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Title: 'No Qualifications are necessary'?
Effective Governance in State Secondary Schools: Model Guidelines

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ABSTRACT

Since the 19th century School Governors have gone through an extended period of change. The most recent legislative changes related to the New Relationship with Schools Agenda (NRwS) will challenge Governing Bodies and highlights the need for effectiveness and accountability.

Today state secondary schools are legally required to have a corporate Governing Body which is responsible for appointing the Head Teacher, for strategic planning and for standards. Governors are representative of the community they serve and are expected to be 'critical friend' to the Head Teacher.

This research is aimed at developing a method of helping Governors become more effective by: examining empirically their performance and effectiveness; investigating the nature of volunteering; exploring the distinctions between School Governor practices and those of Non-Executive Directors in the business sectors; identifying not only the barriers to effectiveness but individual and organizational factors which enable a Governing Body to become more effective and then developing Model Guidelines which will help them to carry out its role more effectively.

To achieve these aims an ethnographic methodology is used and the data gathering methods included: a pilot questionnaire survey; a pilot self evaluation exercise with a school experiencing problems; a questionnaire survey; a pilot elite interview; elite interviews with five experts and fieldwork in two state secondary schools.

Most of the literature tends to focus on factual information whereas this study, whilst an academic piece of research, it is also intended to be a *working tool* for Governors. The findings are largely consistent with the literature; thirty two issues of concern have been identified. These in turn have been translated into five key issues, Governance and Structure, Guiding Principles, People and Processes and Conduct all within a culture of Review and Self Evaluation. The fifth key issue highlights criteria considered essential to the development of the Model Guidelines. The five key issues identified by the research constitute the parameters for the explicit, generic, applicable and hitherto unavailable Model Guidelines for School Governors.

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Preface

"Social science research is inseparable from the researchers' own biographies and values and researchers are situated inside their research rather than outside it. Indeed it is the fore-understanding which comes from the researcher's experience which makes understanding possible" (Deem *et al*, 1995, p.7).

During the past four years I have been asking state secondary School Governors to tell to me about their school and their role.

I was prompted to embark on the study because so much was written about the Governor statutory role and required outcomes and so little about how to achieve them. All of this was within the context of increasing pressure for public accountability, new education legislation and resultant change, equal educational opportunities and a national shortage of Governors. My main concern was that the rhetoric of the School Governor role[1] was not the reality.

I have been an education professional for 35 years. My knowledge and pre-understanding related to School Governance, spanning some fifteen years, is three-dimensional and from this, I consider I bring a unique set of experiences, attitudes and values to this research.

Whilst a classroom teacher I paid little attention to the Governor role, indeed my view was they were a group of people who came to Carol Services and Award Ceremonies. Once a member of the Senior Management Team I developed different views, opinions and perceptions of the Governor role.

First dimension:	Initially as a new member of the senior management team of a large state comprehensive school, I attended Governor meetings, but not as a member of the Governing Body. With the benefit of hindsight I now realize my views were influenced by a particularly strong willed Head Teacher.
Second dimension:	I was subsequently a member of the Senior Management Team and also a Governor. This was the most difficult dimension. Here I made mistakes, as one position compromised the other, related to where my loyalties actually laid. I found *wearing two hats* extremely difficult. I realized at this stage how a Head Teacher can control a Governing Body. I also realized the extent of the deep rooted culture of the Governing Body.
Third dimension:	Finally as a Governor, independent of the management role, I was able to make some sense of governance and make a little difference, but unfortunately somewhat late.

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[1] See introductory quotation by Twigg

I considered there were many unanswered questions:

- can/do Governors make a difference?
- is a Governing Body an appropriate method of 'overseeing' a school?
- is the recruitment and appointment system working, considering the drop-out and shortfall?
- is the available training appropriate?
- is it right for Governors *to carry the can* if something goes wrong when they are volunteers, not professionals?
- how does a Governing Body actually know how well the Head Teacher and school is performing, in other words, is the school *coasting*[2]

My research has been ethical and rigorous and this understanding, described by Deem, has enabled me to investigate the Governor role from a national rather than the parochial level and also to see the real Governor world as an 'insider outsider'.

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[2]A phrase used by David Bell, the Ofsted Chief Inspector of Schools, is 'Satisfactory is not good enough' OFSTED is particularly concerned about schools who appear to be achieving well, but this is because of the location, intake and home environment, not the quality of the teaching and learning.

Acknowledgements

Dedication

Susannah
Janet Helen
Benjamin
Joel

Author's Declaration

I declare this work has not been submitted for any other award and it is my work alone.

Signature   *Gladys Speading*

Date   *8 July 2006.*

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AGIT   Action for Governors Information and Training
BTEC   Business Technical Education Council
COGS   Co-ordinators of Governor Services
CEO   Chief Executive Officer
DES   Department for Education and Science
DfEE   Department for Education and Employment
DfES   Department for Education and Skills
LEA   Local Education Authority
LMS   Local Management of Schools
MORI   Market and Opinion Research International
NAGM   National Association of Governors and Managers
NASUWT   National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers
NFER   National Foundation for Education and Research
NHS   National Health Service
NPM   New Public Management
NRwS   New Relationship with Schools
OECD   Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFSTED   Office for Standards in Education
PANDA   Performance AND Assessment Report
SEF   Self Evaluation Form
SEN   Special Educational Needs
SIP   School Improvement Partner
TEN   The Education Network
QUANGOS   Quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations

CHAPTER ONE: ORIGINS

> "UK army of hidden volunteers. People, such as magistrates, special constables and school governors underpin many public services but their efforts go unrewarded and unrecognized as they operate outside the areas normally associated with volunteering".

