

DIY Guide on Governing Bodies without committees

Governing bodies can decide how they want to structure themselves in relation to committees. The Governance Handbook 2017 (page 55) states that “While boards in some schools have more flexibility than in others, all boards have a choice about how they are constituted and organised. Effective boards think carefully about this and in particular about whether and how to use their powers to delegate functions and decisions to committees or individuals.”

“The purpose of governance is to provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance.” Some schools have moved from committees where specific areas such as finance or standards are delegated, to a non-committee structure where more regular whole governing body meetings occur. This structure enables all governors to have a current understanding of school improvement and what is being done to impact pupil learning.

An Ofsted report of a school where this has occurred quotes, “Since the previous inspection, the structure and membership of the governing body has changed and the full governing body meets more regularly. Governors have maintained a deep understanding about the quality of teaching and the outcomes for pupils, and have an accurate view of actions needed to secure further improvement.”

There are benefits to the system such as:-

- Avoids repetition between meetings
- Reduce overall number of meetings for key governors and the Headteacher
- Enables decisions to be made quickly rather being passed on to the next FGB or committee
- Creates a continuity of minutes and actions which can result in faster progress and prevents issues from being overlooked between committees.
- Creates an environment where every governor has an understanding of all GB responsibilities
- Succession planning is easier as all governors are more informed
- Meeting structure enables easier timetabling (e.g. governor meeting monthly at same time)
- Headteacher’s reporting and other staff presentations are heard by all so accountability is more rigorous
- New governors experience the full picture so progress more quickly
- Greater clarity for the clerk so improves efficiency

However if a governing body decides to go down this route then below are some actions to ensure a smooth transition and subsequent effective working.

- Thorough advance planning to involve current and future meeting arrangements to ensure smooth transition and total governor “buy in”. - Must be approved by full GB
- Agenda planning taking account of existing committee “Terms of Reference”, the Full Governing Body schedule of work and statutory policy list, to ensure nothing is overlooked
- Monthly meetings or certainly **3 or more per term to ensure all work is covered and school improvement is ongoing.**
- Identifying lead governors to take responsibility for key areas and chair particular items at meetings. e.g. Finance, Personnel, Safeguarding, SEN, English, Maths, Stakeholders
- Ensure a visit plan is implemented and administered focussed on the School development plan which results in reports circulated and questions to ensure whole board understanding
- Ensure Headteacher’s performance management panel are appointed
- Identify and appoint a pay committee to consider recommendations annually

Governor services can provide some more information should you want to consider this as a possible structure.