

MAT Governance and Leadership Conference: Thursday 29th September 2022

Welcome and introductions



Governors/trustees were welcomed to the event by Richard Pithers, Chair of the Trust Board. Richard introduced the other trustees present (Rev Ben Whitmore, Sue Preston, Nicky Lowe, Gill Bladon and Katy Kent (CEO)) and welcomed any questions or comments that Governors may have throughout the day. Richard advised that he and the trustees hold Katy to account, similarly to the way that Governors hold their Headteacher/Head of School to account.

S4S Safeguarding service contact information

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Safeguarding

Jodie Richards (Service Lead – Safeguarding and Development at Services 4 Schools (S4S)) presented information to Governors/trustees around safeguarding and their responsibilities. Jodie recommended that all Governors/trustees read the entirety of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), given that they are responsible for safeguarding within their settings. Delegates were advised that KCSIE was updated in September 2022 and changes were highlighted, including a change in terminology from “peer-on-peer” to “child-on-child” abuse. Governors were reminded that they should be seeking assurance that their schools are compliant, that procedures are robust and that a positive culture exists in school. They were also advised of the different forms of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual and neglect) and were informed that S4S provides a range of training which Governors can access online.



Jodie highlighted the responsibilities for safeguarding as detailed within the Scheme of Delegation. She reminded Governors of their strategic responsibilities, suggesting that reports can be produced at Local Governing Board (LGB) level in order to then provide assurances to the Trust Board.

Governors completed a group activity around how they currently strategically ensure that safeguarding is robust and effective within their setting. Examples included:

- Completion of link governor visits; termly is sufficient
- Ensuring there are systems in place in school to ensure all staff understand their responsibilities and that training has taken place

Jodie advised that inspectors will include the effectiveness of governance in relation to safeguarding, and Governors need to feel confident in speaking to an inspector about how they obtain the reassurance they need. In addition, Jodie reminded delegates that at least one person on every interview panel should be Safer Recruitment trained.

Governors/Trustees must ask the right questions to ensure that policies and procedures are compliant, including low-level concerns. Governors' questions should be reflected in LGB minutes, and minutes and/or Headteacher's Report should reflect information around safeguarding in school. Governors must remain strategic and not become involved in operational matters; they represent a second level of assurance in a triangulated approach. Jodie provided example questions that Governors could consider asking in LGB meetings or during school visits, with examples of the types of robust answers they should expect to hear. In addition, they were reminded that they are there not just to challenge, but to provide support and encouragement.

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Ofsted

Kerry Rochester (Ofsted Inspector) was welcomed to the event and opened by asking delegates to consider the three main functions of governance:

1. Ensuring clarity of **vision, ethos and strategic direction**
2. Holding **executive leaders to account** for the educational performance, ensuring effective and efficient performance management of staff
3. Overseeing financial performance and **ensuring money is well spent**



Delegates were reminded to remain abreast of any changes to The Governance Handbook.

Kerry asked delegates to consider who Ofsted will want to speak to and referred to the Trust's Scheme of Delegation.

Kerry provided information about what an Inspector is likely to look at during an inspection, starting with the school website. They may also review minutes and will speak to staff about the culture in school. Does the school's vision and values link to the MAT vision? What training have Governors attended? What form of challenge have Governors provided that has made a difference to the quality of education within the school? Do Governors feel confident in relation to the core functions of governance or are there any elements which they need to explore further?

Delegates completed a group activity considering their roles and effective challenge:



- Do Governors question effectively around the areas in which they have responsibility as per the Scheme of Delegation?
- What information is provided by the Trust/school and how can Governors challenge this? Should leaders consider reporting *less* information in order to facilitate effective challenge from Governors, rather than providing them with all of the answers before they have an opportunity to ask?
- Do leaders provide sufficient notice for papers to be read in advance of the meeting? How are questions encouraged and how can this potentially be better captured? E.g. the Headteacher asking Governors to submit questions in advance of the meeting.

- How does triangulation work in meetings and across the Trust?
- Where responsibility falls to trustees, how can Governors nonetheless question the decisions that are being made at Trust-level e.g. where budgets are agreed by trustees?
- How do Governors question and challenge the HT Report?
- In what way do Governors' questions have an impact on the quality of teaching? E.g. questioning a recent external review.
- Can the workload be spread e.g. a Pupil Premium Link Governor could focus on the PP paperwork presented in a meeting and submit questions around this.
- How do Governors question the way money is spent? An example was Governors challenging the way the school actions the priorities within the School Improvement Plan.



Kerry advised that there is a big focus on equality currently, for example, how are SEND pupils able to access the curriculum? Are Governors familiar with the Trust's Equality Policy?

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Kerry also referenced safeguarding expectations, which had also been covered during Jodie's presentation earlier.

Governors/trustees should expect to be involved in a conversation with Inspectors and Kerry advised that virtual conversations are acceptable if required on the part of the school.

Ofsted inspectors will triangulate evidence in order to inform their judgements. It was noted that inspectors will question schools on their use of Pupil Premium funding. The Ofsted framework provides further information about the expectations around Governors/trustees fulfilling their role. Governors should be able to articulate how their school is performing against national benchmarks and all those involved in governance should adhere to the Nolan Principles.



Delegates discussed the extent to which leaders should be presenting data to Governors. Kerry felt that understanding headline figures would allow Governors to question the priority areas, which should be reflected in the School Improvement Plan. This therefore meant that Governors don't need to be receiving detailed data per year group as much of this should be captured through other forms of monitoring; the key is not *what* information is presented but exactly *how* that information is used to inform priority planning and effective challenge.

Judging governance forms part of the overall leadership and management judgement. Governors/trustees must understand their roles and responsibilities and statutory requirements.

Delegates again completed an activity whereby each table considered a potential question that an inspector might ask, and how they would answer this question. The questions were:



- ✓ Tell me about the quality of education – what are the strengths and weaknesses? How do you know? What about the quality of education for pupils with SEND? How does the MAT make sure that DA pupils achieve as well as they can? How is additional funding used here and how do you know it is having a positive impact?
- ✓ Let's consider RSHE – how have you made sure that each school have fulfilled their statutory requirements? Tell me about how you consulted with parents and what the outcome of the consultation was? For example, what decisions were made about the teaching about LGBT relationships?
- ✓ How do you assure yourselves that pupils are taught about the protected characteristics?
- ✓ Ensure the school cover their statutory duty under prevent, equality and safeguarding?
- ✓ How do you find out about outcomes at the school? Is this where you expect it to be? Do all pupils/groups of pupils achieve well? What is being done to address any poor outcomes?
- ✓ How is attendance managed here? Do governors know about pupil movement? How would you know about any elective home education requests?



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Kerry then went on to provide further information about MAT Summary Evaluations, noting that this was a good way of Trusts being held to account. She asked Katy to explain how the MAT identifies its strengths and weaknesses and Katy referenced her termly report to the Trust Board.

Katy thanked Governors/trustees for volunteering their time to attend the event and of course, for dedicating their time on a voluntary basis to support and challenge the Trust.



Left to right: Gill Bladon (Vice-Chair of the Trust Board), Nicky Lowe, Emma Balchin, Katy Kent (CEO), Richard Pithers (Chair of the Trust Board), Sue Preston and Revd Ben Whitmore



Love



Trust



Compassion



Forgiveness