

# Succession breeds success



How to grow leaders in your governing body

*“Effective succession means having a plan and making plans to create positive and co-ordinated flows of leadership across many years and numerous people”*

*Sustainable Leadership (2006) , Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink, Jossey-Bass, quoted in “Leadership succession – securing the next generation of school leaders” (2006) NCSL*

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## Foreword

Succession planning in a governing body is important, as in any organisation, for the stability and progress of the enterprise. This revised and updated edition of the National Coordinators of Governor Services (NCOGS) document *Succession Breeds Success* is aimed at assisting governors in managing this process in a positive and constructive way so that governance and the leadership of the governing body are strong and effective in holding the school to account. It may be used in whole or part by governors and others, on the understanding NCOGS is acknowledged as the source.

NCOGS exists to support Governor Services in local authorities (LAs) in England, and governance professionals working in and in partnership with LAs, with a view to promoting high-quality governance in schools. NCOGS is a national committee that represents eight regional networks of governor services. The networks include representation from almost every LA and, in many cases, diocesan representatives and independent consultants too. You can find out more about NCOGS on our website, [www.ncogs.org.uk](http://www.ncogs.org.uk), and details of your LA Governor Services via the LA concerned.

LAs retain significant responsibilities around school governance, including making Instruments of government, appointing and/or nominating Authority governors (expected to be nominating only from September 2015 when new regulations will apply, save when statutory intervention powers are applied), and signposting or providing training for governors in schools and academies. Many also provide clerking services and undertake reviews of governing body effectiveness. Alongside this and as part of their statutory functions around monitoring and intervention, LAs have a range of powers of intervention in specified circumstances, including where there is a breakdown in leadership and management

When governance works well intervention powers are most unlikely to be required, and I hope the advice and suggestions in this publication will make a contribution to governance being strong and resilient so that our schools may prosper.

**Andy Kent**  
*Chair of NCOGS*

## Introduction

Has your governing body ever found itself in any of these situations?

- Nobody was prepared to stand as chair.
- The existing chair stayed on but didn't really want to.
- The vice chair has no clearly defined role.
- Committees are simply 'talking shops'.
- It's usually the same governor(s) who volunteer(s) to take on a task.
- It takes too long for new governors to feel they can contribute.
- There are too many vacancies or "we grab anyone willing to do the job".

If the answer's yes, join the club! If it's no, good planning now will avoid it happening in future. It's good practice anyway to ensure your governing body secures the legacy for the strategic leadership of your school, and that includes the leadership of the governing body itself.

Clearly, it's important for governing bodies to ensure continuity of leadership and to avoid crises within leadership in the governing body. So how can these situations be avoided in the first place?

The answer is effective succession planning.

## Succession planning in the governing body – how you do it

Succession planning within the governing body is about:

- attracting and retaining good governors
- spotting leadership talent early
- supporting and developing leadership skills throughout the governing body
- creating opportunities to practise leadership skills
- giving and receiving feedback
- coaching and mentoring
- developing the governing body as a team
- delegating fairly and effectively
- encouraging others to take up opportunities.

For the individual, succession planning can make life much more interesting as it opens up a range of opportunities for personal development. For the governing body, succession planning ensures its future strength and effectiveness. It is easier to achieve smooth succession in a governing body with a fairly stable membership, so where turnover is high, it is even more important to plan succession.

This document aims to help you identify the steps you can take to create a culture in which leadership can thrive. There is the bonus that if you follow the recommendations here you will be encouraging good governance, quite apart from what you will be doing to secure future leadership.

## What does good governing body leadership look like?

The Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted regard governance as a key component of effective school leadership:

“Governing bodies are the key strategic decision makers in every school. They are also a key part of the overall system for school accountability. Governing bodies have a vital role to play in driving up school and pupil performance and ensuring every child receives the best possible education.” *Lord Nash, foreword to The Governors’ Handbook, DfE, 2013.*

“All leaders and managers, including those responsible for governance, are highly ambitious for the pupils and lead by example.” *From the definition of outstanding leadership and governance in the Ofsted inspection framework, 2013*

Traditionally, we tend to think of the leadership of the governing body as being vested in the chair (and perhaps the vice chair). However, for a governing body to be truly effective and guard against the impact of rapid change, it needs to distribute leadership. Distributed leadership is, in fact, common among staff in many schools; in practice it means that many members of the school are seen as leaders and tasks are delegated far and wide. For this to work, too, among governors, we need to grow leaders within the governing body.