> Community Service Volunteers Report (January 2000)

1.0 Introduction and Rationale

The role of the School Governor has evolved over many years and today the statutory role of a Governing Body, illustrated by the following two quotations, is both complex and demanding.

> "The Governing Body is to carry out its functions with the aim of taking a largely strategic role in the running of the school. This includes setting up a strategic framework for the school, setting its aims and objectives, setting policies and targets for achieving the objectives, reviewing progress and reviewing the strategic framework in the light of progress. The Governing Body should act as a 'critical friend' to the Head Teacher by providing advice and support"

> Regulation 4, section 38(3) 1998 School Standards and Framework Act

> "The role of the Governing Body has changed beyond recognition over the past twenty years. With the introduction of local management of schools and further reforms, Governing Bodies have become the strategic leaders of schools. They are rightly responsible and accountable in law and in practice for major decisions about the school and its future. Governing Bodies are equal partners in leadership with the Head Teacher and Senior Management Team. We want to see them taking a full part in driving the improvement and culture of the school".

> Derek Twigg, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools
> "Governing Schools for the Future" (2004)

These are strong statements and demonstrate the huge authority vested in volunteer Governing Bodies. The statements also demonstrate the legal and overseeing status, implicit in which, is the need for accountability. Furthermore, a Governing Body is

responsible for public funds and as such is accountable to the stakeholders and the community it serves.

This research has emerged from the experience of the researcher as both an educationalist and as a School Governor.

The literature is drawn largely from the United Kingdom and the United States of America and all research data from England.

1.1 Overview and Parameters

This thesis focuses on the role of state secondary School Governors with an emphasis on their effectiveness.

It is acknowledged the role of the School Governor is diverse and complex but it was this complexity and nebulous nature of the role which made it not only interesting and valuable but also a prerequisite for a serious study.

The researcher was concerned about whether Governing Bodies were fulfilling their statutory role, their effectiveness and their accountability. A further concern was that no systematic, applied research had been undertaken relating in these areas.

The aims of the research were to:

- Examine empirically the performance and effectiveness of Governors in state secondary schools
- Investigate the nature of volunteering
- Explore the distinctions between School Governor practices and those of Non-Executive Directors in the business sector

- Identify through an examination of representative schools, not only the barriers to effectiveness but individual and organizational factors which enable a Governing Body to become more effective

- Develop Model Guidelines for use by Governing Bodies to help them to carry out their role more effectively

In order to fulfil the aims of the research the following eight questions provided a framework for analysis:

- Is the present system and structure of School Governance working?
- Are Governors working to a 'flawed theory'?
- Are Governing Bodies effective?
- How prepared are Governors for their leadership position?
- What are Governor's perceptions of how they are involved in the governance of their school?
- Does the voluntary nature of the School Governor role influence recruitment and performance?
- Are there lessons to be learned from the Non-Executive Director role in the private sector?
- Would Model Guidelines help Governors carry out their role more effectively?

The key issues investigated are:

- School Governor and Governance
- Non-Executive Director
- Boards
- New Public Management
- Effectiveness
- Volunteering
- Culture

Given the analogy frequently drawn between School Governors[1] and Non-Executive Directors in the private sector the evolution, the roles, the similarities and the differences have been investigated and are illustrated in Table 1.1. The question posed is: Can lessons be learned from several high profile business failures which resulted in Non-Executive Directors carrying much of the blame related to lack of due diligence?

Role of the Non-Executive Director	Role of the School Governor
Strategy - constructively challenge and contribute to the development of strategy	Strategy - take a largely strategic role in the running of the school. This includes setting up the strategic framework and setting aims and objectives
Performance - scrutinise the performance of management in meeting agreed goals and objectives and monitor the reporting of performance	Performance - review progress and review the strategic framework in the light of progress. To conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of achievement
Risk - satisfy themselves that financial information is accurate and that financial controls and systems are robust and defensible	Risk - approve the first formal budget plan each financial year. Investigate financial irregularities(if Head suspected)
People - responsible for determining appropriate levels of remuneration of executive directors and have a prime role in appointing and where necessary removing senior management and in succession planning	People - should act as 'critical friend' to the Head Teacher by providing help and support. Appoint the Head Teacher and via performance management and to set targets for the Head Teacher
Shareholders – represent and are accountable to all shareholders	Stakeholders – represent and are accountable to the community they serve
The board must act as a corporate body	Governors must act as a corporate body
Data from Review of the role and effectiveness of Non-Executive Directors. Derek Higgs, January 2003	*Data from Governing Bodies and Head Teachers. Date of issue: 09/00 Ref DFEE 0168/2000 Regulations made under section 38(3) of the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act*

Table 1.1   Roles of Non-Executive Directors and School Governors

Governing Bodies have legal status as a corporate body with the size and composition legally determined. The stakeholder model of governance is applied and individual Governors should be appointed as representatives of the different stakeholder groups.

