premium
- Governance of the PE and sport premium
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- Introduction to Solihull LA - School Finance – Part 1
- School Finance – Part 2 – the governor's role in school finance
- School Finance – Part 3 – fraud awareness and the governor's role
- Refresher course for experienced governors
- Supporting looked after children
- Health and safety briefing
- Mentally healthy schools
- Understanding school data (secondary)
- Safeguarding briefing
- Peer on peer abuse – role of governors

Every two/three years

- The governor's role in setting the school's strategic vision statement
- Equality and diversity
- Being an effective chair
- Holding a governing body complaints' panel
- Performance management for governing body clerks
- Supporting children with medical conditions in schools
- Monitoring and challenge for effective governance
- On-line safety in schools
- Data protection/Freedom of information – implications for governors
- Exclusions

Held on ad hoc basis as required

- Sessions covering items of new legislation, amendments to regulations, etc. relevant to school governance

Title:	Group Training Session	In-House
Courses available for Governors within LA Maintained Schools		
Admissions Appeals Aimed at governors and head teachers of Voluntary Aided, Foundation and Academy primary and secondary settings. The course covers the process for school admission appeals and supports governors to prepare the governors' case for presentation to an Independent Appeal Panel (IAP).	Y	N
Admissions and the School Admissions Code The governing body or academy trust has full responsibility for the school's admission arrangements. This course will explain to governors their full legal responsibilities with regard to admission throughout the academic year as outlined in the School Admissions Code. It will cover the statutory timescales and requirements, the admission application and allocation process (process and in year) and consultation requirements. Aimed at governors of own admission authority schools.	Y	N
A whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing Following sustained periods of lockdown, disrupted school attendance and uncertainty, the importance of supporting the mental health and wellbeing of pupils and staff has never been so crucial. Good mental health is the foundation for everyone to flourish, develop and succeed in life. This training will consider the importance of developing a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing and examine key actions that governors can take to help embed and monitor emotional health and mental wellbeing across the school.	Y	N
Dealing with Difficult People and Courageous Conversations This course is aimed at Chairs, Vice Chairs and other governors who may need to undertake difficult conversations and/or deal with challenging individuals. The course will help in understanding what we mean by 'difficult', possible strategies to apply and when/why we need to have 'courageous' conversations.	Y	N
Disciplinary Hearings This course is beneficial in helping governors understand the procedures of a staff disciplinary hearing. The course is broadly based on the HfL model disciplinary policy but also useful for governors of all settings as the principles are broadly the same. This session will: • identify the principles of good disciplinary handling • look at the decision making process • assist with dealing of challenges that may arise during the process	Y	N

Title:	Group Training Session	In-House
Effective Governance This course explores in more detail how individual governors and governing boards can effectively carry out their core function of holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school/academy.	Y	Y
****New for 2023 **** **Effective Listening and Effective Questioning** Among the most important skills that governors need to apply are listening and questioning. Being able to listen effectively and ask questions effectively are key to your being able to be as valuable as you can in your role and to you getting as much from the role as you can. This training course is intended to help you: • Consider why effective listening and effective questioning are important for governors. • Understand the aims of effective listening and effective questioning; and • Provide tips / ideas on how to improve these skills.	Y	Y
Effective use of Pupil Premium This course will provide an opportunity for governors to update their knowledge and understanding of the effective use of Pupil Premium funding.	Y	N
Exclusions This training session equips governors to be able to sit on a governors' Disciplinary Committee panel which is a statutory requirement in the case of certain types of school exclusion, including any permanent exclusion. We recommend that panel members are re-trained every 2 years.	Y	Y
Governor Visits This course is useful for all governors but especially those who are linked with a subject or aspect of the work of the school, e.g. SEND, literacy or a subject area.	Y	Y
Handling School Complaints This training is aimed at all governors of maintained schools. Whilst based on the HCC model policy, the concept of governors' roles and responsibilities is the same although other model policies may differ in terms of stages within a procedure.	Y	Y
Headteacher Performance Management This course is particularly useful to governors who serve on the Headteacher Performance Panel but is of interest to all governors.	Y	N
Health and Safety (introduction to) This course is relevant to all governors, particularly those with an interest in premises and health and safety.	Y	N

Title:	Group Training Session	In-House
Improving Outcomes for All Children A vision has emerged from School Leaders in response to the disruption to the education of children by the pandemic and more recently, the cost-of-living crisis. The vision will change the way we think about improving outcomes for each and every child in a Hertfordshire school. A group of Head Teachers and key Local Authority leaders have formed an ambitious plan to promote Achievement 4 All. This training will inform School Governors about the strategy and give an opportunity for reflection, cause for rethinking through reviewing research and discussion and will encourage resetting the culture and ethos of the school.	Y	N
Induction for Governors This half day course is for anyone new to governance for schools, academies and MAT's. This course is very important so that everyone can understand their role and can be as effective as possible in helping the school(s) to secure school improvement. Delegates benefit from the opportunity to network with new governors from other schools and academies. Recommended within first 3 months of appointment.	Y	N
Knowing your School & Ofsted – governance This training session is intended for governing boards who want a better understanding of Ofsted inspections, in terms of: -Ofsted's approach, expectations and assessment criteria; and - governors' discussion with Ofsted inspectors. The course is structured as follows: • Reminder of your key responsibilities as governors • Understand current Ofsted 'areas' and 'grading scale' • Look at the different types of Ofsted inspection and discuss which is likely to apply for your school • Go through the method and process of inspection, including the governors' role during an inspection • What are Ofsted interested in and how do they assess ('grade descriptors') each of the areas • Your next steps.	N	Y
Meeting with the Ofsted Inspector This session will give governors an opportunity to practice giving an account of their work and impact in an interview which will seek to replicate that which they will experience in an Ofsted inspection.	N	Y

