

The
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RIGHT Overview



Sometimes, in seeking to improve, you need to start somewhere new.

Training people to be effective chairs of governors of Church schools is a case in point. There are endless resources out there which cover that. If they worked, the job would already be well and truly done. But, as we all know, the job isn't done...

This is something different.

The RIGHT Programme is about resourcing you as a chair of a Church school, and this pack of cards is a key part of that.

It isn't about offering specifics of what to do. It's about why you do things and how you think about them. It also signposts you to electronic resources with examples, and finds face-to-face expression through the growing programme of Diocese events and networks.

And it's neat, so it fits in your bag.

The RIGHT Programme will help you along a road of growing importance for our schools, the communities they serve and the children in them.



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RIGHT elements

In thinking differently about how to help volunteers become effective chairs of Church schools, there are many apparently obvious topics. Safeguarding, data, Headteacher appraisal and finance would be just a few of those.

The RIGHT Programme isn't about those (important though they are).

It's about the core things that lie underneath all of that. The kinds of things that if you get them right, everything else has a decent chance of following successfully.

The eight RIGHT Programme elements are:

- **the RIGHT team**
- **the RIGHT structure**
- **the RIGHT networks**
- **the RIGHT tools**
- **the RIGHT emphasis**
- **the RIGHT support**
- **the RIGHT model**
- **the RIGHT outcome**

Each of them have a 'suit' of cards.

Each element offers the basics to think through, a set of links to the website where you can see more on the specifics and also a range of contacts at the Diocese, where an experienced and skilled team is ready, willing and able to help you take these elements forward.

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RIGHT options

The RIGHT Programme offers a range of ways for you to develop effective insights and knowledge as a chair.

This pack of cards summarises lots of key, foundational information (most of which no-one tells you!) and is handy to keep with you.

More resources and expanded, interactive versions of the cards can be found at the RIGHT Programme web site (<https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/right-programme/>), where you can find tools to build on the elements within the card pack, as well as lots of other helpful resources.

The Diocese hosts a number of events for chairs (and aspiring chairs), all aimed at bringing you fully up to date, by letting you hear and discuss the issues of the day at chair of governors level. These events are also particularly relevant to ex-officio foundation governors, enabling them to engage with these themes too, as they are central to the future success of our Church schools. You can find the up-to-date list of events and network briefings on the latest Support Programme and at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-events/>

The network briefings are also designed to help you get to grips with the key themes of being a chair in a Church school, alongside others holding the same position.

With summary cards to keep with you, a web area to engage with, events and briefings for people just like you – all developed and delivered by experts with real depth of experience – the RIGHT Programme really will help you to get on top of being of chair, and keep you there.



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RIGHT contacts

Accessing the RIGHT Programme is simple. All you need do is contact the Chichester Diocesan Board of Education, and they'll explain how you can get involved with:

- the RIGHT pack of cards
- the RIGHT web site
- A developing programme of RIGHT events and briefings

To do that, just call 01273 425687 or email: schoolgovernors@chichester.anglican.org

Finally, if you're not chair of a stand-alone school, there's more on how to translate the RIGHT Programme into your context in the RIGHT Model card suit.



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The RIGHT Team



The RIGHT team – overview

Your role as chair of governors will only work out well if you learn quickly to share the load with an effective team.

Trying to do it all yourself really doesn't work, and doesn't build sustainable success.

You really can't succeed as chair without having the support of some capable people around you. As well as other governors, such a team can very effectively also include local clergy and the local PCC and church community.

Being in charge and responsible for everything can be daunting, but it can have its upsides too...

“There are advantages to being elected President. The day after I was elected, I had my high school grades classified Top Secret”

(Ronald Reagan)

You may not be able to pull that off, even if you went to the school you now chair!

That's because governance has long since moved away from being a cosy meeting over coffee, during which you hear how nice the school is. In the case of small communities, the school is simply too important for that kind of hands-off approach, even if the government would allow it. And for large schools, there are too many people in the community whose livelihoods depend on the school's success.

Then there are federations, academies, multi-academies and free schools...

And that's before you even mention being responsible for the children and their education.



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The RIGHT Team



The RIGHT team – skills your team needs

Sharing the load means you need capable people to whom you can delegate a range of responsibilities. That will involve you in seeking out people with genuine expertise – you may not think that's your job, but it's your role as chair that will develop well if you do!

To navigate the developing education landscape, you're going to need people beside you who have the skills, or who have the potential to rapidly become effectively skilled, in:

- Finance
- Understanding complex classroom-generated data
- Strategic leadership and management
- Community engagement
- Managing and interpreting policy issues, at both school and national levels
- Seeing and engaging with different perspectives
- Clerking

If you have appropriate levels of skill available to you in these areas, you're well set to progress.

You can find any current, additional information from the Diocese on skills issues at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-skills>

If your team needs help in acquiring skills, the Diocese can help you with that in a number of ways. There's more on that at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-skills>

Key insight - You're not setting out to manage the school; that's the Headteacher's role (defined as the most senior executive post in the school). Your role is to challenge the management robustly on all key issues, satisfy yourself that the school is performing well across all key areas, and is reaching the targets which governors and government set.