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[1] Appendix B illustrates the evolution of School Governors.

Governors are expected to oversee and support the school and be 'critical friend' to the Head Teacher, who is accountable to the Governors. Governors are responsible for appointing the Head Teacher, for strategic planning and for standards. They are expected to be representative of the community they serve.

1.2   Context, Significance and Distinction of the Research

It may be asked, 'Why have School Governors?' It therefore seems both appropriate and essential to put their role into a twenty first century context by considering their history and the findings and conclusions of earlier research.

This current research, carried out over a four year period beginning October 2001, was designed to obtain sufficient base line data from a wide range of respondents, in order to provide insight into key aspects of Governor practices related to their statutory role and their effectiveness.

Following the 1988 Education Reform Act a number of education researchers highlighted the Governor role and its associated strengths and weakness. Amongst them, Keys and Fernandez (1990), commissioned by the DES, undertook a survey of 2686 School Governors which investigated future needs and roles and responsibilities of Governors. They concluded much more training was required. Governors considered they had too much responsibility in the areas of finance, appointments and the National Curriculum. The report of the survey also highlighted the need for further investigation into the needs of Governing Bodies in schools with a high proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities and those in inner city areas.

The study of Baginsky, Baker and Cleave (1991, Chapter 7) examined how well Governors, Head Teachers and the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were working together. This involved reviewing the many mechanisms that had been established for joint, co-operative decision making. Amongst their conclusions was a view that there will be problems if individuals fail to give of their time as volunteers or, if once in office, they

failed to take an active part in making the decisions that befall them. It was also noted that in some schools Head Teachers and Chairs were at odds with each other and it was necessary to clarify their respective roles and responsibilities.

Earley (1994) followed up these surveys by investigating how much progress had been made since 1990. He concluded that if Governing Bodies were to become more effective, Head Teachers and Governors need to accept and acknowledge the role of each other and that "improving Governing Body effectiveness – and thereby school effectiveness - is about management development". The study also found Governors had problems with issues related to staffing, for example, redundancy, incompetence and salaries and these highlighted a degree of confusion by Governors about their role and relationships. The Earley study echoed the findings of Keys and Fernandez (1990).

Esp and Saron (1995) researched the idea of relationships and partnerships with Head Teachers as a means of improving effectiveness. Their study highlighted the need for mutual trust, shared vision and respect between Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors but it did not present any firm, measurable links between these and Governor effectiveness.

Joan Sallis[2] in the forward to Creese (1995) observes:

> "School Governors often feel they are drowning in information about their responsibilities and feel keenly the need of a firm yet friendly hand to lead them onto solid ground in their relationship with the school and each other. It is as though they are trying to learn their lines without knowing the part they play or how they relate to the rest of the characters. Sometimes even the plot eludes them. In these circumstances the scripts they learn often seem meaningless".

So here is a situation of volunteers being expected to be managers and to be part of the decision making process but with insufficient training, time, knowledge or expertise to carry out the role. Already dependent on the Head Teacher but being told to be part of the decision making process. It could be considered that this political change came too

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[2] Joan Sallis is considered by many to have been the champion of School Governors and to have advanced their cause more than any other person at the time of the Creese research (1995).

quickly or was implemented with a sure knowledge the role of being a Governor was almost impossible as stated within the 1988 Act! It could also appear that whilst there was participation perhaps there was not a great deal of substance in terms of Governor leadership in the early nineties.

The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) publication, Lessons in Teamwork (1995) advises an important role for the Governing Body is to monitor the work and effectiveness of the school but added Governors cannot possibly be expected to know everything that is happening and therefore, Governors must identify key indicators regarding pupil standards and school effectiveness

Creese and Bradley (1997, p.114) concluded Governors depend a great deal on Head Teachers and it is only when something goes wrong that Governors feel able to have a major input. They state "it appeared that Governors were prepared to accept the status quo rather than to ask questions which might upset the delicate balance of Governor-staff relationships".

A postal survey undertaken in 2001 by the National Association for Governors and Managers (NAGM) concluded "Governors consider their workload and responsibilities to be unrealistic which exacerbates the existing problems related to recruitment and retention of Governors".

By 2002, Earley *et al* (p.36-37) suggest Head Teachers have limited understanding of the role of Governors. Their survey results showed 22% of Heads felt Governing Bodies should play a major role in the strategic leadership of schools; only 13% felt they actually did so and 35% thought their Governing Body actually played a minor role or no role at all. One in ten Head Teachers made negative comments about their Governing Body related to their lack of time, knowledge and/or inadequate skills. This possibly highlights a problem relating to the challenging of culturally fixed notions of power and authority vested in Head Teachers and whether Governors are only as good as a Head Teacher allows them to be.