Title:	Group Training Session	In-House
New to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) This session is designed to provide an introduction for governors to the area of special educational needs and disabilities. During the session there will be a range of practical activities and opportunities to ask questions and share ideas.	Y	N
****New for 2024 **** **Prevent Duty** This session will be looking at the current terrorist threat level in the UK, covering relevant legislation and terminology relating to terrorism and extremism and discussing groups and movements which operate in the terrorist and extremist space. Most importantly, we will consider how you as Governors can feel confident in your execution of the Prevent Duty within your organisation.	Y	N
Recruitment, Education and Training Governor – link role This training will encourage you to take a strategic position with regards to your Recruitment, Education and Training of your board. Schools cannot function without governance, and we need to ensure as much as we can that we do not have vacancies, we do not have passengers and all of the board understands their role and can give time to it – how do we encourage this? • Recruit the right people following a formal process • Role Descriptors • Induct and Mentor new governors • Encourage new governors to follow the GREAT! Programme of training • Support, praise and performance manage the board • Valuing the role of governor – blowing our own trumpet • Succession Plan	Y	N
Role of the Safeguarding Link Governor Aimed at Safeguarding link governor but also useful for all governors. Course looks at link governor role and shares good practice for safeguarding visits.	Y	N
Safeguarding Children This course is strongly recommended for all governors and is essential for the Designated Child Protection governor(s), the chair/vice chair. It is also recommended to refresh this training every 4 years.	Y	N
Safer Recruitment This nationally accredited full day 'Safer recruitment' training is suitable for governors and staff of schools/academies involved in the recruitment process. This course is applicable for those who have had no previous training or those that attended 'Safer recruitment' training more than 4 years' ago and	Y	N

Title:	Group Training Session	In-House
therefore need to refresh their accreditation. (Please check if you are unsure).		
Safer Recruitment Refresher Relevant for governors and staff of schools/academies who have attended the Safer Recruitment Consortium all day session within the last 4 years and would like to refresh their knowledge. This Course provides opportunity to refresh safer recruitment practices. **In order to sit this Safer Recruitment Refresher course, governors and staff must have attended the Safer Recruitment Consortium full day course. Attending the NSPCC or equivalent course is NOT suitable.**	Y	N
School Finance Overview This course is aimed at all governors (not only Finance Governors) and is targeted to provide a general understanding of the key financial responsibilities of the Governing Board. It will be assumed that attendees will have had minimal exposure to finance in school and therefore, is aimed at early career governors, or governors who would like to improve their financial skills knowledge.	N	Y
Schools Recruitment – An overview of best practice in Leadership Recruitment This training is designed to give Governors the confidence to contribute to the interview and selection process at their schools through an understanding of: • The legal context of school recruitment and selection • The role and responsibilities of the Governing Body in the process • The support available in Hertfordshire • Safer recruitment and best practice • Inclusion and diversity in recruitment • The stages of the recruitment cycle • The processes and parameters around recruitment, pay & appointment for schools	Y	N
Succession Planning & Strategy For governors/governing boards who want to be aware of their future strategic leadership – leadership of the school (staff) and governing board.	Y	Y
Understanding Assessment Data Suitable to all governors, particularly those overseeing pupil progress, attainment and target setting in primary and secondary settings. **Please note** - An additional charge of £130.00 for in-house requests will be applied as the Assessment Team will review the settings own data prior to the delivery.	N	Y- max every 2 years

Title:	Group Training Session	In-House
Please note - This course may only be booked every 2 years.		
Understanding the Landscape Aimed at all governors, headteachers and key senior leaders of primary and secondary maintained schools. Course provides understanding the current educational landscape, including Multi Academy Trusts, the possibilities available to them and key issues to consider when planning their school's future.	N	Y
Vision, Mission and Strategy 'Governing boards are the key strategic decision-making board of every school. It is their role to set the school's strategic framework and to ensure all statutory duties are met. The governing board should ensure that the school has a medium to long-term vision for its future which it may be helpful to articulate in a strategic written statement.' This course supports governors in their role around; • The GB's 3 key functions • Why Values / Ethos, Vision / Mission and Strategy are important • Values / Ethos • Mission & Vision • Strategic plan • Targets/KPIs and monitoring progress • Your action plan	Y	Y

Southwark Governor

Training and Development Programme 2024/2025

SPRING TERM 2025

The training courses listed below will be provided virtually via Zoom unless advised otherwise. Governors with access to GovernorHub (GH) should book courses they wish to attend directly on the GH website, otherwise please send your booking form to selina.mcclure@southwark.gov.uk. We look forward to hearing from you.

Course	Date	Time	Tick to book your place
Exclusion training for governors in person @ 160 Tooley Street	Monday 13 January	18.00 to 19.30	
Governance for Special Schools and Specialist Settings	Tuesday 14 January	18.00 to 19.30	
Safer recruitment - in person @ 160 Tooley Street	Thursday 16 January	9:30 to 4:30	
Managing concerns to avoid complaints	Thursday 16 January	18:30 to 20:00	
Governor Forum	Monday 20 January	18:00 to 19:30	
HR Panel Training	Tuesday 21 January	18:00 to 19:30	
New governor induction module 1: Governors' roles & responsibilities	Friday 24 January	10:00 to 11:30	
New governor induction module 2: Governors' roles & responsibilities – continued	Friday 24 January	13:00 to 14:30	
New governor induction module 3: School curriculum	Monday 27 January	18:00 to 19:30	
Taking the Chair – Part 1	Tuesday 28 January	18:00 to 19:30	
Taking the Chair – Part 2	Thursday 30 January	18:00 to 19:30	
Effective governor monitoring visits to school	Tuesday 05 February	18:00 to 20:00	
New governor induction module 5: HR framework	Monday 10 February	18:00 to 19:30	
New governor induction module 6: Finance in maintained schools	Wednesday 12 February	18:00 to 19:30	
Safer recruitment refresher	Thursday 13 February	10:00 to 14:00	
Effective governing board self-evaluation	Monday 24 February	18:00 to 19:30	
New governor induction module 7: Safeguarding	Tuesday 25 February	18:00 to 19:30	
Promoting the wellbeing of Headteachers and SLTs in schools	Monday 03 March	18:00 to 19:30	
New governor induction module 4: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	Tuesday 04 March	18:00 to 19:30	
Budget planning and monitoring - in person @ 160 Tooley Street	Wednesday 05 March	18:00 to 19:30	
Safeguarding – practical application:	Wednesday 12 March	18:00 to 19:30	
Preparing for an education inspection	Tuesday 18 March	18:00 to 19:30	
Safer recruitment - in person @ 160 Tooley Street	Thursday 27 March	9:30 to 4:30	

Further course details can be found on GovernorHub or the schools website: www.schools.southwark.gov.uk.

To book a place on a course please book directly on GovernorHub or complete the above form and return to: selina.mcclure@southwark.gov.uk.

Name: .....

School: .....

Email/telephone number: .....

We look forward to hearing from you!

Appendix 7 - Communications

“Gate keeping”

Dear Sarah

[redacted]

I've forwarded your request to our Chair of Governors, [redacted] I doubt the Headteacher would have time to respond as he is very busy.

