

The Aspire Educational Trust



Information for LAC link governors

Introduction

Aim

The aim of this guide is to give you the confidence to be an effective link governor by -

- explaining the responsibilities of each link governor role,
- outlining the information that will give you an overview of your area and
- suggesting some questions that you might ask during monitoring visits to school.

Link roles

Governors support the school and help to drive school improvement through involvement in school self-evaluation, agreeing priorities for development and monitoring and evaluating the actions taken and their impact on pupils. To fulfil the role effectively governors are expected to take a lead for a link area and provide the connection between the LAC and the school.

The LAC has the following key link areas;

- Leadership and management including Disadvantaged and SEND pupils (LAC Chair), SEF and ADP
- Maths
- English
- Safeguarding and health and safety
- Wellbeing including behaviour and emotional wellbeing
- Wider curriculum including Sports Funding

You should be aware which member of staff is responsible for your link area. In each section of this guide, there are some ideas for questions you might think about asking your staff contact and an outline of the link governor's responsibilities. This is only intended to give some background information and suggestions for questions - it is not exhaustive, and this guide is not intended to be prescriptive or to limit discussions.

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Leadership and Management

Self- evaluation; The link governor should monitor that the school's self-evaluation is an honest and rigorous appraisal of performance based on the analysis of accurate, up-to-date information and data from a range of appropriate sources that can be used to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvement and threats to the school's aspirations. The SEF should be

- brief, accurate, honest and open;
- capture the school's context without "making excuses";
- evaluate the impact of the actions taken and the work of the school;
- analyse and evaluate rather than describe;
- be based on solid, wide-ranging evidence that is triangulated well;
- use as much independent evidence as it can, such as staff questionnaires, Parent View or parent surveys, national data on attendance/behaviour etc;
- be consistent, i.e. do not say outcomes are good when the data says otherwise;
- use the Ofsted criteria;
- compare the school to other schools and data nationally wherever possible

If the SEF isn't maintained as a separate document, the link governor should be confident that he/she has an accurate understanding of the school's position and could provide a summary at the start of an Ofsted inspection.

Engagement with stakeholders; The link governor should ensure the LAC engages appropriately with stakeholders and ensure that school provides an annual summary of its activities for inclusion in the AET Trustees' Report and Governance Statement. The link governor should also -

Children;

- Monitor how the LAC liaises with children – do governors conduct pupil discussions with pupils as part of the regular monitoring schedule? Are exit interviews conducted with year 6? Do governors attend the School Council/Eco Council and invite children to LAC meetings where appropriate?
- Liaise with the link governor for wellbeing to monitor children's emotional wellbeing

Staff;

- Ensure staff views are reflected in the school's self-evaluation and ADP
- Liaise with the link governor for wellbeing to monitor staff wellbeing

Parents;

- Monitor the effectiveness of the school's communication with parents (newsletter / website / Parent mail). Have we considered any other potential avenues for communication? Is there a Parents' Forum or Parent Council? Do we look at what other schools do? Do we have any "hard to reach" groups?
- Ensure parents' views are reflected in the school's self-evaluation and ADP
- Represent the LAC as appropriate at school events, such as Parents' evenings
- Monitor any issues with parental complaints. The link governor should ensure that he/she is aware of the school's complaints procedure and that the complaints policy is accessible on the website.
- Consider the information provided to parents and format of children's reports.

Community:

- Monitor and evaluate the promotion of the school within the wider community and support the school in identifying further ways to promote itself including through the school website and prospectus
- Keep up to date with developments that may impact on the community and community developments that may impact on the school. Support the school in addressing any local community concerns including monitoring how well the school promotes community cohesion including through extended services; the use of the school by community groups
- Monitor the effectiveness of work with other local schools including pre-schools and secondary schools and monitor the effectiveness of transition across key stages

SEND and Disadvantaged pupils

As the link governor for SEND/Disadvantaged pupils you should monitor data and information provided by the school and externally, including ASP, ensuring appropriate questions are raised at LAC meetings and further reports requested from the Principal where appropriate. The LAC needs to monitor how effectively the pupil premium grant is used to “close the gap” in attainment between Disadvantaged children and their peers.

You need to know –

- How does the school’s data compare to national data and to data of schools in similar contexts? How does it compare to previous years’ data in school?
- Is there any difference in attainment between different groups - boys and girls? What about looked after children? Have we ensured that a designated teacher promotes the educational achievement of looked after children?
- How does the attendance of SEND/Disadvantaged compare to other groups in school?
- What are the current ADP priorities for SEND/Disadvantaged? Are the school’s actions effectively addressing any areas of concern?