Creese (2002) concludes there is little evidence on how Governing Bodies become effective or indeed what changes need to be made to enable ineffective Governing Bodies to become more effective (p.49). Governors, who are unpaid volunteers, need to function as a team with sound working practices and genuine staff partnerships, if they are to have any meaningful effect on their school. In addition to the conclusions of Creese, Governing Bodies are now faced with a whole host of other issues which need to be considered, for example:

- 'Best Value'[3]
- community participation[4]
- Principles of Public Life
- constant legislative change
- increased (perceived) democracy.
- the lack of national agreements related to the workings of Governing Bodies
- no real job descriptions
- whilst schools are subject to national assessment by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), Governors are not assessed against the same rigorous criteria and it would appear practices vary considerably

At a local LEA level, new Governors are now being offered induction training, but it is recognized this can vary area to area. In recent years it has been acknowledged Governors and Governing Bodies would benefit from training and support and consequently various bodies such as the National Association of Governors and Managers (NAGM) and Action for Governors Information and Training (AGIT), have published articles and carried out research in these areas. To date however, there appears to be little evidence of collaborative projects which offer workable, transferable recommendations.

In Governors' Agenda (January 2003, No 26, p.1) Jenkinson, Chair of the Editorial Board, reflects on the 'The Education Network/Co-coordinators of Governor Services'

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[3] 'Best Value' is discussed in 2.0.2.and 2.2.1
[4] Governing Bodies have to include parents and community representatives

(TEN/COGS) report, 'Governance Matters' (2002). He writes, "if governance really matters then:

- Governors should be trained and the training should be free and it should not taken from individual school budgets
- there should be clear job descriptions, including the idea of time commitment; this could aid both recruitment and retention
- Governing Bodies should be efficiently administered and professionally advised
- clerks should provide independent, informed advice to ensure Governors fulfil their legal responsibilities; it is unwise and unfair to depend on the Head Teacher to carry out this role
- Governors should represent their community"

In 2004 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and OFSTED set out a vision for a new relationship between government and schools and for changes in future school inspections. The stated aim was to help schools raise standards by having clearer priorities and to be in a position to give more information to parents.
This was summarized as:

> "The introduction of an improved data-collection system, streamlined communications and a School Improvement Partner will give schools greater freedom and autonomy. This will release greater local initiative and energy in schools helping them to raise educational standards" (Statement by National College for School Leadership, 1 October 2005).

The New Relationship with School Initiative (NRwS) commenced in September 2005 and the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF), considered to be the key document, has replaced some OFSTED Inspections. The form is intended to show how well a school and hence the Governing Body, knows itself. The Governing Body is responsible for the implementation of the SEF and for working with the School Improvement Partner (SIP) who will assist in setting targets for the Head Teacher. All of this has to link to the Children Act 2004, (Chapter 31, section 10) which provides the legal underpinnings and framework for the

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transforming of children's services. It identifies five outcomes for children and young people (birth to 19 years) which are:

- Physical and mental health and emotional well-being (Being healthy)
- Protection from harm and neglect (Staying safe)
- Education, training and recreation (Enjoying and achieving)
- The contribution made by them to society (Making a positive contribution)
- Social and economic well-being (Achieving economic well-being)

Furthermore, linked to the Children's Act, NRwS includes proposals for the Extended Schools Agenda which expects secondary schools to offer a core of study support facilities; allow widespread community use of the school facilities and provide family learning facilities. It is stated Extended Schools should address the key government agenda of raising targets, realizing regeneration targets and supporting vulnerable children and families. It is expected all schools will become Extended Schools and will increasingly act as hubs of community services. By 2010 all schools are expected to be involved to a greater or lesser extent. This gives rise to the question: How will the recent legislation impact on Governors? The NRwS Agenda, including the Extended Schools initiative, will mean greater use of schools and a substantial increase in the number of people entering the school. Issues which may become a concern for Governors are related to child protection, health, finance and their responsibility for the school premises.

In Governors' Agenda (September 2005, No 4) John Adams, Chair of the National Association of School Governors states:

> "If the school is to become a sort of community resource in which (for part of the time) children are taught, it raises the question of who is in charge of what. For as School Governors we could find our responsibilities stretched to entirely new domains, some of which have little to do (directly) with the teaching of children".

This obviously has implications for Governing Bodies, for example, who should be responsible for the day-to-day management of the activities? It is reasonable to suggest it

cannot become a Head Teacher responsibility. Furthermore, since the new agenda links directly into the community, Governors may need to consider joint collaborative committees when there is more than one school in the locality and the need for legally binding agreements related to joint activities. The issues and implications of finance, security, health and safety also need to be considered. The government suggests Governors will be encouraged to develop a charging policy. School Governors are also faced with a National Agreement related to Workforce Reform in which they have a critical role to play by providing support and challenge. Workforce Reform aims to remove 'creeping administration' of teachers; employ more classroom assistants; limit the amount of 'cover' teacher have to undertake; provide more time for lesson preparation and raise standards. The Governing Body is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the National Agreement, for taking a long term view of the direction of the school and for the well-being of the Head Teacher. Governing Bodies are advised to request at least termly, reports on its implementation and impact on the school. It could be argued all of these extra responsibilities will increase the differential which is described OFSTED in the January 2001 report. This report judged Governing Bodies against the OFSTED criteria and found on governance in leadership and management, 25% were excellent, 32% were good, 30% were satisfactory and 13% were unsatisfactory. In February 2002, the report of the outgoing Chief Inspector of Schools warned the gulf between the best and the worst schools in England was too large and in the case of secondary schools was growing. Added to this, in August 2005 the DfES website on school strategy, hinted school Governing Bodies should be streamlined but no details or timescales are given. All of this is against the NAGM Research (2001, detailed in 2.3.1) which highlights Governors do not wish to take on extra responsibilities where professional knowledge was required. On a more positive note the DfES has replaced the annual Governors' Report with a School Profile. This should improve communication with parents and the community.