[redacted]

[redacted],

Best regards

[redacted]

[redacted]
Clerk to the Governing Body
[redacted]

E-mail received 3rd June 2021 in response to the call for research participants.

Appendix 8 – NGA Skills Audit

NGA Skills Audit - Skills Audit For Governors In Single Schools And Academy Committees (National Governance Association, 2024)

For Schools & Trusts

Skills audit

For maintained school and federation governors, trustees of single academy trusts and academy committees

Effective governance requires a board with a range of knowledge, skills, perspectives and backgrounds. The NGA skills audit is a way of assessing the overall breadth and depth of the board's skills and knowledge; no individual will have all the necessary skills and competencies.

How to complete this audit

1. Enter your scores (1 to 4) and make comments where prompted, using the scoring guidance to access helpful resources.

Log in to the NGA website to access member-only resources. Speak to your governance professional or contact us if you would like to discuss membership or need help logging in.

2. Reflect on your responses – identify any areas where you need to prioritise further development.
3. Your board's scores should then be collated and evaluated using the NGA skills dashboard – we recommend that this is carried out by your governance professional, together with the chair or designated member of the board.

Visit the NGA website for further guidance.

About NGA membership

NGA membership provides access to a wealth of governance resources and tools. Whether it's advice and guidance, networking or keeping up to date on education news and policy, we can help you face new challenges as they arise.

Find out more

Guidance

nga.org.uk

For Schools & Trusts

NGA skills audit

	Statement	Scoring guidance	Enter a score (1 to 4)
1	**I have governing experience in a school or in a different sector**	**4**: you have significant (more than 4 years') experience of governance on a school or academy trust board. **3**: you have up to 4 years' experience governing within the schools sector or more than 4 years' experience governing in a different sector (such as director of a charity or limited company). **2**: you have limited governing experience outside the school sector. **1**: you have no prior governing experience.	
2	**I am/have been the chair of a board or committee**	**4**: you have more than 4 years' experience of chairing governing boards and or committees in schools or academy trusts. **2 or 3** (depending on your level of experience): you have some chairing experience, including being a vice-chair or acting as chair for meetings. This may include chairing experience outside the schools sector. **1**: you have no chairing experience.	
3	**I have experience and expertise in developing a strategy**	Developing a medium to long-term strategy for any organisation requires: risk management; identification of key performance indicators and deciding how they will be monitored; and consideration of stakeholder views. **4**: you have experience of strategy development in a school (such as leading a governing board strategy development day). **3**: you have equivalent strategy development experience outside the schools sector. **2**: your experience is less extensive. **1**: you have no experience of developing a strategy.	

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4	**I know what the school's strategic priorities are**	**4**: you know what your school's strategic priorities are, what they mean for pupils and other stakeholders, and can confidently discuss these priorities with others. **2 or 3**: you are aware of your school's strategic priorities but don't feel confident discussing them. **1**: you don't know what your strategic priorities are – perhaps you have recently joined the board or haven't been involved in developing the strategy.	
5	**I can identify key risks and evaluate their potential impact**	**4**: you have experience of evaluating and managing risk in a governance role – you have contributed to discussions about the school's risk register, potential impact and mitigation. **2 or 3**: you have some understanding of how risk management works in practice. NGA members may wish to read our risk management guidance to help achieve a score of 2 as a minimum. **1**: you have no experience of risk management and do not feel able to contribute.	
6	**I am aware of how the school is funded and what the funding is spent on**	*School funding is largely based on pupil numbers and includes grants such as the pupil premium.* **4**: you have a good understanding of how funding is allocated under different budget headings and how spending impacts on pupil outcomes. **2 or 3**: you have some awareness of your school's funding and allocation but do not feel confident providing examples of how spending impacts on pupil outcomes. **1**: you are not aware of what the key information is.	
7	**I can interpret budget monitoring reports and ask relevant questions**	*Governing boards (finance/resources committees in particular) should receive budget monitoring reports from their headteacher and or school business professional.* **4**: you can confidently use these reports to ask relevant questions which help provide assurance that the budget is being managed effectively. Your questions focus on changes to planned spending and the explanations for such changes.	

		2 or 3: you have evaluated financial data in a school or another organisation; your experience informs your contribution to relevant discussions. **1**: you have no experience of using financial data and so do not feel able to contribute to relevant discussions.	
8	**I understand how the school's curriculum meets the needs of all pupils**	*You can find out about the principles upon which your curriculum is based on your school's website.* **4**: you have read and understood the curriculum principles and feel confident discussing this with colleagues. **2 or 3**: you have read the curriculum principles but do not yet feel confident discussing this. **1**: you are not aware of what the curriculum principles are. NGA members can use our guide to curriculum effectiveness to explore this topic.	
9	**I understand how my governing board engages with stakeholders – pupils, parents, staff and the wider community – and how this informs decisions**	**4**: you have been involved in your board's stakeholder engagement activity, which may include: evaluating parent survey responses, attending pupil forums, or meeting with staff and outside organisations (such as the local authority). **3**: you have experience of stakeholder engagement on another governing board. **2**: you have experience of stakeholder engagement outside the schools sector. **1**: you have no experience of stakeholder engagement.	
10	**I feel confident being part of the panel that conducts the headteacher's appraisal**	**4**: you have been a member of the panel that conducts the headteacher's annual appraisal. **2 or 3**: you have conducted an appraisal outside the schools sector. **1**: you have not been part of an appraisal process.	

11	**I know how to build the knowledge I need to be effective in my governance role**	**4**: you have completed an induction to the board and engage in ongoing development. **2 or 3**: you have identified knowledge or skills gaps but have not yet engaged in or planned relevant development activity. **1**: you have not yet identified knowledge or skills gaps and have not engaged in relevant development activity.	
12	**I can build positive, collaborative relationships with members of my board**	A score of **4** means that you: • are willing to share the workload • welcome a range of experiences and perspectives • feel comfortable offering up constructive challenge • can reach a reasonable consensus • seek to resolve issues that may lead to conflict **2 or 3**: you have identified areas you would like to work on. **1**: you have not built collaborative relationships and are unsure how to achieve this.	
13	**I understand the strategic nature of the board's role and what governing boards and school leaders should expect from each other**	NGA guidance on what governing boards and school leaders should expect from each other should be understood and applied to your own context. 4: you have read and understood the guidance. 2 or 3: you have read the guidance but require further clarity. 1: you have not read or understood the guidance.	
14	**I know what the governing board's core functions are**	Section one of the DfE governance guide explains the core functions and describes the features of effective governance. If you have read and understood this section, provide a score of **4** for this statement.	
15	**I understand how the board delegates its work**	*Governing boards often delegate their work to committees, working groups, individuals (link governors), and panels.* **4**: you have good awareness of how the governing board delegates its work, for example, the specific responsibilities of any committees and their terms of reference.	

