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Questions for Governing Boards to ask: Staffing

These questions are part of NGA's Questions for governing boards to ask. Click here to view the full range of questions.

> **Health warning:** these questions need to be used appropriately. You need to consider the best time and place to ask any questions – it may be at the relevant committee meeting, rather than in a full Governing Board meeting, and must be pertinent to the discussion at hand. It is absolutely **NOT** intended that these questions should be handed over to the headteacher and an answer to each one sought. This is not a test for school leaders, but a tool to help governors.

If you are in any doubt about how to use these well, please contact NGA at governorhq@nga.org.uk.

Overarching question

Have we got the right approach to staffing?

Questions for the board to ask itself:

a)   How effectively is the head teacher's appraisal carried out?

b)   Are her/his objectives set in line with school priorities?

c)   Does the GB/relevant committee receive good quality information about the performance appraisal outcomes of staff?

Questions for the board to ask senior leaders:

a)   If you could change the staffing structure, would you and why?

     i.   What changes would you make?

     ii.   Are there any areas (including business management) we need more/less staff in?

     iii.   Is the support staff to teaching staff ratio right?

     iv.   Do we have the right line-management structure in place?

b)   Have we got an effective pay structure in place?

     i.   When did we last review our pay policy?

     ii.   Is it clear how performance and pay are related?

     iii.   Are we able to use the pay structure to reward our best staff?

     iv.   Maintained schools – does our policy reflect the new rules on leadership pay?

c)   How effectively are all the staff managed and appraised?

     i.   Do all line managers meet regularly 1:1 with their staff?

     ii.   How do you go about setting objectives?

     iii.   Do all classroom based staff (teaching and non-teaching) have performance objectives which relate to the school development priorities?

     iv.   What moderation does the SLT undertake in relation to performance management objectives?

     v.   How many staff achieved their objectives for the past year?

     vi.   What additional support is being offered to staff struggling to meet objectives and is that working well?

     vii.   Are any teachers subject to capability proceedings?

d)   Is there correlation between appraisal outcomes, pay and the quality of teaching and learning?

e)   What percentage of teaching is outstanding/good/requires improvement/inadequate?

f)   Do you have a programme of staff development for succession planning to ensure the school has a good supply of middle and senior leaders?

g)   What is the staff retention like in reference to similar schools?

h)   What is staff absence/sickness like in reference to similar schools?

i)   Are you carrying out 'exit' interviews for staff who leave - are there any common themes?

j)   Have we got Human resources expertise which is high quality and how do we know?

k)   Have we got the skills and knowledge in the staff team to manage personnel matters well, and how it this demonstrated?

Continuing professional development:

a)   How much money is being spent on the full variety of CPD activities? Do we need to increase this?

b)   How much time is allocated for staff to engage in professional learning? Is time allocated for all staff, including non-teaching staff?

c)   Is this time sufficient, or so we need to plan to extend this?

d)   Do CPD activities have specific outcomes, including where possible pupil outcomes, associated with them? Is the impact of each activity being evaluated upon these outcomes?

e)   What is the programme of CPD activities for the year? How long is each CPD focus being sustained for - are these one off activities or long-term approaches?

f)   Is the school building on the expertise and skills of its own staff, and how is the school working with other schools, including Teaching School Alliances?

g)   How is the school ensuring that it is engaging with quality providers? Is it strategically comparing courses and consultancy on a national database (such as Good CPD Guide.com)?

h)   What steps is the school taking to ensure that up-to-date, evidence-based approaches to teaching are being actively sought and embedded?

i)   Is every member of staff (including non-teaching staff) being proactively supported in their career development?

j)   Are appraisal and mid-year reviews used with all staff to discuss specific development needs and set a personal development objective?

k)   Does every member of staff feel supported and constructively challenged? Do they feel trusted and valued?

l)   How are school leaders ensuring that top-down quality assurance processes aren't hindering a culture of professional learning?

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