In defence of Governors, it is accepted they are unpaid volunteers, invariably with no job description, who can walk away at any time. Many writers comment on the paucity of quality, meaningful training and lack of any element of progression. Governor

qualification has been mooted from time to time and indeed a Business Technical Education Council (BTEC) Advanced Certificate of School Governance has been piloted in some counties. This is an evidence/competency based award but there is little data on which to base a judgement of its success and Ogen (2000) suggests there are some difficulties attached to obtaining evidence when candidates do not have the support of the Chair or the Head Teacher (Appendix A, Governor Accountability Unit).

Overall, the research of the last ten years has highlighted areas of concern but has not led to practical solutions. An issue highlighted by many writers relates to the teaching professionals versus the lay members of the Governing Body and the difficult situations which have arisen from this issue. For example, there would appear to be a culture of reluctance by many Head Teachers to allow Governors to play an active role in their school. Also highlighted is the lack of any precise measure of the impact Governors have had on their school and the raising of standards. However, the government continues to highlight the important role played by Governors and gives them more responsibility without increasing their authority or power.

The *context* of this research has been described.

The *significance* of the research is it builds on and takes forward the research of the last decade and, it is timely in that it relates to government initiatives of 2005/6. The findings of the study will contribute to an aspect of school life that is being highlighted but not necessarily being directed, monitored or standardized.

The *distinctiveness* of the research is to be found in the application. Other research has highlighted strengths and weaknesses of Governing Bodies but has not translated them into actions. Links hitherto missing are made between the Governor statutory role, the OFSTED Evaluation Criteria, the Best Value Principles and The Principles of Public Life.

The four features which distinguish this research from that of earlier authors are:

1. To date, authors have identified problems with School Governance but they have not however suggested an holistic set of practical solutions. This applied research has led to a practical application in the form of Model Guidelines.

2. This study links the Governor statutory role, current literature and legislation including NRwS (2005), the Principles of Public Life, the Best Value Principles, OFSTED Judgments Criteria (2003) and The Higgs Report (2003) which examined governance in the private sector.

3. The private business sector Non-Executive Director practices have been investigated objectively. Lessons learned from the private sector have been incorporated into the Model Guidelines.

4. The Model Guidelines are regarded by knowledgeable School Governors as having the potential to help Governing Bodies increase their effectiveness. In doing so they will encourage strategic thinking, support the Head Teacher and hence provide a better service to their pupils.

This study attempts to replace rhetoric with reality and focuses on processes and practices in the 'real world' by establishing a plausible theory about how School Governors can become more effective. Given government changes in School Governance following The Way Forward[5] (2002) and the NRwS Agenda (2005), it is argued this research is both timely and relevant. The result of this research has been the development of holistic Model Guidelines.

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[5] This relates to the choice of number of members, between 9 and 20, the election of Chair and vice-Chair the frequency and length of meetings (at least three meetings per year). The quorum is half of the complete membership. In certain circumstances a Governor can be suspended. The new constitutional framework and new Instruments of Government have to be in place by September 2006.

1.3   Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is presented in seven Chapters.

Chapter One (Introduction: Origins) introduces the concepts and thoughts that will be further developed in subsequent chapters and outlines the study by setting out the aims and the research questions. The opening section discusses the issues which prompted the research, the focus and the key areas of study. The analogy drawn between School Governors and Non-Executive Directors is introduced and the research is set into its historical context. Having placed the study into its context, the chapter concludes by describing the significance and distinction of the research.

Chapter Two (Critical Literature Review) reviews and reflects on School Governance in relation to New Public Management and the volunteer aspect of the School Governor role. The concept of corporate governance is explored and the Non-Executive Director – School Governor analogy is developed. The Non-Executive Director role is considered by introducing current research from the private sector. The chapter then moves to School Governance as it is today by investigating roles and responsibilities, legal issues and recruitment and retention. The chapter concludes by addressing the key issues of effectiveness, culture and accountability. It is argued the three are inextricably linked and since effectiveness is measured by outcomes it is probably the most difficult area to define.

Chapter Three (Methodology). Ethnography was selected as the principal methodology. The method was qualitative and used a case study approach. The qualitative data was collated through questionnaires, interviews, observation and analysis of documents. Ethnography was selected since it lent itself well to the study and to the particular style and preference of the researcher. The chapter describes the theoretical underpinnings, practical application, the analytic strategy and the evaluation of the study.

Chapter Four (Rhetoric, Reality or Act of Political Faith?) presents the detailed analysis of the research findings provided by the questionnaires, interviews and field work. Cross Case Study findings are presented and relationships are drawn between the analysis and the literature. In conclusion, consideration is given to the question 'is School Governance in its present day form an act of political faith or a realistic role?'

Chapter Five (Key Findings and Recommendations) draws together the key findings and recommendations and formulates them as five key areas. The sustainability of present practices is considered and then moves to the argument and rationale for Model Guidelines. It is argued the data indicates Model Guidelines will increase the effectiveness and therefore the accountability of Governing Bodies.