		2 or 3: you have some understanding – for example, you know what committees the board has appointed but not what each one is responsible for. **1**: you are unaware of how your board delegates its work.	
16	**I feel confident serving on a panel**	*Governors are sometimes required to be part of a panel which is needed to decide employment issues and other matters.* **4**: you have been a member of a panel where you reviewed evidence and reached an objective decision. **2 or 3**: you understand how and why panels are formed and, with some support, you would feel confident being part of a panel. **1**: you do not feel confident being part of a panel.	
17	**I am aware of the board's legal and compliance responsibilities**	*Your induction to the board (including any induction training course you attend) should provide a broad understanding of the board's legal and compliance responsibilities in areas such as safeguarding.* You may also wish to consult chapter two of NGA's Welcome to Governance for an overview of your responsibilities. **4**: you have gained awareness of your board's legal and compliance responsibilities from your induction, experience of governing, attending meetings, carrying out the business of the board and undertaking further development. **2 or 3**: you have some awareness. **1**: you have no awareness.	
18	**I feel able to speak up if I am concerned about non-compliance and unethical behaviour**	**4**: based on your experience of governance, you are able to recognise something that is not – or does not appear to be – right and raise it as an issue in an appropriate way, however challenging it may be. **2 or 3**: you do not feel confident in recognising and or challenging appropriately. **1**: you would like more support or guidance in this area. You may wish to consult The Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education.	

19	**I recognise when independent, expert advice may be required**	*Effective governing boards recognise the importance of seeking independent, expert advice and are prepared to call for advice before making a decision. This includes the advice of their governance professional (clerk to the board) and, where necessary, legal, financial, or human resource advice.* **4**: you feel confident requesting that expert advice is sought where necessary. **2 or 3**: you have a lower level of confidence. **1**: you are unable to recognise situations where expert advice is necessary.	
20	**I know, and can identify with, the community served by the school**	*Developing knowledge and understanding of your community means you are better placed to understand the impact of your strategy and decisions.* **4**: you have knowledge and understanding of the community served by the school and its characteristics. This may be informed by a range of experiences such as volunteering, talking to people, and or living and working in the community. **2 or 3**: your experience and understanding could be extended. **1**: you have limited or no experience of the community served by the school.	
21	**I understand the legal responsibilities of governing boards in relation to equalities**	Governing boards have a legal duty under The Equality Act to protect pupils and staff against discrimination, harassment and or victimisation. **4**: you have read and understood Department for Education guidance on The Equality Act (and/or Equality and diversity guidance for NGA members). **2 or 3**: you have some understanding of the responsibilities that schools have under The Act but require further clarity. **1**: you have not yet built an understanding of The Act as it applies to schools.	

22	**I have influenced an organisation's culture of equality and diversity (through communication, appropriate challenge, awareness raising or developing policy and practice)**	*Culture = the way things get done = is what makes a school or trust unique and influences behaviour and practices. The policies that governing boards adopt reflect the culture in their school.* **4**: you have had a direct influence on creating an inclusive culture within or outside a school. For example, by being part of a working group to create family friendly working practices or a more accessible work environment. **2 or 3**: you have not had a direct influence but recognise how this is achieved. **1**: you are developing an understanding of how an inclusive culture is achieved.	
23	**I have knowledge, experience or training that will help me to promote diversity and inclusion**	*An example is training on unconscious bias (beliefs and views about other people that might not be right or reasonable).* **4**: you have experience and or training and so are confident making a tangible contribution to discussions and actions that promote diversity and inclusion. **2 or 3**: you have some knowledge or experience but do not feel confident about making a tangible contribution. **1**: you have limited knowledge or experience and are unable to make a tangible contribution.	
24	**I can confidently challenge behaviour, attitudes and practices which are detrimental to creating an inclusive culture**	**4**: you are able and prepared to challenge attitudes, assumptions and or language that, whether intentional or not, could result in individuals or groups being disadvantaged or treated less favourably than others. **2 or 3**: you are prepared to challenge but could benefit from development, support or guidance. **1**: you require development, support or guidance in this area.	
25	**I can interpret relevant data and insight to identify issues and ask questions relating to equality and inclusion**	*Examples include data on pupil attendance and exclusions, recruitment, and outcomes of different groups.* **4**: you are fully confident using data to identify issues and ask questions. **2 or 3**: you have some experience using data and asking relevant questions. **1**: you have no experience using data for this purpose and require support.	

