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Academy Advisory Board: Role of the Chair

Available on the Visible Learning Platform

<http://bit.do/governors>

Aims:

- clarify the roles and responsibilities of the chair of the Academy Advisory Board (AAB)
- provide strategies to develop constructive relationships
- explore solutions to some common challenges faced by chairs
- consider sources of evidence that would demonstrate the effectiveness of the chair/AAB

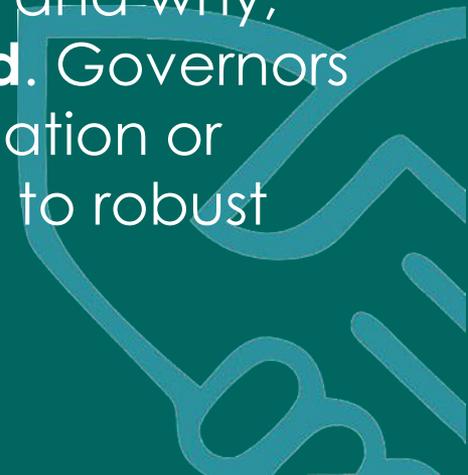


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Characteristics of effective governance

- Effective governing bodies are driven by a **core of key governors** such as the chair and others. They see themselves as part of a team and build strong relationships with the Principal/Headteacher, senior leaders and other governors.
- Effective governing bodies consistently **monitor** their school's progress towards meeting agreed improvement targets. Information about what is going well and why, and what is not going well and why, is **shared**. Governors **consistently ask** for more information, explanation or clarification. This makes a strong contribution to robust planning for improvement.



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Chairs lead effective governance by:

- facilitating good communications and well organised meetings
- building a strong team
- modelling a good relationship with school's senior leaders
- ensuring school improvement is the key focus of the AAB
- ensuring AAB's preparedness for OFSTED inspection
- encouraging AAB self-evaluation and improvement
- reviewing own performance



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Characteristics of a good chair

- Committed to the school
- A strategic thinker
- Good communication skills
- Works well under pressure
- Offer support and mentoring
- Can challenge without being confrontational
- A team player that can develop a strong team
- Structured and organised



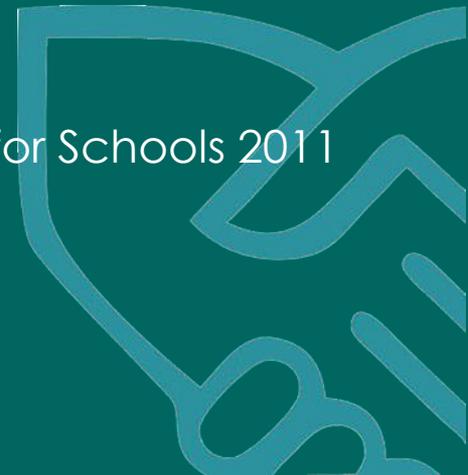
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Strategic leadership role

“The governing body should be the most important decision making group in any school and the key body for school improvement. Through the leadership of the chair of governors, governing bodies should set the overall strategic direction of a school, hold the head teacher to account and have a relentless focus on driving up standards. Too many governors tell me that they spend hours in meetings discussing what are relatively trivial issues when they could be concentrating on strategic leadership and making a difference to children.”

Lord Hill of Oareford Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools 2011



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Enable robust governance by:

- providing new governors with information on how the AAB works
- agreeing, and gaining annual commitment to, a code of conduct
- challenging governors who act without delegated authority
- questioning decisions made without AAB or fellowship agreement
- operating within agreed terms of reference



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Well chaired meetings:

- early communication of agenda
- Prior circulation of associated papers
- start at the communicated start time
- encourage contributions from all
- don't divert from the agenda without good reason
- summarise discussion and confirm decisions/agreed actions
- ensure adherence to agreed code of conduct
- discourage discussions which digress from the agenda
- last no longer than anticipated end time

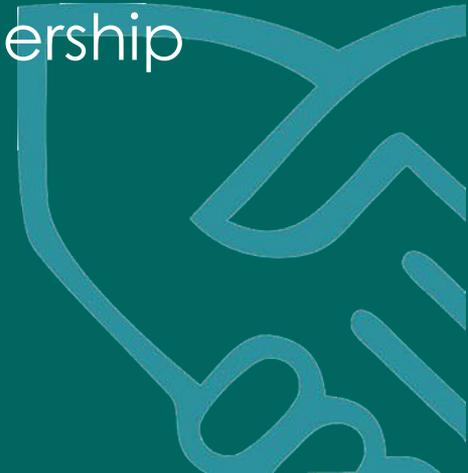


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The Chair's powers

- Few powers are given to the chair
- The chair is accountable to the fellowship
- The Principal/Headteacher is not accountable to the chair but to the fellowship
- The chair should liaise directly with the CEO of the fellowship or designated executive if they have major concerns about the school or leadership within the school