In response to a potential long-term shortage of headteachers the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) has been encouraging schools to become more proactive in

growing the next generation of leaders by:

- expanding opportunities – providing more openings for teachers to practise leadership skills
- widening the talent pool – encouraging more women and ethnic minorities to take on leadership roles
- talent spotting – actively identifying and encouraging leadership talent within the school
- leading beyond the school – encouraging opportunities in other schools and industries for leadership practice
- promoting new models of leadership – federation, co-headship and executive headship.

These strategies are equally applicable to the governing body. Significantly, the NCTL has also taken on responsibility for developing the skills of new and potential chairs, including creating a leadership development programme for chairs that is now being delivered across the country.

Effective leadership of the governing body involves working towards a shared vision for school improvement which all governors help to achieve, working together to share responsibility and workload, and the adoption of effective working practices which enable everyone to participate and develop leadership skills.



## What deters people from taking on school leadership?

The NCTL has identified various factors that deter people from taking up headship. Similar factors may deter governors from taking on the role of chair. The following table identifies some common themes:

<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Chair of governing body</b>
<i>Overwhelming demands of the job</i>	<i>Overwhelming demands of the job – and the time to do it</i>
<i>It takes 20 years to reach headship</i>	<i>It can take at least two years to feel confident enough to take it on</i>
<i>Shortage of suitable candidates</i>	<i>Governors are not effectively prepared for the role</i>
<i>Schools wait for talent to emerge – they don't seek out leaders</i>	<i>Governors hope someone else will volunteer and governing bodies don't develop potential leaders</i>
<i>Behaviour and attitude of chair or governing body</i>	<i>Behaviour and attitude of head or governing body</i>
<i>Previous or existing head impossible act to follow</i>	<i>Previous or existing chair impossible act to follow</i>
<i>Level of responsibility – but at least it's well paid</i>	<i>Level of responsibility – and it's unpaid</i>

The NCTL website ([www.nationalcollege.org.uk](http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk)) contains various forms of guidance on headteacher and staff succession planning that governors will find useful. The need for this document was stimulated by the absence of equivalent guidance on the leadership of the governing body . It has been developed to provide guidance for governing bodies on how they should approach their own succession planning.

## How can we use this document?

The rest of this document contains tables that identify the different phases of leadership development through which a governor may pass, from recruitment through to becoming an effective chair:

- attracting new governors
- developing the new governor
- taking additional responsibility
- growing as a team leader
- developing the role of vice chair(s)
- being an effective chair of governors.

Each table defines the expectations and actions and strategies that will enable the growth of leaders within the governing body.

The roles of governing bodies in academies can vary from those in maintained schools as some of the governing body's roles may be retained by the academy trust. However, the principles and advice given remain the same for both types of school. Where the text refers to 'the headteacher' it applies equally to the principal of an academy.

The 'Expectations' column in the tables makes it clear for each entry whether the advice is intended for an individual or for the governing body as a whole. In the case of the latter (the majority of the tables), the table can be used by the governing body in reviewing its own practice or by a single governor on behalf of the governing body. This may be the chair, but

could equally well be another governor entrusted with the task. If used by a single governor, share what you identify from the tables with the other governors and evaluate your governing body's practice against what the tables say.

If you would like help in exploring the recommended actions and strategies, your local Governor Services Co-ordinator can help.