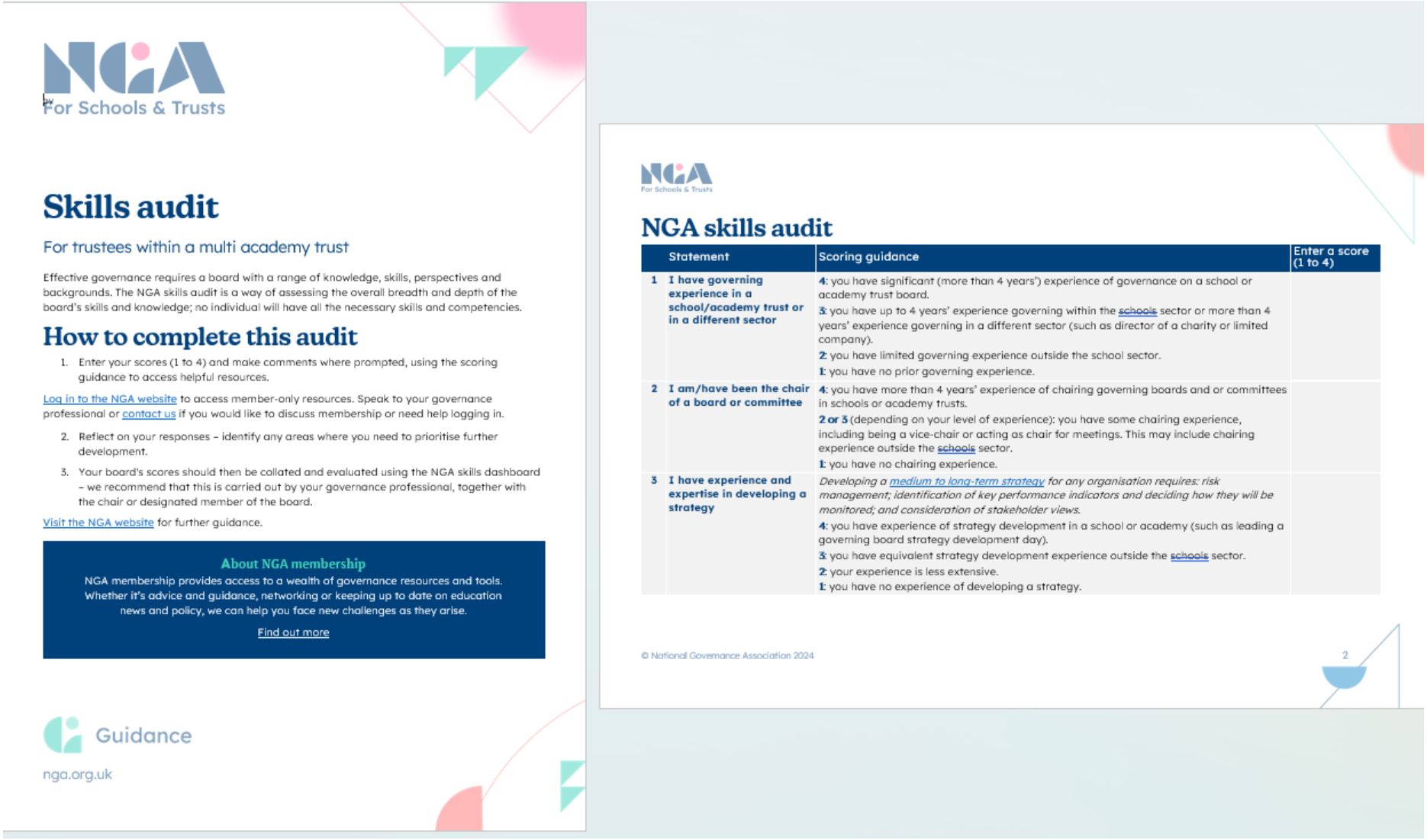
26	**Is there any training or support you would like to increase your contribution to promoting equality and diversity in your school?**	This could include: • mentoring and coaching • specific training (such as unconscious bias training) • reading • general awareness raising • a whole board approach (such as a diversity and inclusion workshop)	*INSERT COMMENTS HERE*
27	**What do you need to do over the next 12 months to increase your governance knowledge and skills?**		*INSERT COMMENTS HERE*
28	**What specific skills or experience do you have that could be utilised by the board?**		*INSERT COMMENTS HERE*

NGA is the national membership association for governors, trustees and governance professionals in England's state schools and trusts.

We empower those in school and trust governance with valuable resources, expert support and e-learning. Together, we're raising standards and shaping stronger governance to ensure every pupil can thrive today – and tomorrow.

nga.org.uk

NGA Skills Audit - Skills Audit For MAT Trustees (National Governance Association, 2024)



For Schools & Trusts

Skills audit

For trustees within a multi academy trust

Effective governance requires a board with a range of knowledge, skills, perspectives and backgrounds. The NGA skills audit is a way of assessing the overall breadth and depth of the board's skills and knowledge; no individual will have all the necessary skills and competencies.

How to complete this audit

1. Enter your scores (1 to 4) and make comments where prompted, using the scoring guidance to access helpful resources.

Log in to the NGA website to access member-only resources. Speak to your governance professional or contact us if you would like to discuss membership or need help logging in.

2. Reflect on your responses – identify any areas where you need to prioritise further development.
3. Your board's scores should then be collated and evaluated using the NGA skills dashboard – we recommend that this is carried out by your governance professional, together with the chair or designated member of the board.

Visit the NGA website for further guidance.

About NGA membership

NGA membership provides access to a wealth of governance resources and tools. Whether it's advice and guidance, networking or keeping up to date on education news and policy, we can help you face new challenges as they arise.

Find out more

Guidance

nga.org.uk

For Schools & Trusts

NGA skills audit

	Statement	Scoring guidance	Enter a score (1 to 4)
1	**I have governing experience in a school/academy trust or in a different sector**	**4**: you have significant (more than 4 years') experience of governance on a school or academy trust board. **3**: you have up to 4 years' experience governing within the schools sector or more than 4 years' experience governing in a different sector (such as director of a charity or limited company). **2**: you have limited governing experience outside the school sector. **1**: you have no prior governing experience.	
2	**I am/have been the chair of a board or committee**	**4**: you have more than 4 years' experience of chairing governing boards and or committees in schools or academy trusts. **2 or 3** (depending on your level of experience): you have some chairing experience, including being a vice-chair or acting as chair for meetings. This may include chairing experience outside the schools sector. **1**: you have no chairing experience.	
3	**I have experience and expertise in developing a strategy**	*Developing a medium to long-term strategy for any organisation requires: risk management; identification of key performance indicators and deciding how they will be monitored; and consideration of stakeholder views.* **4**: you have experience of strategy development in a school or academy (such as leading a governing board strategy development day). **3**: you have equivalent strategy development experience outside the schools sector. **2**: your experience is less extensive. **1**: you have no experience of developing a strategy.	

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4	**I know what the trust's strategic priorities are**	**4**: you know what your trust's strategic priorities are, what they mean for pupils and other stakeholders, and can confidently discuss these priorities with others. **2 or 3**: you are aware of your trust's strategic priorities but don't feel confident discussing them. **1**: you don't know what your strategic priorities are – perhaps you have recently joined the board or haven't been involved in developing the strategy.
5	**I can identify key risks and evaluate their potential impact**	**4**: you have experience evaluating and managing risk in a governance role – you have contributed to discussions about the trust's risk register, potential impact and mitigation. **2 or 3**: you have some understanding of how risk management works in practice. NGA members may wish to read our risk management guidance to help achieve a score of 2 as a minimum. **1**: you have no experience of risk management and do not feel able to contribute.
6	**I am aware of how the trust is funded and what the funding is spent on**	*Funding is largely based on pupil numbers and includes grants such as pupil premium.* **4**: you have a good understanding of how funding is allocated under different budget headings and how spending impacts on pupil outcomes. **2 or 3**: you have some awareness of your trust's funding and allocation but do not feel confident providing examples of how spending impacts on pupil outcomes. **1**: you are not aware of what the key information is.
7	**I can interpret budget monitoring reports and ask relevant questions**	*Trust boards (finance/resources committees in particular) should receive budget monitoring reports (management accounts) from their chief finance officer.* **4**: you can confidently use these reports to ask relevant questions which help provide assurance that the budget is being managed effectively. Your questions focus on any changes to planned spending and the explanations for such changes. **2 or 3**: you have evaluated financial data in an academy trust or another organisation; your experience informs your contribution to relevant discussions. **1**: you have no experience of using financial data and so do not feel able to contribute to relevant discussions.