You should visit school at least once per term with an agreed focus relating to the current Academy Development Plan. Your formal written report should be shared with the Principal within 10 working days for approval and then submitted to the clerk who will distribute it for discussion at the next LAC meeting. Your report should highlight areas for future monitoring by governors and ensuring the LAC knows the strengths and areas for development.

You should attend relevant training courses, including in- school training and keep abreast of initiatives and national developments. Monitor policy documents including the Local Offer, Inclusion Policy and Equality policy refer any required amendments to the LAC for consideration.

You also need to monitor that the school meets any responsibilities to publish SEND information online; this includes the SEND report and policy and the school’s equality objectives.

SEND/Disadvantaged pupils: some questions you could ask.....

- *What is the school’s context?*

Know the numbers of SEND/Disadvantaged within school – how does this compare nationally/with schools in similar contexts? Understand how SEND/Disadvantaged pupils are identified within school. How many have an EHC Plan (Education Health and Care plan)?

- *How is progress monitored, recorded and reported?*

It is particularly important to understand how the school is evaluating pupils' attainment against the "expected" standard and what proportion are achieving "greater depth" in their learning. Governors should monitor the impact and effectiveness of the school's internal assessment of pupils' progress and attainment. Do you understand how and when the school makes its assessments? How is pupil progress tracked through the year and on transition across year groups? How do we know teachers' assessments are accurate; have they been externally moderated?

- *How does the school interact with other agencies?*

Be aware of opportunities specifically tailored to meet the needs of SEND children including involvement with other bodies such as speech and language therapy. What is the impact of these activities?

- *How is the role of SENCO developing?*

How does the SENCO support other teachers who work with pupils with SEN? How are we improving our practice through collaboration with other schools within the hub/AET? Is the role as SENCO full-time, or combined with another role within the school? Does this work well? Are there sufficient resources in school? Is more training needed?

- *How effectively is the school deploying its resources (including TA's) and using interventions?*

Monitor how the SEND/PP budget and resources are allocated within school and monitor the impact of spending. Find out about relevant initiatives and research regarding the best use of funding e.g. from the Sutton Trust. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit>. If pupils are not making expected progress, how is the school addressing this. Which pupils are targeted for interventions? How does the school evaluate the effectiveness of its interventions?

- *What extra-curricular opportunities do we facilitate?*

Do we access opportunities with other local schools? How much PP money is spent on funding extra-curricular activities? How well are pupils with SEND able to join in the everyday activities of the school?

- *How are parents involved in the processes?*

Monitor the school's approach to involving/informing parents about the support/intervention their child is receiving. How are we working to engage parents?

- *Does the designated teacher for Looked After children receive appropriate training; do governors get an annual report from the designated teacher and act on any issues that the report raises?*
- *Is the school making reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010 and publishing equality objectives at least once every four years?*

Maths

As the link governor for Maths you should monitor data and information provided by the school and externally, including ASP, ensuring appropriate questions are raised at LAC meetings and further reports requested from the Principal where appropriate.

You need to know –

- How the school's data compares to national data and to data of schools in similar contexts.
- How does it compare to previous years' data in school?
- Is there any difference in attainment between different groups - boys and girls, SEND, PP?
- What about high, middle and low attainers?
- What are the current ADP priorities? Are the school's actions effectively addressing any areas of concern?

You should visit school at least once per term with an agreed focus relating to the current Academy Development Plan. Your formal written report should be shared with the Principal within 10 working days for approval and then submitted to the clerk who will distribute it for discussion at the next LAC meeting. Your report should highlight areas for future monitoring by governors and ensuring the LAC knows strengths and areas for development. You should also attend relevant training courses, including in-school training, parents' workshops and keep abreast of initiatives and national developments; monitor policy documents as allocated and refer required amendments to the LAC.

Maths: some questions you could ask.....

- *How is progress in the subject monitored, recorded and reported?*

It is important to understand how the school is evaluating pupils' attainment against the "expected" standard and how we ensure as many as possible achieve "greater depth" in their learning. How do we know our end of year expectations are right? How do we know teachers' assessments are accurate; have they been externally moderated? How is the progress of different groups tracked through the year and on transition across year groups?

- *How do we approach the curriculum?*

How does the school make sure there is appropriate progression of skills and knowledge across year groups and Key Stages (including KS2 to KS3)? What are the opportunities for extra-curricular activities? How is planning shared - do year groups plan together?

- *How is the role of the subject-leader developing?*

How effective is our collaboration with other schools within the hub/AET? What impact is this having? How are we developing the skills of other teachers? How are parents engaged in their children's learning?

