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Questions for governing boards to ask: Raising standards

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

What are we doing to raise standards for all children?

The governing body should know the answers to questions a) to k) from data sources, such as Analyse School Performance (ASP), the Ofsted dashboard and [Fischer Family Trust dashboard](#), and from internal data provided by school leaders, including the headteachers' report:

- a) How does attainment at this school compare to national averages and the government's floor standards?
- b) What, if any, impact does the context of our school have on pupils' attainment?
- c) How is the school performing in English and maths?
- d) How do children in our school progress compared with expectations?
- e) How does the school's performance compare to those for other similar schools?
- f) Which groups of pupils in terms of gender and ethnicity are the highest and lowest performing?
- g) How are FSME (ever-six Free School Meal), SEN and EAL students progressing compared with other students in this school, and compared with FSME students in other schools?
- h) How are low, middle and high ability children progressing and attaining?
- i) Which subjects are highest and lowest performing?
- j) Do we know how these results have been changing over the past three years: are we improving or not?
- k) How does attendance in each year group compare with national averages, and what are the trends over time?
- l) Does the headteacher's report give a clear indication of progress towards meeting the targets/objectives in the school development/improvement plan?
- m) Does the headteacher's report give a clear indication of pupil progress for all year groups and subjects in the school?
- n) What are the strengths and weaknesses of this school?
- o) How do we know that the information we have about our school is robust and accurate?

Questions for the board to ask senior leaders:

(some of these should be answered regularly by the headteachers' report)

- a) Why is progress in some subjects under national expectations?
 - i. What is your strategy for improving the areas of weak performance?
- b) Why is progress in some subjects or year groups better than others in the school?

- i. What is being done to raise performance specifically in those areas which are under-achieving?
 - ii. What has worked well and can we use it more widely?
 - iii. How does this relate to the quality of teaching across the school?
- c) Why are some groups of pupils (as identified above: by gender, ethnicity, EAL, socio-economic status, ability) progressing less well than in other schools?
- i. What is being done to raise performance for those children?
 - ii. Are staff aware of which pupils and groups of pupils are underachieving?
- d) Why are some groups of pupils progressing less well than others in the school?
- i. What is being done to close this gap?
- e) How will you demonstrate to the governing body that improvement is taking place?
- i. Who in the staff group has responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of different interventions and how is this done?
 - ii. Which interventions offer the best results and how does this compare with the cost?
 - iii. Are we learning from other schools?
- f) For pupils with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, are we meeting all of the requirements on their EHC?
- g) How much progress are pupils with e.g. SEN, EAL, FSM making in relation to:
- i. The expected level?
 - ii. The national average?
 - iii. The school average?
 - iv. Equivalent schools?
- h) What is the attainment for pupils with e.g. SEN, EAL, FSM in our school in comparison to:
- i. The expected level?
 - ii. The national average?
 - iii. The school average?
 - iv. Equivalent schools?
- i) How do we assess our pupils?
- i. How do we set individual targets for pupils?
 - ii. What proportion of pupils are meeting their personal progress targets?
 - iii. How do you know the targets are ambitious enough?
 - iv. What is being done to help the individual pupils that aren't meeting their targets?
 - v. What is the impact of that and how do you know?
- j) How is assessment and feedback used to help children progress and meet their targets?
- k) What strategies are in place to ensure the most able pupils are stretched?
- i. How do you know they are working?
- l) Is low attendance having an impact on pupil outcomes? (see also [question 7](#)).
- i. Are there any persistent late-comers - if so, what impact is that having?
 - ii. Are there particular groups affected, such as children on ever-six Free School Meals?
 - iii. What is being done to improve attendance and is it having an effect?

- m) Does the number of children arriving at the school after the usual intake affect their attainment and what are we doing to improve outcomes for those children?
- n) How do we support children arriving at the school to settle in and learn?
- o) How do we prepare children for the next stage of their education?
- p) Special Schools - How many P-levels of progress are children making compared to similar schools?

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