8	**I understand how the trust's curriculum meets the needs of all pupils**	*You can find out about the principles upon which your curriculum is based on your trust's website or on each academy's website.* **4**: you have read and understood the curriculum principles and feel confident discussing this with colleagues. **2 or 3**: you have read the curriculum principles but do not yet feel confident discussing this. **1**: you are not aware of what the curriculum principles are. NGA members can use our guide to curriculum effectiveness to explore this topic.
9	**I understand how my board engages with stakeholders – pupils, parents, staff and the wider community – and how this informs decisions**	**4**: you have been involved in your board's stakeholder engagement activity, which may include: evaluating parent survey responses, attending pupil forums, or meeting with staff and outside organisations (such as the local authority). **3**: you have experience of stakeholder engagement on another governing board. **2**: you have experience of stakeholder engagement outside the schools sector. **1**: you have no experience of stakeholder engagement.
10	**I feel confident being part of the panel that conducts the chief executive's appraisal**	**4**: you have been a member of the panel that conducts the annual appraisal for the chief executive of an academy trust. **2 or 3**: you have conducted an appraisal in an organisation outside the ~~schools~~ sector. **1**: you have not been part of an appraisal process.
11	**I know how to build the knowledge I need to be effective in my governance role**	**4**: you have completed an induction to the board and engage in ongoing development. **2 or 3**: you have identified knowledge or skills gaps but have not yet engaged in or planned relevant development activity. **1**: you have not yet identified knowledge or skills gaps and have not engaged in relevant development activity.
12	**I can build positive, collaborative relationships with members of my board**	A score of **4** means that you: • are willing to share the workload • welcome a range of experiences and perspectives • feel comfortable offering up constructive challenge • can reach a reasonable consensus and seek to resolve issues that may lead to conflict

		2 or 3: you have identified areas you would like to work on. **1**: you have not built collaborative relationships and are unsure how to achieve this.
13	**I understand the strategic nature of the board's role and what trust boards and leaders should expect from each other**	NGA guidance on what governing boards and school leaders should expect from each other should be understood and applied to your own context. **4**: you have read and understood the guidance. **2 or 3**: you have read the guidance but require further clarity. **1**: you have not read or understood the guidance.
14	**I know what the trust board's core functions are**	Section 2.2 of the Academy Trust Governance Guide explains the purpose of trust governance. If you have read and understood this section, provide a score of 4 for this statement.
15	**I understand how the board delegates its work**	*Trust boards delegate their work to committees, academy committees (local governing bodies), working groups, individuals (link trustees), and panels.* **4**: you have read your trust's scheme of delegation and understand how the trust board delegates its work. **2 or 3**: you have some understanding – for example, you know what committees the board has appointed but not what each one is responsible for. **1**: you are unaware of how your board delegates its work.
16	**I understand the role and powers of the trust's members**	*Members hold the trust board to account for the effective governance of the trust but have a minimal role in the actual running of the trust.* **4**: you understand the distinct role of members as guardians of the governance of the trust. If you have read and understood NGA's guidance on the role of members, you can confidently give a score of 4 for this statement. **2 or 3**: you have some understanding of the role of members but would not yet feel confident explaining it. **1**: you do not understand the role of academy trust members. The role of members is set out within part 1 of the Academy Trust Handbook.

17	**I understand the distinct responsibilities of my trust's academy committees (local governing bodies)**	*Trust boards should carefully develop the role of academy committees, ensuring that they add value to the checks and balances of trust governance.* **4**: you can confidently explain the role of your trust's academy committees as set out in your trust's scheme of delegation (SoD). **2 or 3**: you have read the SoD but need further clarity. **1**: you have not read the SoD and so do not understand the role of academy committees in your trust. NGA members may wish to consult our SoD guidance to learn more.
18	**I feel confident serving on a panel**	*Trustees are sometimes part of a panel which is required to decide employment issues and other matters.* **4**: you have been a member of a panel where you reviewed evidence and reached an objective decision. **2 or 3**: you understand how and why panels are formed and, with some support, you would feel confident being part of a panel. **1**: you do not feel confident being part of a panel.
19	**I am aware of the board's legal and compliance responsibilities**	*Your induction to the board (including any induction training course you attend) should provide a broad understanding of the board's legal and compliance responsibilities in areas such as safeguarding.* You may also wish to consult chapter four of NGA's Governing a Multi Academy Trust for an overview of your responsibilities. **4**: you have gained awareness of your board's legal and compliance responsibilities from your induction, experience of governing, attending meetings, carrying out the business of the board and undertaking further development. **2 or 3**: you have some awareness. **1**: you have no awareness.

20	**I feel able to speak up if I am concerned about non-compliance and unethical behaviour**	**4**: based on your experience of governance, you are able to recognise something that is not – or does not appear to be – right and raise it as an issue in an appropriate way, however challenging it may be. **2 or 3**: you do not feel confident in recognising and or challenging appropriately. **1**: you would like more support or guidance in this area. You may wish to consult The Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education.	
21	**I recognise when independent, expert advice may be required**	*Effective governing boards recognise the importance of seeking independent, expert advice and are prepared to call for advice before making a decision. This includes the advice of their governance professional (clerk to the board) and, where necessary, legal, financial, or human resource advice.* **4**: you feel confident requesting that expert advice is sought where necessary. **2 or 3**: you have a lower level of confidence. **1**: you are unable to recognise situations where expert advice is necessary.	
22	**I know, and can identify with, the communities served by the trust**	*Developing knowledge and understanding of your communities means you are better placed to understand the impact of your strategy and decisions.* **4**: you have knowledge and understanding of the communities served by the trust and their characteristics. This may be informed by a range of experiences such as volunteering, talking to people, and or living and working in the community. **2 or 3**: your experience and understanding could be extended. **1**: you have limited, or no experience, of the communities served by the trust.	
23	**I understand the legal responsibilities of trust boards in relation to equalities**	Trust boards have a legal duty under The Equality Act to protect pupils and staff against discrimination, harassment and or victimisation. **4**: you have read and understood Department for Education guidance on The Equality Act (and or Equality and diversity guidance for NGA members). **2 or 3**: you have some understanding of the responsibilities that trusts have under The Act but require further clarity. **1**: you have not yet built an understanding of The Act as it applies to academy trusts.	