- *How effectively is the school deploying its TA's and using interventions?*

Which pupils are targeted for interventions? Are interventions and TA's being deployed to stretch the more able as well as to support lower attainers? How does the school evaluate the effectiveness of its interventions?

- *Early Years; How is maths taught in the Early Years? How is maths assessed in the Early Years? What percentage of children are on track to achieve the expected level of development?*

English: Reading, Writing, Phonics, Spelling/Grammar

As link governor for English you should monitor data and information provided by the school and externally, including ASP, ensuring appropriate questions are raised at LAC meetings and further reports requested from the Principal where appropriate.

You need to know –

- How the school's data compares to national data, to data of schools in similar contexts and how does it compare to previous years' data in school?
- How many children pass the phonics screener in Year 1 and the re-take in Year 2?
- Is there any difference in attainment between different groups - boys and girls, SEND, PP?
- What about high, middle and low attainers?
- What are the current ADP priorities? Are the school's actions effectively addressing any areas of concern?

You should visit school at least once per term with an agreed focus relating to the current Academy Development Plan. Your formal written report should be shared with the Principal within 10 working days for approval and then submitted to the clerk who will distribute it for discussion at the next LAC meeting. Your report should highlight areas for future monitoring by governors and ensuring the LAC knows the strengths and areas for development.

You should also attend relevant training courses, including in- school training/parents' workshops and keep abreast of initiatives and national developments; monitor policy documents as allocated, referring any required amendments to the LAC.

English: some questions you could ask.....

- *How is progress in the subject monitored, recorded and reported?*

It is important to understand how the school is evaluating pupils' attainment against the "expected" standard and how we ensure as many as possible achieve "greater depth" in their learning. How do we know our end of year expectations are right? How do we know teachers' assessments are accurate; have they been externally moderated? How is the progress of different groups tracked through the year and on transition across year groups?

- *How do we approach the curriculum?*

How does the school make sure there is appropriate progression of skills and knowledge across year groups and Key Stages (including KS2 to KS3)? What are the opportunities for extra-curricular activities? How is planning shared - do year groups plan together?

- *How is the role of the subject-leader developing?*

How effective is our collaboration with other schools within the hub/AET? What impact is this having? How are we developing the skills of other teachers? How are parents engaged in their children's learning?

- *How effectively is the school deploying its TA's and using interventions?*

Which pupils are targeted for interventions? Are interventions and TA's being deployed to stretch the more able? How does the school evaluate the effectiveness of its interventions?

- *Early Years; How are reading and writing taught in the Early Years? How are reading and writing assessed in the Early Years? What percentage of children are on track to achieve the expected level of development?*

Safeguarding and Health and Safety

Safeguarding and Prevent

Schools must follow the statutory guidance on safeguarding, Keeping Children Safe in Education and, under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, schools have duties to help prevent pupils from being drawn into terrorism. Governors need to ensure that staff are aware of the safeguarding policies and procedures the school has in place, know how to recognise and report signs of abuse and neglect, and update their child protection training regularly.

As link governor for safeguarding you should monitor that the school fulfils its responsibilities in respect of Safeguarding and Prevent including -

- Monitor that staff are aware of the whistle blowing policy.
- Ensure that all requirements for DBS checks are met. Ensure that a procedure is in place to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if a person in regulated activity has been dismissed or removed due to safeguarding concerns (or would have been if they had not resigned).
- Have oversight of the single central record (SCR) and ensure it is up to date and maintained in line with guidance.
- Ensure that safer recruitment practices are followed.
- Monitor that there is a suitably qualified, trained and supported Designated Safeguarding Lead (and in their absence Deputy Designated Lead) who has responsibility for responding to and overseeing safeguarding issues.
- Ensure that school staff and governor safeguarding/ Prevent training is up to date and that there is a robust system for recording, storing and reviewing child welfare concerns.

You should meet with the DSL at least once a term. Your formal written report should be shared with the Principal within 10 working days for approval and then submitted to the clerk who will distribute it for discussion at the next LAC meeting. Your report should highlight areas for future monitoring by governors and ensuring the LAC knows the strengths and areas for development. You should also attend relevant training courses, including in- school training and keep abreast of initiatives and national developments.

Safeguarding: some questions you could ask.....