Key insight - The only staff member you are responsible for line-managing is the Headteacher.

As you develop a team with these skills, as a governing body you collectively become more and more able to challenge the management effectively – that's your key role.

'Critical friend' no more - increasing levels of 'challenge' are the key issue now.



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The RIGHT team – foundation governors

As you put a suitably-skilled team in place, there's one other key role to be covered - which in a Church school trumps all the others. That is the role of foundation governors.

Key insight - Foundation governors firstly need to be excellent governors in their own right. On top of that (but not instead of it) they need to be able to guard and nurture the school's Christian ethos and values. They have a responsibility to uphold the school's Christian distinctiveness and should have an active interest in RE, SIAMS and collective worship.

There will be a separate, external inspection of these areas, organised by the Diocese, so these are of real importance.

“ Our schools are at the very forefront of mission in this Diocese and represent a significant contribution to the Common Good of our communities

(Mark Sowerby, Bishop of Horsham)

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The RIGHT team – other extended contacts

- Local clergy - If the local vicar is not a foundation governor, make contact and do all you can to keep them in the loop regarding school developments; they can be of real help to you as chair
- PCC - Offer to brief the PCC on developments at the school. Keep them up to speed with that, as they can be highly-effective brokers of community support
- Other parish members - The wider parish network may also be able to offer additional support and engagement, through roles like a parish youth leader

In all cases, make sure your contacts are at an appropriate level – if they are not governors, you must be careful in sharing any sensitive information

Key insight - It may be that the local vicar will be an ex-officio governor. If not, developing a relationship between the vicar and the school can be extremely helpful. It's worth investing time into this relationship.

“ Please support your church enthusiastically and energetically in keeping its relationship with the school a thriving one

(Mark Sowerby, Bishop of Horsham)

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The RIGHT team – your support team

You're only on your own with this if you choose to be. There is a wealth of further information, resource and experience available to you from the Diocese.

On offer is a range of excellent training and development opportunities for governors and also for chairs. There's more on that at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-events/>

You can also commission support for your governing body from the Diocese, which can sometimes usefully follow a review of governance in the school. That process offers a Diocese-approved review of standards of governance, together with a diagnosis of what is going well and what needs to be improved. The governance review can then be used to make sure that support from Diocesan staff and trusted external advisers is customised towards the specific needs you have. To get an idea of what such a review entails, there's more on that at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-support/>

“ There are people with a range of experiences that have no equivalent in business, but are essential to governing, like keeping a kid in school ”

(Dee Dee Myers)



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The RIGHT Structure



The RIGHT structure – overview

Surrounding yourself with the RIGHT team is only part of the set-up challenge. Your role as chair of governors also demands that you establish and develop those people into an effective structure that will outlast you, and which isn't dependent on you to succeed.

The idea that that's easy to say, but difficult to do, is more likely to be true if you don't start out with a clear vision of what it is you're trying to build.

“ Where there is no vision,
the people perish... ”
(Proverbs 29:18a, KJV)

There's no one perfect answer here. To some extent, it depends on the team you have, but it also depends on how secure you are in building something that isn't solely about suiting you and your way of doing things. The big deal here is to establish a way of doing things that draws the best out of the team. And remember too that the extended team can, and should, include good contact with the local clergy, PCC and other parish members as appropriate.

There are some things your structure must cover.

Then there are things that you need to cover if your structure is to function well for all the people who need it to.

There are also things that you (or others) may want to do, but are really better off not doing.

And once you've got that sorted, it all needs to knit together into a coherent whole.

And, as Tom Peters and Bob Waterman once famously observed*, there's wisdom in sticking to the knitting...

**Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, In Search of Excellence*



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The RIGHT structure – what your team needs

Just remember that the more complex it is, the harder it is to hold it all together. Which, being that that's your primary task, should make you want to keep it simple.

Your school will of course have meetings of the full governing body (FGB). Depending on whether you're an academy or part of a multi-academy, that may be called a local governing body, or something of the sort. In every case though you need a meeting of the full body – referred to here as the FGB.

While the specific tasks allocated to the FGB can vary, especially if they're part of a multi-academy (depending on the scheme of delegation in relation to the school), the FGB in principle brings the work of any committees and other sub-groups together into one meeting. It also considers those items which can't be delegated downwards.

Key insight - If you have committees, the work gets done in the committees. It is expressly not the function of the FGB to rework or reconsider the work of the committees. If you have committees, the FGB has delegated responsibilities to them, should consider the committees' advice and, unless there is a compelling case to do otherwise, endorse it. If the FGB overturns the advice of a committee, that decision will quickly become the least of your concerns as chair, as you try to repair the fallout from that rejection. This is really important.

Key insight - If you don't have committees, none of that applies, but that's not a magic bullet either, as having everyone doing everything brings special kinds of pressure, not least that you then don't build up real expertise in small groups – you're asking everyone to be an expert in everything.