Chapter Six (Model Guidelines) addresses the method of creating the Model Guidelines namely, the fundamental concepts and the overall development process. The issues related to the design, the process, the content and the presentation and use criteria are described. The chapter concludes with a discussion related to validity and the view that no team can operate effectively unless each member understands the organization, knows exactly what their job is, has the skills to carry it out and shares a common expectation of how the team should work together.

Chapter Seven (Summary: Final Reflection) reviews the aims of the study and their fulfilment, acknowledges and reflects on the quality of the research, on its limitations and strengths, the contribution to existing knowledge and the implications for further research.

The complete Model Guidelines are presented as the Annex (p. 250) and are followed by the Appendices. The reference list is presented at the end of the thesis.

1.4   Summary

This thesis argues that if Governors are vital to a school and to the education of young people there should be a system by which they can carry out their duties effectively and be seen to be accountable. Governors should be valued for the work they do and be able to contribute to the development of the school strategy as stated in statute.

The concept of comparing the roles of Non-Executive Directors and School Governors is often discussed but seldom taken further.[6] Since there has been on-going research into the practices of Non-Executive Directors for many years, it is considered there is much to be gained by investigating possible transferable lessons.

Governors are an emergent body of people and this study has the potential for generating recommendations and observations related to best practice, that are academic, theoretically accurate and with practical applications. Since this research has been undertaken at a time of change for Governors and indeed secondary education as a whole, it will not only add to and enhance the existing research which has been undertaken during the 1990s, but will highlight a number of research issues which subsequently can be further developed.

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[6] Although the DfEE uses the analogy, some writers, for example Adams, have a negative view of this concept. However, there appears to be neither quality investigation nor comparison of the roles.

CHAPTER TWO: CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW:
REFLECTION ON THE DIMENSIONS OF GOVERNANCE

"You cannot be a good Governor without proper experience of the real world".

and

"School Governors make up the largest voluntary movement in the country, responsible for spending more money than any other".

> Kevin d'Arcy, Director of the National Governors' Council (2003)

"Leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible".

> Colin Powell, Secretary of State, USA. Definition Leadership (2001)

2.0   Introduction

In Chapter One, the role of the researcher, the context, significance and distinction, historical background, the voluntary nature of the Governor role and the similarity of its role to Non-Executive Directors in the business world were introduced. Chapter Two portrays the inclusive, reflective literature review undertaken which aims to identify, describe, examine and analyse the School Governor role in relation to Corporate Governance, Non-Executive Directors, School Governance, Performance and Effectiveness, Volunteering, and New Public Management. The review of literature has been on-going throughout the research and has developed from the general to the specific. The general being the background and historical aspects of educational governance and the background to non-executive roles in business to the roles of volunteers. The specific is defined as being current reports, papers and academic journals, where available, related to governance, Non-Executive Directors and volunteering. The literature investigated included previous research documents, works by leading authors, press articles and leading   Governor journals, namely the monthly Governors' Agenda, the monthly

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Governors' News (The Journal for the National Association of School Governors) and the Times Education Supplement (TES) Governor Network Briefing which is published each school term.

The chapter returns to School Governance history introduced in Chapter One. It is contended it is only by investigating its long history and tradition that School Governance of today can be understood. Recent legislation has created an unprecedented rate of change in schools and in School Governance. This change has raised many fundamental questions about the purpose and role of Governing Bodies. To fully understand the role and position of Governors in the twenty first century, it is necessary to investigate their background and to appreciate that the roles of Governors, teachers and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have evolved independently. This may be the cause of some perceived problems in schools today (see Appendix B, Timeline: School Governor Evolution).

The term Corporate Governance is now widely used but there would appear to be no one definition of the term. However the definition of governance as applied initially in this research is "The structures, processes, cultures and systems that engender the successful operation of the firm" (Keasey and Wright 1993, p.281).

2.0.1 Historical Perspective

The first School Governing Bodies were boards of trustees running Church Schools who were responsible for setting up and running schools from the sixth century. The role of these trustees included the appointment of teachers, the maintenance of buildings and sometimes the teaching. However, many, it would appear, left the running of the school in the hands of somewhat corrupt and incompetent Head Teachers (Gann, 1998, p.8).

Over the intervening centuries schools were established not only by the clergy but also by guilds, voluntary associations, private individuals and charities many of which had a common feature, namely a Board of Trustees. The numbers of elementary schools increased rapidly and by 1729 there were some 1400 schools in England. In 1839 the Government Education Office was created with a Secretary of Education and two

inspectors, although they had limited powers. Gann (1998, p.9), notes that in 1840 School Inspectors were told they were "in no respect to interfere with the instruction, management or discipline of the school or to press upon them any suggestions that they may be disinclined to receive". The trustees could therefore act as they chose fit, accept financial grants from the state and spending them they wished. At this time, school trustees were almost exclusively from the middle classes.

The 1870 Elementary Education Act allowed for the creation of 10 school boards whose members were called managers. These were the most democratically constituted of all elected bodies of local government and members sat for three years. Governors at this time required neither a property nor a residential qualification (Hurt, 1979, p.75). Section 15 of the Act stated:

> "The School Board may delegate any of the Powers under the Act except the power of raising money to a body of managers appointed by them, consisting of not less than three people" (Gann, 1998, p.12).