## Attracting new governors

An effective governing body is, in itself, the best recruitment tool of all. Don't wait for vacancies to arise before developing effective recruitment strategies such as engaging parents and carers with the work of the governing body and actively encouraging community and business links. The Twenty Key Questions for a governing body to ask itself published by the All Parliamentary Group on Governance start with "Right skills: Do we have the right skills on the governing body" and ask if we have completed a skills audit of the governing body, whether we appoint governors on the basis of their skills and whether we know how to find people with the necessary skills. Follow this advice and when you have a vacancy it will be an opportunity to strengthen the governing body. Even if your vacancies are for parent or staff governors and therefore subject to election, you can still indicate in advance what skills you hope candidates will bring.

### **Expectations**

The governing body knows that its collective effectiveness is the best recruitment tool and encourages governors to stay and develop leadership skills

The governing body reaches out to its community and ensures that potential recruits are clear about the purpose, work and expectations of the governing body

The governing body makes use of available recruitment resources

### **Actions and strategies**

- Agree and publish a shared vision between the senior leadership team and governors of how the school's leadership will look in five years' time (staff and governors)
- Sign up to a code of practice that underpins effective, transparent team working, shares the workload and encourages all to get involved and gain leadership experience
- Build relationships between governors and between governors and school staff, including the clerk, based upon mutual trust and respect
- Encourage all governors to participate in all aspects of the work
- Change roles within the governing body regularly to ensure maximum numbers gain experience across a wide range of work
- Audit governing body skills and development needs
- Ensure that collective responsibility is understood and observed
- Review structures regularly to ensure the governing body meets statutory requirements and that workload and experience are shared
- Publicise the work of the governing body e.g. newsletter, informal presence at parents' evenings
- Organise open evenings/sessions for interested parents
- Approach and build relationships with local companies and community groups
- Invite potential governors as observers or appoint them as associate members
- Be honest about the commitment needed to be an effective governor
- Agree and publicise an expenses policy
- Ensure that the timing of meetings is no disincentive to recruitment, and reflects satisfactory work-life balance for both school staff and governors
- Use local authority (LA) material or DfE-published recruitment materials
- Contact SGOSS – Governors for Schools ([www.sgoss.org.uk](http://www.sgoss.org.uk))

## Developing the new governor

Effective induction of new governors is crucial to ensure their retention on the governing body. If they engage through induction they will be more able to contribute effectively and feel part of the governor team early on. Remember that induction has two strands: initially by the governing body and then formal training, usually from the local authority.

### **Expectations**

The governing body ensures that all new governors are made welcome and supports them in their development

The governing body identifies those with potential leadership capability early on and nurtures leadership skills

The new governor contributes to the effectiveness of the governing body

The new governor has a positive impact on the effectiveness of the governing body

### **Actions and strategies**

- Find out whether the newest governors felt they were welcomed and given sufficient support so that they could make a contribution from the start
  - Develop and implement an induction policy for your governing body, identifying what information new governors need to be given, taking account of most recent recruits' views
  - Identify an individual to oversee the induction of new governors (this may be the clerk)
  - Provide new governors with a mentor
  - Encourage new governors to attend LA induction and other relevant training
  - Ensure that all contributions are recognised and valued
  - Review the induction process
- 
- Agree and publish a clear description of who is responsible and accountable for what, including terms of reference for committees
  - Audit the skills, knowledge and experience of new governors to establish their interests and development needs
  - Identify those with leadership potential and interest in developing it
  - Explain the future leadership opportunities available within the governing body
  - Encourage the early adoption of additional responsibilities by those with the relevant potential
- 
- Discuss with your mentor what skills, interests and experience you bring
  - Be realistic and clear about the level of commitment you can give
  - Seek opportunities and offer to take on additional responsibility if and when appropriate
  - Offer feedback on the effectiveness or otherwise of your induction
  - Attend relevant training and development opportunities
- 
- Through discussions with one or more other governors, identify what has gone well and what could be improved

## Taking additional responsibility

An effective governing body motivates and enables all its members to play an active part in its school improvement and strategic development work. This could include:

- joining a committee
- linking with a School Development Plan or self evaluation priority
- leading a school improvement task or working group
- taking on a specific area of responsibility such as Special Educational Needs, child protection, health and safety, headteacher appraisal
- leading on an agenda item
- becoming a Link/Development governor.