FGB meetings shouldn't be all-night affairs, which serve only to demoralise and exhaust your team. Some very large schools do FGB meetings very effectively in 90 minutes, including good levels of debate and engagement from governors, because they delegate really well to committees. And that can be with as few as four FGB meetings a year, plus a single-item budget meeting.

So what's a good core model?

There are two schools of thought on this: the committee model and the 'FGB runs everything' model. On balance, the RIGHT Programme would always suggest opting for the committee model if you can.



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The RIGHT structure – the committee model 1

- You need to delegate as much as you can to committees, who will provide proper levels of scrutiny, using their expertise (which you've sought out to enhance your team's abilities)
- Each committee's chair could have a member of the school's senior leadership team (SLT) allocated to partner with them, so that together they can develop shared understanding and trust - that goes a very long way to making the whole mechanism more effective
- It really shouldn't be the Headteacher working with every committee – this is a good chance to build leadership capacity in both governors and senior staff

Key insight - Committees need really good chairing too. Ideally, as chair you shouldn't be chairing a committee. If you are having to, you need to build a better team around you. To see why, consider this – at an FGB, how do you (as chair of the FGB) deal with a report from you (as chair of a committee)?

A basic committee structure needs to cover these bases (the names can vary, but the areas being covered don't):

- Teaching and learning – always the main thing; keep it that way
- Finance and operations – the business issues that enable the main thing to happen
- Community – the links with the wider interest groups
- Discipline – covering staff, pupil/student and (perish the thought) governor issues, separately
- Audit – not a legal requirement in every scenario, but, used appropriately, can help ensure accountability
- Staffing – you might want this as a separate area, but it can be effectively built in to the teaching and learning and/or finance and operations areas, reducing the number of committees
- Ethos – either as a dedicated committee or as a defined responsibility of another committee



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The RIGHT structure – the committee model 2

Key insight - With the exception of committees covering discipline and audit areas, all committees should be open in principle to all governors. A key issue for you as chair, though, is to have a core group of governors on each committee, to ensure continuity and to develop deep understanding of the issues involved in each area.

There's more on that at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-special/>

After that, you're in to the 'working group' type of structure. These have their advantages, especially if they're tightly issue-focused and short-term in nature.

One special case is the group which manages the Headteacher's appraisal process. There are specific guidelines for this – there's more on that at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-hta/>



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The RIGHT Structure



The RIGHT structure – the other model (where the FGB does everything with no committee structure)

- Collectively, you need to be clear about how you will provide proper levels of scrutiny, in each area
- Every governor needs to be engaged properly in all areas
- Involving the SLT in the work of the FGB is good practice - the Headteacher can't and shouldn't carry the full executive weight alone (not least as involving others builds capacity and creates an element of succession planning)

Key insight - If you don't have committees, you need to work hard on creating opportunities for building capacity amongst both governors and senior leaders. It won't happen by itself, and in the absence of committees, you need to be creative in making sure that opportunities are developed for that (perhaps like letting the vice chair actually chair some FGB meetings with you still present, then doing a debrief to help them grow in confidence; likewise, having a senior leader do the leadership report, but with the Headteacher there to support and encourage).

Without committees, the full FGB needs to cover the same bases (the names can vary, but the areas being covered don't):

- Teaching and learning – always the main thing; keep it that way
- Finance and operations – the business issues that enable the main thing to happen
- Community – the links with the wider interest groups
- Discipline – covering staff, student and (perish the thought) governor issues, separately
- Audit – used appropriately, because accountability is important
- Staffing – you might want this as a separate area, but it can be effectively built in to the teaching and learning and/or finance and operations areas, reducing the number of committees

Key insight - Without committees, you need to think very carefully about how you cover discipline and audit areas, as these need to be limited in terms of attendance and also need to draw on specific skills for which governors need training.

One special case is the group which manages the Headteacher's appraisal process. There are specific guidelines for this – there's more on that at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-hta/>



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The RIGHT structure – the development plan

The structure described (whether you choose the model with or without committees) will cover most of the bases for you.

You need one other item to make the picture complete, and it's the key one – the school's development plan. This sometimes moonlights as a 'raising achievement plan' or one of many other names. The key for you is that it must lay out, clearly and unambiguously, where the school is planning to go and how it plans to get there.

That must include, as a central feature, your aspirations for driving improvement across the school.

Key insight - Although staff may well draft it, the development plan belongs to the governing body. It is what you're there for; it sets the vision. You must believe in it, and you must ensure its delivery. Other than ensuring the safety of the pupils, this is your core task.

The development plan works best if you keep it short and concise. A 75-page document won't be read, won't be understood and won't guide everything you do. One running to only a few pages will, and you'll be able to share it widely, helping everyone understand what the school is aiming for.

Of course there will be lots of detail behind it, and that's fine. The detail, though, is almost always operational, which means it isn't governance and that means it isn't your responsibility. There is much to be gained in the widest sense from having a short, sharp, focused plan which everyone can get behind.