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Developing good relationships:

- facilitates the work of the AAB
- influences the climate in which the Principal/Headteacher works with the AAB
- influences the climate in which the AAB works with other members of staff
- is based on mutual respect and openness but is not an exclusive relationship
- allows the Principal/Headteacher to make all operational management decisions
- demonstrates a shared pursuit of school improvements



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The AAB structure should:

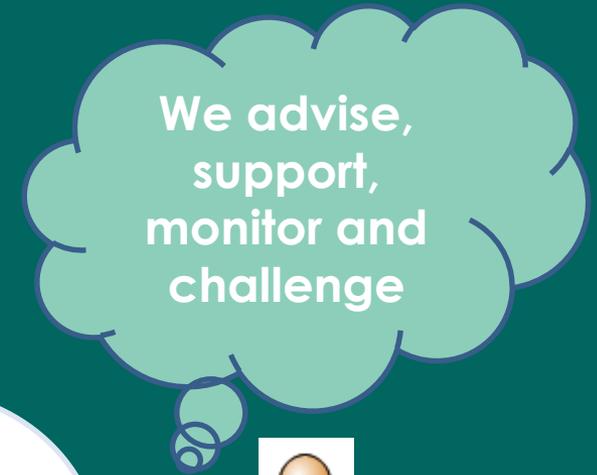
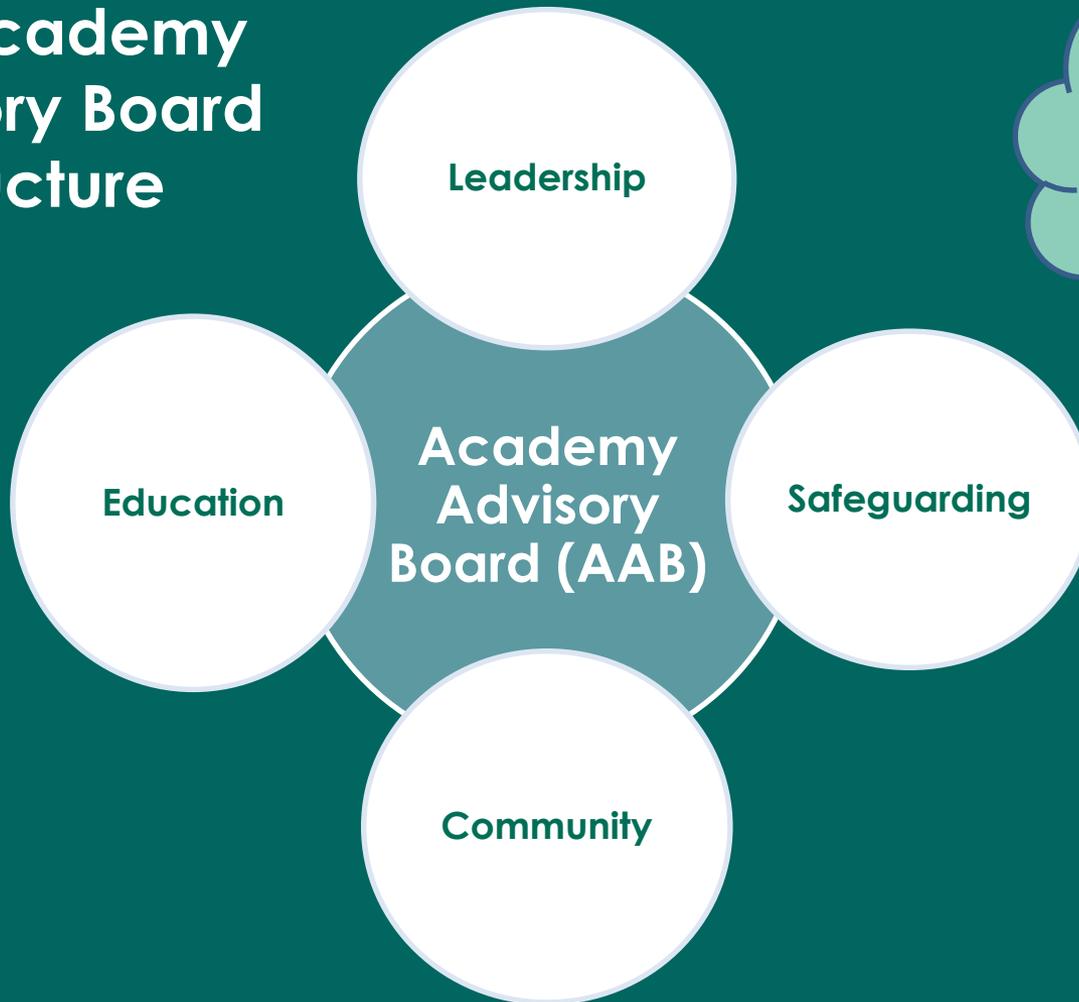
- Comprise between seven and 10 members
- Serve a three year fixed term
- Re-election for a maximum of three terms
- Comprise a minimum of two parent governors
- Governors with local community knowledge
- Bring clear knowledge and expertise
- Evaluate a skills audits for all governors
- Offer necessary training to support governors (including some mandatory training)