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24	**I have influenced an organisation's culture of equality and diversity (through communication, appropriate challenge, awareness raising or developing policy and practice)**	*Culture – the way things get done – is what makes a trust unique and influences behaviour and practices. The policies that trust boards adopt reflect the culture in their trust.* **4**: you have had a direct influence on creating an inclusive culture within or outside a school or trust. For example, by being part of a working group to create family friendly working practices or a more accessible work environment. **2 or 3**: you have not had a direct influence but recognise the ways this is achieved. **1**: you are developing an understanding of how an inclusive culture is achieved.	
25	**I have knowledge, experience or training that will help me to promote diversity and inclusion**	*An example is training on unconscious bias (beliefs and views about other people that might not be right or reasonable).* **4**: you have experience and or training and so are confident making a tangible contribution to discussions and actions that promote diversity and inclusion. **2 or 3**: you have some knowledge or experience but do not feel confident about making a tangible contribution. **1**: you have limited knowledge or experience and are unable to make a tangible contribution.	
26	**I can confidently challenge behaviour, attitudes and practices which are detrimental to creating an inclusive culture**	**4**: you are able and prepared to challenge attitudes, assumptions and or language that, whether intentional or not, could result in individuals or groups being disadvantaged or treated less favourably than others. **2 or 3**: you are prepared to challenge but could benefit from development, support or guidance. **1**: you require development, support or guidance in this area.	
27	**I can interpret relevant data and insight to identify issues and ask questions relating to equality and inclusion**	*Examples include data on pupil attendance and exclusions, recruitment, and outcomes of different groups.* **4**: you are fully confident using data to identify issues and ask questions. **2 or 3**: you have some experience using data and asking relevant questions. **1**: you have no experience using data for this purpose and require support.	

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28	**Is there any training or support you would like to increase your contribution to promoting equality and diversity in your trust?**	This could include: • mentoring and coaching • specific training (such as unconscious bias training) • reading • general awareness raising • a whole board approach (such as a diversity and inclusion workshop)	*INSERT COMMENTS HERE*
29	**What do you need to do over the next 12 months to increase your governance knowledge and skills?**		*INSERT COMMENTS HERE*
30	**What specific skills or experience do you have that could be utilised by the board?**		*INSERT COMMENTS HERE*

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We empower those in school and trust governance with valuable resources, expert support and e-learning. Together, we're raising standards and shaping stronger governance to ensure every pupil can thrive today – and tomorrow.

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Appendix 9 – Induction Training For School Governors In Wales

PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

Induction training for school governors in Wales

Requirements for local authorities on what to include in training for new school governors.

First published: 12 July 2024

Last updated: 12 July 2024

Contents

Overview

The different and complementary roles of governors

Key roles and responsibilities of governing bodies

How to be an effective governor

Background information and related links

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Overview

This document sets out the scope and content of the governor induction training.

All school governors in Wales must have induction training within one year of their appointment or election and will be expected to undertake induction training as contained in this document. Local authorities and other training providers may wish to expand on the content contained in this document and use it for refresher training on key areas.

The training will help ensure that governors:

- have the required knowledge and understanding to begin to fulfil their role effectively as a governor to support their school in raising standards
- are aware of national and local educational issues and their impact on governing bodies
- recognise the importance of training and the need to develop their skills and take advantage of other training opportunities available to them

The training will reflect the current legislative framework for school governance in Wales and will define clearly what should be expected from the role of governors, focusing on:

- raising standards and school improvement
- the strategic role
- the range of powers and duties of governing bodies
- how the governing body supports and challenges the work of the school
- their role in monitoring and evaluating progress within the school
- how and to whom governing bodies are accountable

The information provided in the induction training will help support new governors to develop a range of key skills and attributes which add value to a governing body, such as self-confidence, team working, problem solving, time management, analysis and evaluation of information.

The training will allow for governors to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of governance and provide an overview of school governance and will be set out in four inter-related areas as follows:

- the different and complementary roles of governors
- key roles and responsibilities of governing bodies
- how to be an effective governor
- where to access further support and training

Each key area provides a summary of the key points which local authorities and other training providers should cover in the induction training. The summaries are not meant to be exhaustive, but are meant to give an overview to help with planning training courses. Local educational issues and processes, as well as new and changed national policies should be borne in mind at each section. Links to where information on national policies can be found are provided in the final section of this document.

The different and complementary roles of governors

This key area focuses on:

- the composition of governing bodies and how governing bodies are made up in accordance with the category of the school in which they serve
- different types of governor, and how they represent the various stakeholders associated with the school – headteacher, parent, local authority, teacher staff, community, additional community, foundation, sponsor governors, associate pupil (in secondary and middle schools)

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- how each category is appointed or elected, the length of the term of office, for example 4 years or 2 years depending on the type and school category
- what commitment is expected of a governor – tenure of office, attendance and behaviour at governing body meetings, committees and events, visits to school, attendance at governor training sessions, time to read relevant paperwork
- the **Seven Principles of Public Life** and how they influence governing body practice; governors need to understand what is expected of them and how they can be held to account to be good role models
- the process for annual election of the chair and vice chair

The role of the chair

- Providing a clear lead in organising the governing body's work.
- Ensuring all governors are fully informed and involved in meetings.
- Ensuring that the governing body works as a team.
- Making good use of the skills and expertise of members.
- Managing meetings effectively.
- Maintaining an effective relationship with the headteacher.
- Providing support and strategic challenge to the headteacher.
- Acting as a spokesperson on behalf of the governing body.

The chair of the governing body should form a productive and respectful professional relationship with the headteacher, whereby the governing body feels empowered to ask questions and hold the headteacher and senior leadership team to account.

The role of the clerk

- Convening governing body meetings.
- Distributing papers.
- Taking and distributing governing body meeting minutes.
- Maintaining membership, including instruments of government, and attendance registers.
- Offering procedural advice and guidance during and between meetings.
- Ensuring any follow up action has been taken.

The clerk is accountable to the governing body and should work closely with the chair, the headteacher and other governors on identified tasks. The clerk will often provide a close link between the governing body and the local authority and is therefore perfectly placed to provide advice on procedural matters.