The development plan is your promise to the whole community – staff, pupils, clergy, PCC and others. Make sure you believe in it, that you totally understand it and can relate it to all you and your team of governors do.



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The RIGHT structure – effective meetings

Effective governor meetings tend to share a few common 'marks', including:

- Papers distributed an agreed period of time in advance
- Governors arriving having read the papers and considered the issues in advance
- Nothing tabled at the meeting (outside of genuinely urgent items which couldn't be accommodated within the normal system – those should be few and far between)
- Starting on time, every time
- Chairing which actively encourages everyone to contribute appropriately
- Chairing which discourages rambling and/or irrelevant contributions
- Effective clerking, which includes advising the chair on process as needed
- Consistent senior leadership representation at meetings and partnership with the chair (this should not mean the head teacher or the chair having to be at everything, whether or not you have committees)

Key insight - The chair is there to facilitate the contributions and decisions of others, not use their role as a platform for their own opinions...

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The RIGHT Structure



The RIGHT structure – knitting it all together

So, you've got your team, you've got a committee structure (if you choose that route), you've got a development plan and you've got an idea of what makes meetings effective. What now?

You need to establish the rules of your particular FGB game. Happily, they're relatively simple.

You need four major things:

- **A scheme of delegation** – which outlines where statutory and key responsibilities lie within your structure
- **A policy structure** – you need the right range of statutory and other policies in place and allocated to the right committee to 'own' and keep under review
- **Committee terms of reference, if you have committees** – which describe the responsibilities of each committee
- **An understanding of other statutory requirements** – there's more on those at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-statutory/>

If you use the committee model, you begin to see why the chairs of committees are so important, and why their standards of chairing and leadership are so central in supporting your own role.

Good practice is developing all the time in these areas. The Diocese can give you examples of current good practice and advice on how to adapt these to your own circumstances. There's more on that at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-goodpractice/>

Key insight - If you have committees, each committee chair must know and understand what their committee is responsible for, which policies it 'owns' and where all of that sits within the overall structure. The four major things listed above will deliver that for them.

Key insight - If you don't have committees, everyone needs have a good understanding of everything. You win by having fewer meetings, but the standards required (of everyone) at the meetings you do have are necessarily higher. Everything gets done at FGB level, meaning everyone on the FGB needs to contribute fully and well – to everything.

And after all of that, make sure that everyone sticks to the knitting...



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The RIGHT networks – overview

Once you've put in place the RIGHT team and the RIGHT structure to let that team handle its responsibilities, your next question is to ask where your ongoing support will come from. That's important, because the whole political and operational landscape in which you and your governor team work is changing quicker now than at any time in recent memory.

“ The focus on governance in our schools has never been greater or more important ”
(Mark Sowerby, Bishop of Horsham)

As chair of governors, you'll find yourself besieged with emails, pieces of paper and offers of services from the private sector and various magazines - all purporting to be the only guide you'll ever need.

You will need support and advice on an ongoing basis.

You will also from time to time find yourself in the position where you need to take appropriate professional advice.

Where should you turn?

The good news is that, as a Church school, you have the resources of the Education Team at the Diocese available to you.

You have a range of experienced educational professionals, all of whom 'get' what a Church school is about and understand the distinctives at a really deep level. They, in turn, have access to the most current guidance and advice, and can offer you a level of integrated support that really will make a difference.

Much of that is available to you through a Diocese Partnership Agreement. There are more details on the current Partnership Agreement offer at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-partnership/>



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The RIGHT networks – the 'core offer' from the Diocese

As a Church school, the Diocese offers you a package of support, through the Partnership Agreement.

Having a Partnership Agreement makes a range of key elements available to you, on which you can draw as needed. There's more on that at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-partnership/>

The real value of a Partnership Agreement lies in you having a 'one stop shop', which really does understand the needs of Church schools.

Key insight - Church schools are different, and their distinctiveness needs to be nurtured and developed. That's your job, and it's one you should take seriously. You can't govern a Church school in exactly the way a non-Church school is governed, because the foundational principles are simply not the same.



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The RIGHT networks – other Diocese support services

A Partnership Agreement covers many of the bases for you, but you may from time to time need support which isn't available within it.

The Diocese can help you with that.

- If you're new to your role as chair, the Diocese offers development opportunities to help you in your new role. As chair, you're an important player in the network of Church schools, and the Diocese is committed to working with you from the outset.
- In addition, the Diocese offers a wide range of other governance support and development packages for you and your governing body. New elements to meet new challenges are added regularly.
- Finally, the RIGHT Programme also offers opportunities for chairs of Church schools to exchange views and experiences through events and briefings. You can find out more at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-events/>

Key insight - All of the services on offer are delivered either by Diocesan staff or by trusted Diocese-appointed partners. That way, you can be sure that you're working with people who 'get' Church schools.

- The range of support services available to you from the Diocese is developing all the time and you can find more on that at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-support/>



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The RIGHT tools – overview

Having the RIGHT team, RIGHT structure and RIGHT networks is a good place to be.