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The Academy Advisory Board Structure



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Effective chairs build strong teams by:

- sharing responsibilities through effective chairing and using the skills/interests of individual governors
- using the fellowship code of conduct within the AAB to ensure strong team practice
- being accessible and encouraging to other governors
- ensuring good induction arrangements are in place
- providing prospective governors with a good understanding of expectations
- paying attention to leadership succession planning



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Summary Code of Conduct, governors:

- are ambassadors for both the academy and the fellowship
- should ensure they attend meetings promptly and for the full duration
- should operate as a team and always in the best interests of the academy
- should listen to and respect the views of others and be loyal to collective decisions made by the Advisory Board
- ensure decisions at AAB meetings are made public through minutes and reports, adhering to confidentiality in respect of key discussions
- should not speak out against decisions, in public or in private, outside meetings
- should only speak or act on behalf of the Advisory Board when specifically authorised
- should be able to express their views openly within meetings but should ensure that they relate to matters proper for discussion by the AAB

Full details in appendix 7 of the Governance Handbook (see visible learning....) Failure to comply with the code of conduct could result in removal from the AAB.

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Readiness for Ofsted

- Schools are expected to provide inspection teams with evidence of the work of governors and their impact
- The AAB should keep an up-to-date folder of key evidence that demonstrates the work undertaken within FAB and action groups to demonstrate work and impact
- Effective AABs constantly **reflect on their own effectiveness** and readily make changes to improve. They consider their own training needs, as well as how they organise their work.



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Ofsted: key characteristics of effective governing bodies.

Governors' consistently:

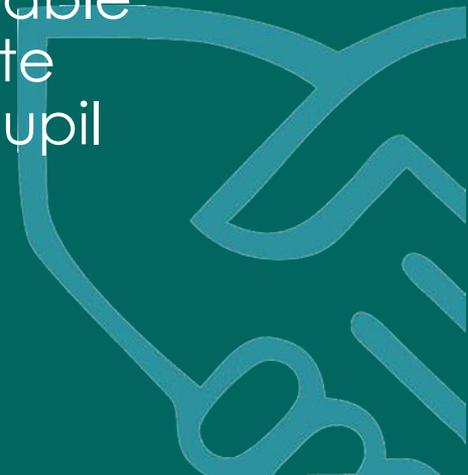
- Systematically monitor progress to meet targets
- Ask for more information, explanation or clarification
- Are given high quality, accurate information
- Take and support hard decisions in interest of pupils
- Supports honest, insightful self-evaluation
- Are clear on their individual and collective roles
- Talk with staff, pupils, parents and the community
- Ask challenging questions focused on improvement to pupil experiences and outcomes

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Outstanding Governance

- Outstanding governance supports honest, insightful, self-evaluation by the school, recognising problems and supporting the steps needed to address them
- Effective governing bodies systematically monitor their school's progress towards meeting agreed development targets. Information about what is going well and why, and what is not going well and why, is shared
- Governors are well informed and knowledgeable because they are given high quality, accurate information that is concise and focused on pupil achievement



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AAB self-evaluation, key questions

- How well is your AAB doing/how would you know?
- What impact has it had in the last two years?
- When did you last evaluate yourselves as an advisory board?
- What process did you use?
- What success indicators did you judge yourselves against?
- What did you do as a result of the self-evaluation?
- Do you have an AAB improvement plan?
- How is progress against it monitored?
- How will the impact of the improvement plan be evaluated?
- Do you know the strengths and areas for improvement?



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Resources for chairs

NGA Chair's guide www.nga.org.uk

Leading Governors (programme from the NCSL)

www.dfe.gov.uk

www.Ofsted.gov.uk

www.nga.org.uk

www.thegovernor.org.uk

www.governorline.co.uk

www.nationalcollege.org.uk

www.sgoss.org.uk

<http://schoolgovernors.thekeysupport.com>