This was the start of School Governance with the managers' role being to appoint the staff, visit and inspect the schools, to undertake some teaching and oversee policies. Whilst the Act was designed to include members of the working communities, this was not realized and in 1896 only "around 3% of membership" were working men since elections and meetings were held during their working day with the consequent loss of wages" (Hurt, 1979, p.82). Hurt argues that the opposition to working men was because the middle classes wished to preserve their monopoly. 1875 saw teachers banned from being managers and Hurt (ibid,. p.96) notes that this was "a restriction that the National Union of Elementary Teachers accepted with remarkable quiescence". Of the ten boards created in 1870 only two had women members. Once elected, board members found great demands were made on their time. The Chairman of the Birmingham School Board was summoned to 128 meetings in 1875 and nine other members each had a commitment of more than 70 meetings that year (Hurt, ibid,. p.95). This would appear to reflect one of the issues of concern for Governors today.

In 1893 an Association of Clerks was formed. This was the birth of the profession of education and lay people were squeezed out, their roles being eroded by the professionals who were employed by the Local Education Authorities (Hurt, ibid,. p.13).

1902 saw the establishment of secondary schools (or county schools). The 1902 Act required secondary schools to have Governors and elementary schools to have managers but their roles were insignificant.

By 1907-1908 new regulations demanded that the majority of Governors must be local authority appointees and their main role was the appointment and dismissal of Head Teachers, "subject to the approval of the local authority" (Hurt, ibid., p.65).

The 1918 Fisher Education Act prescribed an increasingly paternalistic school structure. Members of the community, parents and teachers could not be members of the boards, so the local authority and central government had full control. The school leaving age was now fourteen years.

The 1944 (Butler) Education Act allotted greater powers to the Minister of Education "to prevent unreasonable exercise of powers by Local Education Authorities or School Governors" (Section 68). The Act was an attempt to create the structure for the post-war education system, which included the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen with effect from 1947. This Act provided for free primary and secondary education. Further Education was provided one day a week for 15 to 18 year olds. The tripartite system of grammar schools, secondary modern schools and secondary technical schools was introduced with the eleven plus examination. This period was a highly influential period for LEAs who coined the phrase 'national service, locally delivered'. Governors at this time were 'to be suitable people' (Esp and Saran, 1995, p.6) with limited powers namely, inspection and informing the LEA of buildings condition, the use of school after hours and the appointment of staff. The Head Teacher became powerful and had great freedom within the school. It was questionable whether it was inability or unwillingness that new Governors were not forthcoming but a pattern was now set. Governors were only

required to meet three times per year and "the Governing Body was an interesting combination of employer (LEA) and caretaker" (Gann, 1998, p.15). Discussion was often on a social, peripheral level and often little to do with the education of the children.

In the years that followed there was very little change in the role of Governors, education was in the control of LEA professional staff and Central Government did not define Governor roles and responsibilities. However, there was a growth in interest shown by the community and parents which led to the development of Parent/Teacher Associations (PTAs). The Newsom Report (1963, section 8) talks of the need for links to the community, "a causeway, well trodden in both directions". Shortly after this the Plowden Report (1967) stressed the need for community involvement and recommended constructive involvement of parents in their children's education. Both of these reports resulted from national post war worries related to underachievement of children and a rise in unruly behaviour. Both stressed the need for quality education at all ability levels and the need for parental involvement.

By 1977, the Taylor Committee Report, 'A New Partnership for Our Schools', set out to reform Governing Bodies. It recommended equal representation in secondary/county schools of parents, teachers, LEA and community representatives. Governing Bodies would have some shared responsibilities with the LEA, for example, the appointment of Head Teacher and deputy Head Teachers, plus other powers of delegation. The term of office for Governors was four years and meetings held twice each term. This report led to strong opposition from teaching unions, as teachers saw it as threatening.

The 1980 Education Act stressed the parental rights to choice of school and saw the start of market-led provision. The constitution of Governing Bodies now provided for the inclusion of two parents and two teachers. Power, however, still remained with the LEAs. Restructuring and defining of the responsibilities of Governors was included in the 1986 Education Act and the LEA majority was removed. Two years later the 1988 Education Reform Act gave Governors specific role with a range of duties prescribed by the Department of Education and Science. Governors had a shared responsibility for the

implementation of the new National Curriculum, budgets were delegated (Local Management of Schools: LMS) and this saw the start of competitiveness between schools. The Act increased the rights of parents to information about their children and schools, Governors were now responsible for ensuring parents were kept fully informed. Governors had a legal responsibility for many school issues and to enable Governors to carry out their statutory duties LEAs had to provide free of charge, such training considered necessary.