To move on from there, you're going to need some tools and a clear idea of what the success-delivering non-negotiables are for you as chair of governors.

You set the tone for everything in governance terms. You have to be clear about what's critical and what isn't.

That's a moving picture, but there are some issues which are pretty much unchanging.

This section is about making sure you've got a clear view of those issues, and that you know which approaches to use to make sure that they're properly addressed.

Doing that well should ensure that your governance structure makes good progress.

Think of this as putting some good tools into your chair's survival kit...

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The RIGHT tools – survival kit 1

The essential tools you need are actually mercifully few. The challenge is to make sure that you spend time on the right things, because it's so easy to spend endless time on things that don't matter.

As ever though, learning effective use of tools takes a little practice, and can result in an occasional bruised thumb.

As chair, your tool kit has to include some hard items:

- A written-down, clear structure/diagram, showing your committees (if you have them), how they relate to each other and where governance interfaces with management (ideally with names). Those points of interface are where governor challenge to management becomes real and tangible
- A set of terms of reference for each committee – so you're clear about what they're responsible for
- A scheme of delegation – so you know the level at what each key issue/policy/procedure is 'owned', and how often it should be considered
- A schedule of meetings that makes sense. Meetings should be sequenced so they flow in a sane order (you'd be amazed at how many governance meetings can't make any progress because the meeting that should have informed that one hasn't happened yet...!)
- Your Diocese Partnership Agreement. This gives you a range of good tools to use (think of this as hiring in specialist tools from a contractor)
- An understanding of challenging situations – like exclusions, closing the school and so on. There's more on that at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-situations/>
- A really good system for taking, keeping, filing and accessing papers and minutes – a good clerk is one of the best possible resources you can invest in



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The RIGHT tools – survival kit 2

You need some soft items in your tool kit too – the kind that help make the hard items work well. They're every bit as important:

- A regular set of meetings with the Headteacher – this can be a suitable mix of face to face, phone calls and emails. The mix will change, of course, as circumstances change (the mix covering the days after appointing a new Headteacher will look very different to the mix after you've been working with a Head for a few years, for instance). Your ability to work well together is the single most critical issue you'll ever face – and mutual trust is the key element
- A strategic chair's committee, where the overall business of the governing body can be planned in advance, and an internal cohesion ensured

You'll also need a way of quality-assuring the work of the governing body, in a way which helps you acknowledge good things, identify things to be improved and, where necessary, advise you on how to use your tools to achieve ever-better performance. This can, for instance, include a governors' skills audit and also a 360 degree review of the chair's performance. There's more on this at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-support/>

You can chase after badges and awards, and they're fine to have. You're probably better spending time on securing a really good, sustainable approach to continuous improvement in your governance – the gongs may follow anyway if you do that.

One of the best quality-assurance tools you have as a Church school is a Diocese-approved 'review of governance', and that's the last big thing to put in your tool kit.



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The RIGHT tools – a review of governance

There are lots of people offering this service.

And standard reviews of governance are just that – standard, all the same, devoid of distinctiveness.

As a Church school, you need to be wise. The foundational issue is that you are not like other schools – you are, and should be, distinctive.

Key insight - Whatever else, any review you undertake has to be able to embrace and embed a proper Christian perspective. This cannot be a bolt-on extra, but a component which informs and underpins everything your school does.

The ability to call in support for that kind of distinctive review of governance is a key evaluative tool for you as chair. It'll help you see how you're doing, how the team is, and how effective you are. It will also help you to deliver all of that in a supportive framework that 'gets' what Church schools are about.

The Diocese is your professional support network here.

It offers a review of governance framework which recognises and understands your distinctiveness. This framework will work with you, not struggle against you.

Whether you have a Partnership Agreement or buy in a Diocese review of governance on its own, you can be secure that you're working with people (Diocese staff and other Diocese-approved specialists) who 'get' Church schools. They are highly experienced in working with them and in turn have the support of the whole Diocesan network, locally and at national level, behind them.

The Diocese review of governance framework is evolving all the time, as you'd expect. There's more on that at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-review/>

Armed with all this, you're well-placed to make ongoing progress in terms of the quality of your governance model and processes.



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The RIGHT emphasis – overview

In the end, you can buy in handbooks, manuals, process guidelines and consultants and none of them will make any lasting difference if you as chair of governors don't adopt an appropriate emphasis for what you do and (equally important) how you do it.

Governance can't be reduced to being a scientific, measurable, evidenced undertaking. The truth is that, for chairs especially, it's much more of an art than a science.