- *How do we ensure there are no safeguarding concerns arising from the use of the building by other organisations?*
- *Does the school have the appropriate security/access systems in place?*
- *Do key safeguarding 'messages and lessons' run throughout the curriculum and how does the school ensure e-safety?*
- *Do children feel safe pupils in school? How do we know?*
- *What safeguarding information is provided to parents?*

Health and Safety

The LAC is responsible for ensuring staff and pupils are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. As link governor for health and safety you should:

- Monitor the school's critical incident policy
- Support the SLT with termly health and safety walks / audits in school including site visits and /safe systems of working.
- Check whether the results of termly fire drills are reported. Is fire alarm testing being recorded appropriately? Governors should check a sample of fire exits and ask: are fire exits clearly signposted? Are the corridors, stairs and doorways free from obstruction?
- Ensure there is a robust system for recording and addressing health and safety concerns and liaise with the Principal to monitor procedures; for example, ensuring governors are informed regarding any patterns of accidents, including ensuring the school is complying with The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).
- Ensure appropriate action been taken by the school to reduce risks and that risk assessments are carried out by third parties where appropriate
- Ensure staff have the relevant health and safety training for their roles e.g. caretaker, first aider, Principal and class teachers.

You should visit the school once each term. Your formal written report should be shared with the Principal within 10 working days for approval and then submitted to the clerk who will distribute it for discussion at the next LAC meeting. Your report should highlight areas for future monitoring by governors and ensuring the LAC knows the strengths and areas for development. You should also attend relevant training courses, including in- school training and keep abreast of initiatives and national developments.

Health and safety: some questions you could ask.....

- *What has been the result of investigations into incidents and accidents that have occurred?*
- *Do pupils and staff feel safe when they're in school? How do we know?*
- *Have there been any breaches of security?*

Wellbeing including behaviour and emotional wellbeing

As link governor you are responsible for monitoring the children's personal development, behaviour and emotional wellbeing as well as the emotional wellbeing of staff. This includes monitoring the following areas -

- **PSHE/SMSC and British Values**
Monitor policy documents as allocated including the school's SRE policy, referring any required amendments to the LAC for consideration. Monitor that the school has regard to guidance issued by the Department for Education and Ofsted and meets any requirements to publish information on its website.
Ensure that the school is effective in promoting British values including an understanding and tolerance of different cultures, awareness of public institutions, a balanced presentation of opposing views, democracy and equality.
- **Healthy lifestyles**
Ensure the school is working with families to encourage and foster healthy lifestyles including healthy eating
- **Behaviour**
Review the behaviour policy, ensuring a clear approach to all aspects of behaviour management in school, including reward systems, anti-bullying and exclusions. Ensure the school constantly reviews and considers their curriculum in order that key behaviour 'messages and lessons' run throughout. Consider the behaviour information provided to parents. Monitor fixed term or permanent exclusions and report to the LAC.
- **Bullying and racist incidents**
Ensure there is a robust system for recording and managing bullying and racist incidents / concerns and that the LAC monitors the frequency and number of allegations and the outcome of these.
- **Wellbeing (pupils)**
Monitor how the school ensures the emotional wellbeing of pupils including the impact of family support work provided through the school. Review attendance figures including identifying how the school is addressing persistent and unauthorised absence and report to the LAC. Find out about other agencies and initiatives to support pupil wellbeing including Cheshire East's Emotionally Healthy Schools project.
- **Wellbeing (staff)**
Monitor staff welfare and ensure the LAC receives regular reports from the Principal regarding staff attendance, sickness and leaves of absence. Staff turnover should also be monitored.
Monitor the school's approach to managing staff workload and ensuring an appropriate work/life balance, having regard to the Department for Education's guidance – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-teachers-workload/reducing-teachers-workload>

You should visit the school once each term. Your formal written report should be shared with the Principal within 10 working days for approval and then submitted to the clerk who will distribute it for discussion at the next LAC meeting. Your report should highlight areas for future monitoring by governors and ensuring the LAC knows the strengths and areas for development. You should also attend relevant training courses, including in-school training and keep abreast of initiatives and national developments.

Wellbeing including behaviour and emotional wellbeing: some questions you could ask.....

- *How effective is the school's provision of SMSC?*

How effective is our collaboration with other schools within the hub/AET? What impact is this having? How are we developing the skills of other teachers? How are parents engaged in their children's learning?

Monitor the school's links with other schools and the impact on pupils' social development in building relationships with children from different backgrounds and on increasing pupils' knowledge of different cultures, languages and faiths.

- *How do you keep track of progress re the children's personal development?*

Ensure that the school effectively monitors and evaluates its provision. What are the strengths and the areas for development; what is the progression of knowledge and skills across year groups; how does the subject coordinator monitor this? Monitor the school's approach to providing information to parents and involving them in their children's learning

- *How are the subject leader roles developing?*

How are the skills of other teachers developed? What training/development do staff access in the area?