Some members of the governing body will take on additional responsibilities, such as being the nominated governor or champion for specific roles, for example additional learning needs, child protection, equity and diversity, areas of learning and experience in the Curriculum for Wales.

Key roles and responsibilities of governing bodies

This key area focuses on the purpose of governance – to help provide the best possible education for learners – and how individual governors contribute to the work of the governing body in school improvement.

Powers and duties of the governing body

- Providing a strategic view: setting the framework within which the headteacher and staff run the school, setting the aims and objectives, agreeing policies, targets and priorities for achieving these objectives, and monitoring and evaluating.
- Acting as a critical friend: providing support and challenge to the

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headteacher and staff, seeking information and clarification.
- Ensuring accountability: explaining the decisions and actions of the governing body to anyone who has a legitimate interest.

Core responsibilities

- Standards: ensuring the school promotes high standards of educational achievement, and attendance and behaviour, including the rigorous review of published performance data, the school development plan and robust self-evaluation.
- Targets: setting targets by which progress for learner achievement and outcomes can be measured.
- Curriculum for Wales: ensuring that all learners access a broad and balanced curriculum that meets statutory requirements, as well as supports and challenges them to progress in their learning.
- Determining the aims, policies and priorities of the school, renewal and approval of statutory policies, curriculum summaries and documents.
- Finance: determining and monitoring the effective use of the school's budget.
- Staffing: covers the difference between governing bodies' responsibilities for staff and those of local authorities as the employer (where appropriate) in deciding the number of staff, the pay policy and making decisions on staff pay, staff appointments, suspension, disciplinary issues and dismissal, grievances, performance management and matters affecting the work-life balance of the headteacher and staff, all with due regard to the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (Wales) Document (STPC(W)D).
- Support community engagement for the benefit of learners, their families and the wider community.
- Ensure that learners with additional learning needs (ALN) are benefitting from the education provision and are achieving, attaining and showing appropriate progress.

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- Ensure that learners with ALN are fully included in all aspects of school life.
- Providing parents and carers with information regarding the school, for example via the annual report to parents, curriculum summaries and statutorily required meetings with parents and carers.
- inspection preparation and follow up, including producing an action plan and monitoring progress following an inspection by Estyn.
- Ensuring the wellbeing of learners and staff through a whole-school approach.
- Ensuring effective policies and procedures are in place to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children in accordance with **Keeping learners safe** guidance, and for monitoring compliance with them.
- Take action to promote healthy eating and drinking, including information on action taken in the annual report.
- Ensure that every learner who is entitled to receive free school lunches and free school milk receives them, taking reasonable steps to ensure that learners who receive free school lunches cannot be identified.
- Promoting a fully inclusive school environment, with a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and discrimination in all its forms, with a particular focus on anti-racism.
- Awareness of governors' responsibilities in equality matters and where to seek advice.
- Evaluation of the performance of the governing body as and when required.

How to be an effective governor

This key area focuses on the difference between governance and management, defining the respective roles as follows.

- The headteacher is responsible for internal organisation, management and control of the school, advising on and implementing the governing body's strategic framework and policies.

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- The governing body provides strategic leadership, challenging and supporting the headteacher, by acting as a critical friend with regards to strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation.

Governors should understand:

- what functions can be and have been delegated to the headteacher
- the importance of effective relationships with the headteacher, staff, local authority, diocesan authority, learners, and the local community
- the need for excellent communication with stakeholders, such as parents and carers, the local authority or the community
- the roles and responsibilities of the local authority and diocesan authority, where applicable
- the personal attributes of a governor regarding diplomacy and taking account of other governors' views in decision-making, principles of conduct, working collectively, and not acting individually
- how governing body meetings work and what is discussed, such as agendas, papers, minutes, voting, quorums (50% of the governing body membership), apologies, governing body acceptance, delegation of functions, frequency, notice and duration of meetings, schedule of meetings, calendar of work for the year
- what to expect at their first governing body meeting, and how to prepare effectively for, and be effective at, governing body meetings
- the structure of governing bodies and the role of committees, membership and terms of reference agreed and reviewed annually, specifying powers and responsibilities, effective communication between committees and the governing body
- the requirement for confidentiality regarding the proceedings of meetings, sensitive matters, and how individual members vote
- how to deal with conflicts of interest and register pecuniary interests, withdrawing from meetings where there is a personal conflict of interest
- how decisions are made in the governing body
- the corporate responsibility of the governing body, which could include collective responsibility for the outcomes agreed, the benefits of effective team work, the extent of and limitations on the liability of governors
- how collaboration or federation could potentially benefit the school and its learners
- the importance of working strategically, monitoring and evaluating school performance through use of the school development plan, self-evaluation, performance data and the headteacher's report

There are a number of statutory governing body committees, including:

- staff disciplinary and dismissal committee
- staff disciplinary and dismissal appeals committee
- pupil discipline and exclusions committee
- admissions committee (voluntary aided and foundation schools and any school where the local authority has delegated authority for admissions to governing bodies)

Statutory procedures must be put in place by governing bodies for the following:

- headteacher and deputy headteacher selection panel
- headteacher performance management appraisers and appeal appraisers
- pay review and pay review appeals
- grievance and grievance appeals
- capability and capability appeals
- complaints

Governing bodies should also consider putting in place policies and procedures for the following:

- whistleblowing
- school toilets
- sustainable development

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Governors must have:

- training in understanding the role of school data in supporting self-evaluation and improvement in schools
- understanding of the characteristics of an effective school, through involvement in discussions on the school development plan and school self-evaluation on at least a termly basis
- visits to the school, to become familiar with and learn about the school, while respecting the protocol for visits and outlining the purpose
- continuous training and development; this training should be reviewed regularly, with skills and experience analysis undertaken by the whole governing body

Background information and related links

- The school governors' guide to the law
- Training for school governors: understanding school data
- Training for chairs of governors
- Training for school governing body clerks: guidance
- School improvement guidance: framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability
- Pupil inclusion, wellbeing, behaviour and attendance
- Parent meetings: guidance for governing bodies
- School complaints procedures: guidance
- Whistleblowing in schools: guidance
- Handling allegations of abuse against teachers and staff
- Disciplinary and dismissal procedures for school staff
- Federation process of maintained schools: guidance for governing bodies and local authorities
- School toilets: good practice guidance
- Healthy eating in maintained schools: statutory guidance

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