Key insight - Charles Handy's wonderful presentation* of The McNamara Fallacy (named after Robert McNamara, architect of the Vietnam war) is one to keep with you:

- The first step is to measure whatever can easily be measured – this is OK as far as it goes
- The second step is to disregard that which can't be easily measured or to give it an arbitrary, quantitative value – this is artificial and misleading
- The third step is to presume that what can't be easily measured really isn't important – this is blindness
- The fourth step is to say that what can't easily be measured really doesn't exist – this is suicide

* *Charles Handy, The Empty Raincoat*

You'll often spend your most valuable hours moving behind the scenes, rather than doing the data analysis (many wish McNamara had done rather more of this at the time of Vietnam). It's there that you can most effectively do the talking, influencing, encouraging and (most importantly) listening. It's in these times that you'll find yourself able to understand, to grasp perspectives in the round and to be brave enough to let others challenge your thinking.

If all you do is front up meetings, you'll find all of that hard. But if you can give yourself time to spend on these kind of soft issues, you'll find that they're really valuable in shaping the way you are in meetings.

It's really a question of emphasis...



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The RIGHT Emphasis



The RIGHT emphasis – keep the key issues the key issues 1

As chair, over time you'll be pulled from pillar to post. On good days, you may be asked to be in the photo; on challenging days you may be facing upset parents.

When there's a serious issue, the protagonists may all want a part of you. When there's lots to do, you can find yourself alone at night worrying. Or you might find yourself endlessly engaged in things that you really don't need to do. You might even find yourself in a classroom, wondering why you're there and what exactly you're supposed to add to the collective wisdom as a result.

The trick is to keep the main things the main things, or – as we said earlier – stick to the knitting.

Key insight - Governance is governance and management isn't...

- You are not there to manage the school
- You are not there to manage the staff, other than the Headteacher
- You are not there to opine on classroom practice, the quality of homework or the way the wall displays look
- You are not there to build your own kingdom
- You are not there to make sure that your views get heard

But...

- You are there to set the vision for the school
- You are there to ensure the school is well-managed
- You are there to manage the Headteacher and to ensure that they are providing good management of the staff
- You are there to ensure that the school is providing good and effective teaching and learning
- You are there to ensure that standards of all kinds are high
- You are there to make sure the pupils, the parents and the staff feel the school really is theirs
- You are there to make sure that every governor gets heard appropriately



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The RIGHT Emphasis



The RIGHT emphasis – keep the key issues the key issues 2

Key insight - The prime directive is governance, not management; strategic, not operational

Your key task is to make sure that your governance structure works and is effective – and the measure of that is a successful school, with high standards and safe, happy pupils and students, who all have the opportunity to progress to their full capability.

The photo opportunities can wait; the quotes from you in the local paper can come from someone else (unless it's a crisis, when you need to be seen to lead).

Key insight - Keep governors away from the media, unless it's a crisis. On a good day, let the staff and pupils take the glory; on a bad day, protect them

Spend time behind the scenes, learning the deep insights that will enable you to understand the real issues and are keep them at the top of the governance task list.



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The RIGHT emphasis – across the team

You may find that some governors want to bring a ‘special emphasis’.

They may want an emphasis which avoids budget issues and reports, because they ‘don’t do finance’. Or they may want to emphasise avoiding looking at data, because they ‘don’t do numbers’.

You may also find that they want to emphasise teaching & learning, because they ‘like being involved in the classroom’ or see themselves as ‘a people person’.

Sometimes, that can be because they’ve got an agenda...

To get the RIGHT emphasis, there are few key things to remember:

- All governors need to fully understand the broad sweep of the school’s finances; you just can’t have governors declaring that ‘they don’t do finance’
- Make sure all governors fully understand the key data suite properly – this is essential. There’s more on that at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-data/>
- The Headteacher should not be at every committee meeting (if you have committees); they shouldn’t need to be
- The chair should not be at every committee meeting – they shouldn’t need to be
- You have nothing to offer in terms of classroom observation – don’t do it
- Futureproof against changes - appoint vice chairs for all your committees and see that they actually do some of the chairing; if you don’t have committees, establish other ways for building the capacity of governors and senior staff
- When you have vacancies, look for people who are better than you

And lastly...

- Evaluating (formally and informally) both the school and the governing body’s own performance is absolutely key. Governors must learn together how to challenge and review with real insight - in the end, this is how you hold the senior leadership and the governors themselves to account. There’s more on that at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-evaluation/>



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The RIGHT Emphasis



The RIGHT emphasis – a word about parents and carers

The governors of all effective schools place a real emphasis on listening to parents and carers.

They can sometimes be challenging, but they can also be wonderfully supportive, encouraging and insightful, so find ways to listen to them – carefully.

Seek out structured opportunities to meet with them and listen to them (but make sure you're not just listening to the loud, the opinionated or the same voices...)

And make sure that any parent governors understand their function properly.

Key insight - If you have them, parent governors are not there simply to represent the parents.



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The RIGHT Support



The RIGHT support – overview

Development and support are all very well, but if they come down to just a list of things that no-one does and no-one takes anything from, they're just so much warm air.

What's needed are moments when you can hear things that challenge you, things that encourage you and things that can help you.

As ever, there are a few key things that you can do that will make a significant difference. And through the RIGHT Programme, a few key things that you can access that will help.