### **Expectations**

The governing body knows and deploys the skills, experience and interests of all the governors

### **Actions and strategies**

- Create opportunities for governors to get to know each other socially
- Conduct a skills, experience and interests audit
- Match governors' skills, experience and interests to known and anticipated roles and tasks – but enable new challenges by swapping roles as experience grows
- Include a brief pen-portrait or mini-biography of each governor in relevant documents

The governing body creates opportunities for governors to take on additional responsibilities and develop leadership skills

- Review structures and ways of working to create opportunities for governors to take on additional responsibilities (e.g. working parties, task groups)
- Give one or more governors the task of finding out from other governing bodies how they structure and manage their workload
- Encourage governors with a moderate amount of experience to mentor new governors
- Encourage, value and facilitate feedback from governors on their additional responsibilities

The governing body encourages and supports governors taking on additional responsibilities and developing leadership skills

- Offer mentoring
- Make sure the governors know the boundaries of the additional responsibility and what is expected
- Facilitate meetings with relevant members of staff
- Promote appropriate training and development
- Develop policies and protocols with staff and governors to facilitate visits to school
- Provide opportunities to network with governors from other governing bodies with similar responsibilities

Governor taking on additional responsibilities carries out responsibilities to the best of his/her ability and reflects on learning

- Make use of all available support and guidance
- Keep to timescale
- Deliver what has been agreed
- Report as appropriate
- Liaise and network with governors fulfilling a similar role on other governing bodies
- Reflect on any new leadership skills you have developed

Governor taking on additional responsibilities has a positive impact on the effectiveness of the governing body

Through discussions with one or more other governors, identify what has gone well and what could be improved

## Growing as a team leader

Leading a team in the governing body can mean chairing a committee or leading a task group or working party. An effective committee chair doesn't simply run a meeting. He/she ensures that all governors have an opportunity to contribute, especially those reporting back on their additional responsibilities, and he/she forges positive relationships with other players involved, such as key school staff and external advisers.

<b>Expectations</b>	<b>Actions and strategies</b>
The governing body defines and agrees the role of the team leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agree and publish the job description</li><li>• Ensure clear parameters of delegation of authority and reporting-back procedures (formally in terms of reference for committees with delegated powers and less formally for task groups and working parties)</li></ul>
The governing body identifies and nurtures the governor's leadership skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify governors with the potential to become team leaders</li><li>• Encourage them to take on these roles</li><li>• Enable shadowing of more experienced team leaders either on own or other governing body</li><li>• Offer mentoring</li><li>• Offer support at initial meetings</li><li>• Encourage attendance at effective chairing or other relevant training</li><li>• Encourage provision of feedback on leadership skills</li></ul>
Team leader leads group effectively and reflects on learning	<p>Take advantage of support, guidance and training offered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fulfil expectations of role</li><li>• Liaise and network with governors fulfilling a similar role on other governing bodies</li><li>• Seek feedback on how well you have fulfilled the role</li><li>• Reflect on the new leadership skills you have learned</li></ul>
Team leader has a positive impact on the effectiveness of the governing body	<p>Through discussions with one or more other governors, identify what has gone well and what could be improved</p>

## Developing the role of the vice chair(s)

The role of vice chair offers plenty of scope for the development of leadership skills. For example, you could be:

- a champion of distributed leadership among the governing body
- an active role model to new governors
- co-vice chair.

In any case, developing a close working relationship with the chair is essential.