- *How do you ensure the behaviour policy is being applied consistently throughout the school?*
- *How does the school provide support to staff who find behaviour management difficult?*
- *How does the school provide support to pupils who often misbehave?*
- *Does the school keep an up-to-date record of serious breaches of behaviour and sanctions used in response? How often are children excluded from class (internal exclusions)?*
- *What measures does the school take to prevent misbehaviour outside of the classroom, such as in the playground and corridors?*
- *Is absence (and persistent absence) more widespread within certain groups of pupils? Are the figures skewed by a small number of pupils? Is there a particular age group/year/class that has a significantly lower attendance rate than the others?*
- *What are we doing to promote attendance? What impact are these strategies having? How does our attendance compare to the national figures?*
- *How many pupils/families need additional support and how do we evaluate the impact of this?*
- *How do we support our pupils to transition to secondary school?*

The wider curriculum including EYFS (music, art, DT, computing, science, history, geography, MFL, RE) and Sports funding

As link governor for the wider curriculum you should monitor the teaching of the subjects to ensure the curriculum is broad and balanced and that appropriate questions are raised at LAC meetings and further reports requested from the Principal where appropriate. You need to know –

- The current ADP priorities for the wider curriculum and sport.
- Are the school's actions effectively addressing any areas that are less strong?
- Ensure that the school is making effective use of its Sports funding? Schools receive PE and sport premium funding based on the number of pupils in years 1 to 6 and the funding must be used to develop or add to the PE and sport activities that the school already offers as its provision for PE. The funding can also be used to make improvements that will benefit pupils joining the school in future years. Monitor opportunities for extra-curricular activities – including across ages and genders – and opportunities to take part in competitive events.
- Monitor that the school meets its requirement to publish information online. The school is required to publish details of how it spends (or plan to spend) the Sports premium, including details of the impact of the funding on pupils' participation and attainment in PE and sport. The D for E says; "We do not require schools to report on the impact of the grant on wider attainment but would encourage schools to do so where possible. We would consider this to demonstrate best practice." GOV.UK guidance "How to use the PE and sport premium"- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pe-and-sport-premium-for-primary-schools#how-to-use-the-pe-and-sport-premium>

You should visit school at least once per term with an agreed focus relating to the current Academy Development Plan. Your formal written report should be shared with the Principal within 10 working days for approval and then submitted to the clerk who will distribute it for discussion at the next LAC meeting. Your report should highlight areas for future monitoring by governors and ensuring the LAC knows the strengths and areas for development.

You should also attend relevant training courses, including in- school training and keep abreast of initiatives and national developments.

The wider curriculum and Sports funding: some questions you could ask

- *How do you keep track of standards and progress in the subject?*

Ensure that the school effectively monitors and evaluates its provision and attainment in the wider curriculum. What are the strengths of the subject and the areas for development; what is the progression of knowledge and skills across year groups; how does the subject coordinator monitor this? How do we know our end of year expectations are set at the right level? What proportion of children reach greater depth in their learning in this subject? How do we stretch the more able? How do SEND and Disadvantaged children perform in this subject?

The Ofsted Inspection Handbook says "There is no expectation about how primary schools should carry out assessment or record pupils' achievements in any subject, including foundation subjects. Schools will not be marked down because they are not 'tracking' science and foundation subjects in the same ways that they may be doing in English and mathematics."

- *Is our curriculum in line with the National Curriculum? How do we make sure our children meet the NC standard for swimming?*
- *How effective is our collaboration with other schools within the hub/AET? What impact is this having??*
- *How do we ensure effective transition to KS3?*
- *How are the subject leader roles developing? How are we developing the skills of other teachers? How are parents engaged in their children's learning?*

Meet with the subject coordinator in line with the governors' annual monitoring schedule to discuss how the SDP action plan/ their subject-leader action plan is progressing. Ask about resources allocated to the subject from the school budget. Do we make full use of the school's website? Computing only; do we have enough equipment and are we using the most appropriate current technology; does the equipment match the needs of the curriculum; is spending on new IT equipment adequate and appropriate?

- *How has the school improved the quality and breadth of PE and sport provision and increased participation?*

Early Years

- *What does the curriculum look like in the early years? How does the school ensure that this curriculum is broad and balanced and includes all areas of learning? How is the classroom and outdoor space organised to develop different skills?*
- *What assessment processes are in place?*
- *How are parents informed of the children's progress and attainment in the early years?*
- *What are the strengths of the early years and what are the areas for development? (Discussion with the EYFS lead)*
- *What percentage of the children are on track for a 'Good Level of Development?'*