The RIGHT Programme isn't mainly about what to do (though it does offer that) – it's about how to do it and how to adopt a successful tone for governance. Earlier, we dealt with emphasis; get the emphasis right, and lots of things will quietly slip into place.

Getting that right in the long run comes down to cultural development...



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The RIGHT support – leaders and followers

You may not think of yourself as a 'leader', and your governor colleagues may not think of themselves as 'followers', but the metaphor works. It will serve all of you well, if everyone (including you) can leave their pride at the door, just for a bit.

Whether or not you like it, as chair of governors you are a leader. You lead the school in a non-executive sense, and if there's ever a crisis, you'll know quickly just how much you need to do the leading.

You lead your governing body. You lead in terms of the development plan. And you lead, at least in some respects, your community.

By any reasonable definition, that's being a 'leader'.

From there, it's clear that your fellow governors are followers – of you, or at least of the office of 'chair' that you embody. 'Followers' is not in any sense a derogatory word – the very best organisations can switch effortlessly, with leaders becoming followers and followers becoming leaders.

In Church schools, that requires all of you to have a sense of who you are, and an abiding clarity as to why you're there.

As chair, you do lead – that much is clear. But you have an equally clear role in developing other governors to become leaders, at different levels. And they, as good followers, have a responsibility to step up to the plate when an opportunity comes along to which they can rise.

Vice chairs who actually do some chairing; people other than committee chairs (if you have committees) getting to go to events and activities which help them see the wider picture; responsibility being shared wherever possible (does the chair always have to be the one to speak at celebration events or could that be another governor, who speaks on behalf of the whole governing body?)

Doing all you can to build capacity, developing sustainable governor leadership, making sure that no one person is indispensable, giving everyone the chance to grow and develop as a governor – those are a few leadership tasks.

Helping to identify opportunities, rising to the challenge, acting corporately, seeing the bigger picture – those are a few follower tasks.

So, how to do it?



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The RIGHT support – create your own development programme 1

Key insight - Don't abandon governor training to the newest, quietest governor; and don't put it as the last item on the agenda. This is important, and needs a skilled, committed governor to work with you on it – this is a key chair responsibility

There are ways the RIGHT Programme and the Diocese can help you (and we're coming to them), but first you need to know, own and love the idea that there are ways you can take a lead (that word again...) in the whole area of governor development.

Your school staff already know plenty about the things you need to know more about. They know the detail. You need to know the broad scope. They can be your best allies here.

Giving staff members the chance to present directly to governors on subjects they really know about does two things; it lets the governors see staff members in their best light and it lets staff members see that the governors are interested in them, and value them for their skills and knowledge.

You can also work across schools, drawing governing bodies together to share in developments. If one school has the most brilliant staff member on data issues, why not bring two or three sets of governors together to learn from them? Each school's staff team will have something to contribute to that kind of 'masterclass' programme and, over time, everyone wins.

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The RIGHT support – create your own development programme 2

Draw up an internal ‘masterclass’ programme – you might do four a year; covering one subject a session (one hour max is fine) from a list like:

- Understanding school data
- Safeguarding
- Special educational needs
- Gifted and talented issues
- Understanding the curriculum
- Getting more from self evaluation
- Pupil premium funding

and many more. Cover this kind of list over a two-year period, and you’ll have a bank of well-informed, insightful governors, and a team of staff who’ve been able to actually show governors what they do best.

This can work really well – you identify the areas into which you and your team would most value having deeper insights; you organise for staff members who know those subjects well to present (whether from your school or another); the staff are affirmed; your governors are developed – and all from within.

It’s a really good way to ground your programme in a local reality, build capacity and establish key elements of succession planning.



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The RIGHT support - events

The RIGHT Programme isn't limited to a set of cards.

From the outset, it was designed to have several other expressions too.

At RIGHT events, governors, Diocese staff and a range of others can come together to share what they know and need to know, in a safe space where everyone is there for the same common reason. These events are about listening to people who are thinking through the same issues as you, and they're staged on an occasional basis by the Diocese. As they are central to the future success of Church schools, these can sometimes also involve clergy, PCCs and other parish members too, enabling them to engage with these themes.

Some events will have a developmental focus, with a more intensive approach to better governance through better chairing.

There will also be occasional RIGHT Programme briefings for clergy, which provide a way to discuss together how the clergy can bring effective support to Church schools, whether or not they themselves are governors. These briefings will be aimed at helping to give the most significant players the chance to grow and refine their understanding of issues which are at the heart of good governance in Church schools.

And the RIGHT Programme web site gives chairs an online resource, which is regularly updated and added to by the Diocese. It's where the various links from the RIGHT cards point – to resources and examples of key documents, to reports, updates and more.

The RIGHT structure is run and quality-assured by the Diocese as not just being suitable for Church schools, but as a way of developing the things that make our Church schools so distinctive and valued by the communities they serve.

That's all at <https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/right-programme/>



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The RIGHT model – overview

The RIGHT Programme makes the broad assumption that the chairs who use it are within standalone schools, simply because most schools still fall into that category.