<b>Expectations</b>	<b>Actions and strategies</b>
The governing body defines the role of vice chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agree and publish the role description</li><li>• Include the definition in relevant documents</li><li>• Agree the term of office of the vice chair prior to an election and record it</li></ul>
The vice chair actively develops knowledge, skills and understanding to share the workload with the chair and governing body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the chair's workload to establish which tasks you could take on</li><li>• Attend relevant briefings</li><li>• Attend training on chairing skills, especially the Chairs of Governors' Leadership Development Programme</li><li>• Join meetings with chair/head</li><li>• Link with vice chairs of other governing bodies</li><li>• Ensure you keep abreast of school issues</li></ul>
The vice chair shares some of the chair's workload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maximise the effectiveness of communication between you and the chair</li><li>• Take on specific responsibility e.g. mentor for new governors, committee chair or development of governors</li><li>• Chair particular agenda items</li><li>• Chair some full governing body meetings</li><li>• Hand over role to well-prepared successor(s)</li><li>• If still a governor after handover, serve as mentor to other governors</li></ul>
The vice chair has a positive impact on the effectiveness of the governing body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Through discussions with one or more other governors, including the chair, identify what has gone well and what could be improved</li></ul>



## Being an effective chair of governors

An effective chair of governors:

- gives a clear lead in organising and evaluating the governing body's work, valuing the contribution of all members and staff
- delegates roles and ensures all governors are fully involved
- works in partnership with the headteacher through regular meetings, providing appropriate support and challenge
- co-operates with other agencies to support school improvement
- operates as the first among equals but actively models and promotes the development of leadership skills
- encourages the development of the vice chair role.

<b>Expectations</b>	<b>Actions and strategies</b>
The governing body defines the role of chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree and publish the role description</li> <li>• Include the definition in relevant documents</li> <li>• Agree the term of office of the chair prior to an election and record it</li> </ul>
The chair actively develops knowledge, skills and understanding to share the workload with the vice chair(s) and governing body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend relevant training, especially, if not undertaken before assuming the role, the Chairs of Governors' Leadership Development Programme</li> <li>• Keep up to date</li> <li>• Seek a mentor</li> <li>• Mentor vice chair(s)</li> <li>• Share workload with vice chair(s) and other governors</li> <li>• Network with other chairs</li> <li>• Contribute, where appropriate, to governance beyond the school (e.g. in localities, federations or clusters; as mentor to chairs in other governing bodies)</li> <li>• Seek feedback from vice chair(s), headteacher and governors on own performance</li> <li>• Encourage regular review of the effectiveness of governing body structures and working practices</li> </ul>
The chair shares workload with vice chair(s) and delegates tasks and responsibilities to the governing body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create opportunities for governors to take responsibility and provide/arrange support where necessary/possible</li> <li>• Encourage governors to contribute at meetings</li> <li>• Ensure that governors' contributions are recognised and valued</li> <li>• Develop effective working relationship with clerk and headteacher</li> <li>• Develop the governing body as a team</li> <li>• Develop sustainable processes for sharing knowledge and information</li> <li>• Hand over role to well-prepared successor(s)</li> <li>• If still a governor after handover, serve as mentor to other governors</li> </ul>
The chair has a positive impact on the effectiveness of the governing body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through discussions with one or more other governors, identify what has gone well and what could be improved</li> </ul>

## ***Further support***

For help in finding new governors, go to your local governor service department or to SGOSS, [www.sgoss.org.uk](http://www.sgoss.org.uk).

The Inspiring Governors Alliance is aimed at encouraging employers to encourage staff to become governors, and to release them from work to do so. Its website, [www.inspiringgovernors.org](http://www.inspiringgovernors.org), gives information for would-be governors and will also provide lists by area of people interested in joining governing bodies.

Advice for new governors is in the National Governors' Association publication *Welcome to Governance*, see [www.nga.org.uk](http://www.nga.org.uk).

## ***Acknowledgements***

The first edition of this document was compiled, edited and published by a project team with members drawn from the South West and South East Co-ordinators of Governor Services (COGS) regions. The team included: David Alderson, Poole; Jan Banks, Bournemouth; Steve Barker, Four S; Rosie Bass, West Berkshire; Pat Fuggle, South Gloucestershire; Marya Griffiths, Oxfordshire; David Marriott, Wiltshire; Mary McIntyre, Plymouth; Judith Ogan, West Sussex; Hilary Price, Torbay; Brenda Steel, Somerset.

This edition published 2014

Produced for NCOGS by Adamson Publishing Ltd