That's changing though, with some areas switching more quickly than others to a different status, whether that be a standalone academy, being part of a multi-academy trust, being part of a federation or coming into being as a free school.

None of that changes the core content of the RIGHT Programme though, because it is concerned principally with governance issues which are even more foundational than these categories.

Almost everything in the RIGHT Programme applies across schools of different types. Where it doesn't, it really isn't too difficult to translate it across.

So, the fact that academies and free schools need to comply with relevant company law is fine – but the RIGHT Programme's guidance as to how to hold good meetings still applies.

Academies may well combine the role of clerk with that of company secretary, but the good principles for clerking still apply. And the principle that everyone who is a governor really must 'do numbers and finance' applies equally in academies, even though a chief financial officer post is compulsory in that context.

Though academies and free schools must have audit committees (subject to one or two caveats) it's really good practice for other schools to consider having them too.

And though the vagaries of charity law apply to almost every type of school except community schools, the issue of good governance is enduring across all of them, and is of central importance where public funds are being used.



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The RIGHT model – overview 2

Some things apply to VA schools but not to VC ones (such as VA governing bodies being responsible as the Admissions Authority).

Multi-academy trusts have boards and Members, even corporate Members, and only some governance tasks may be delegated to schools, depending on the local context. Even then, taken as a whole, the need for good governance is clear, and almost all of the RIGHT Programme's content applies – it just needs to be interpreted in terms of where responsibility for particular things lie, not whether these things are relevant.

In every type of school good governance does one main thing – it ensures the ongoing strategic effectiveness of the school, further ensuring the best possible experience for the pupils.

So, feel free to translate the RIGHT Programme's terminology into whatever helps you, and into whatever best fits your particular situation. Just don't forget that good governance will see out any particular governmental agenda, and endure into the future.

Key insight - The principles of good governance relate to all types of schools.

The real point, for every type of school, is: good governance is good governance.

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The RIGHT Outcomes



The RIGHT outcomes – overview

The RIGHT Programme isn't about what to do, as much as it's about how to do it.

The RIGHT outcomes we've been aiming for are consistent, good governance standards at the heart of all of our schools.

“ Few people on school boards understand what governance is about ”
(Eli Broad)

Throughout the RIGHT Programme, the focus has been on the key approaches that are proven to work in generating governance which is good and solid – from the roots up and for the long run.

In many areas of life, getting a few key basics done really well will make achieving your goals more likely, and that's true in terms of the governance of Church schools.

If we are to create a solid foundation for governance across our schools, the kind of issues the RIGHT programme highlights are key. You'll recall the final step in the McNamara Fallacy:

“The fourth step is to say that what can't be easily measured really doesn't exist – this is suicide.”

(see The RIGHT Emphasis, card one, for the full Fallacy)

The RIGHT Programme is about awarding importance to the status of those governance issues which don't have an obvious measure, but which are clearly key.

And it's about establishing a foundational quality level across the governance of our schools. Some of this will be well known to you; some of it might be new. If you take up the things that can help you as a chair of governors, you'll have taken an active part in helping quality assure our collective governance.

Whether it is all new, or whether it is all known to you, you'll find more RIGHT content to help you at RIGHT Programme events and briefings (<https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/rp-events/>), and also through the RIGHT Programme web site (<https://schools.chichester.anglican.org/right-programme/>).

All that's left is to give you a summary of the RIGHT content...



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The RIGHT Outcomes



The RIGHT outcomes – not easily measured, but really do matter 1

You need the RIGHT team, with the right skills, who believe in the distinctiveness and value of Church school.

You need the RIGHT structure, which is simple, effective and which everyone understands clearly – and it's all there to enable you to implement and monitor your development plan.

You need the RIGHT support networks, working with people who 'get' the distinctiveness of Church schools at a really deep, foundational level.

You need the RIGHT set of simple tools which help you get the job done.

You need the RIGHT emphasis for your Church school - keep the key issues the key issues.

You need the RIGHT support – you can, if you choose wisely, create some of that yourself (and to good effect too). But you can also pick from other RIGHT programme resources to help you in a wider sense.

You need the RIGHT model – as school structures develop so rapidly, not every form of words here will automatically reflect your reality – you may have to do some translating if you're in a MAT, or are a free school, for example. But the underlying RIGHT Programme wisdom endures, and you can still very much draw on it.



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The RIGHT Outcomes



The RIGHT outcomes – not easily measured, but really do matter 2

Finally, you need to have the RIGHT reason to want to do all this.

It can't be about your own child or grandchild. And it can't just be about fixing something you think needs to be improved.

In the final analysis, this is about community.

It's about being, living and growing together – and that includes adults as well as children. It's about recognising that our Church schools lie at the very heart of almost every community in the land.

Our Church schools don't just teach children and young people, whether from a faith background or from none – they employ people, they shape thinking, they provide services to others and they bring people of all kinds together.

We don't just value or represent community – as a chair, when you consider the full scope of your Church school's impact, you can say clearly and confidently:

Taken as a whole, we are the community.