Following the 1986 and 1988 Acts it was estimated 100,000 parent Governors would be needed. Many existing Governors resigned, declaring they were worried by the added pressures they would face under the 1988 Education Reform Act, for example the budgets and the hiring and firing of staff. At the same time, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) conducted a survey commissioned by the Department of Education and Science (DFS). Its findings showed more than 40% of School Governors came from the business world, only 8% were teachers and there was a low level of 'blue collar' workers. Of the respondents 57.1% were male and 41% female. There was very little representation of ethnic minorities. Most Governors were aged between 31 and 60 and 70% made negative comments on the work they were required to undertake as Governors. It is an interesting observation that the concerns about recruitment of new Governors were unfounded. Gann (1998, p.26) reports nearly nine out of ten LEAs found recruitment of all types of Governor as fairly easy or easier than they had anticipated. However, rural areas had more difficulty than urban areas because of the problems of travel.

In 1987 the Department for Education and Science introduced the Annual Governors' Meeting with Parents. Since parents had not been encouraged for many years to attend open meetings to air their views and opinions, it is not surprising that it was and is often a non-event. Parents have rarely attended these events.[7] At this stage Keys and Fernandez

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[7] Since 2005 Governing Bodies have had the choice as to whether or not to hold the Annual Parents' Meeting.

(1990, Section 5.3.3) reported buildings, resources and staff appointments were regular topics of discussion by Governing Bodies.

With the establishment of the OFSTED in 1992, Governors were required to play a further major role in schools. They receive the initial OFSTED Report and have overall responsibility for the follow-up action plan in terms of implementation, monitoring and evaluation. They must also report progress of the action plan annually to parents in the Governors Report to Parents.[8]

Whilst in 1988 Governor recruitment was relatively easy, there was a marked difference in 1992. The Education Secretary at that time, John Patten, made a major speech when launching a campaign to recruit new Governors. He called for businesses to become actively involved in the recruitment of Governors by giving employees time away from work. It is interesting to note that 20 companies, including the TSB Group, United Biscuits and Marks and Spencer were involved in sponsoring a 'welcome pack' for new Governors and the donation of prizes to schools that were successful in this recruitment. The education department estimated at that time over 100,000 new Governors were needed to service 25,000 state schools in England and Wales. The main reasons given for the parents leaving Governing Bodies was the lack of time or expertise to carry out work expected of a Governor (the total number of Governors needed was 320000).

The 1993 Education Act increased the flexibility of Governors and enabled schools to become Grant Maintained i.e. to opt out from LEA control. This encouraged further choice and diversity within education and schools could appoint industrial sponsors to their Governing Body. Corrick (1994, p. 91) has a view of the Governing Body being "deferential" and "working well with Head and staff". He also notes that Head Teachers did not really believe Governors took any real part in the decision-making. Earley (1994, p.2) records certain themes dominated Governing Body discussions. Resources (including Local Management of Schools), building maintenance, annual parents' meetings, staff

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[8] The Self-Evaluation process (SEF) has replaced some OFSTED inspections and is discussed later in this chapter.

appointments and the school development plan, were discussed for more than one hour during the year.

The general conclusion to be drawn from all literature was Governors played a passive role in the early 1990s. This view is supported by the OFSTED Report (1998, paragraph 85) "Governors should have an overview of the performance and management of the school but they are not always sure of their role or how to exercise it".

Furthermore, The School Standards and Framework Act (1998, Section 38) states:

> "Governing Bodies are responsible for the conduct of their schools. That includes in particular, ensuring the school has in place an effective process for reviewing performance, identifying priorities, taking action and monitoring progress - all with a view to raising standards. The relationship between the LEA and the Governing Body should support this role".

To support these statements and the work of Governing Bodies, the DfEE produced 'A Guide to the Law for School Governors' (January 2000). In the forward, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for School Standards stressed the key role of Governors, saying, "There can be no more important task than helping to raise standards for our children".

At a practical level, Governors were required to hold an Annual Parents' Meeting[9] and the School Standards and Framework Act (1998, section 43) says this is to reinforce accountability to parents. "There should be emphasis on discussing the future of the school and how the Governing Body will take forward their plans". It suggests home-school agreements should also be a focal point of the discussion. Schools reported extremely poor attendance. In a telephone conversation (June 2004) when asked for figures related to attendance, a DfES official said "We know they [Annual Parents' Meetings] are poorly attended and it is up to schools to encourage parent participation.

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[9] The government says 'such meetings should discuss standards of achievement, behaviour and discipline. If 20% of parents attend then resolutions can be passed which would provide real power to parents which they otherwise would not have' It is however possible the Acts of late 2005 may leave the choice of whether or not to have such meetings up to individual Governing Bodies.

We do not have data relating to attendance". In the same conversation the official said the DfES had no data related to the total number of School Governors or the number of vacancies but "it is possible this data may eventually become part of Form Seven" (the annual census form).

By September 2001 the government was seeking further change with their White Paper 'The Way Forward – A Modernised Framework for School Governance' The subsequent Bill was enacted in June 2002, with regulations and guidance coming into force from January 2003. The changes related to the composition of Governing Bodies could take place over a three year period. The joint DfES/OFSTED Conference (November 2001) suggested School Governors should work towards National Guidelines although no details were forthcoming as to what they should be. A further suggestion at the conference was of Professional Governance. The question as to whether this meant 'paid Governors' or 'Governors who are professionally trained' was not considered. To date there has been no further consultation.

2.0.2   School Governance and New Public Management

In this section the concept of New Public Management (NPM) also known as New Managerialism, will be examined in relation to public sector organizations, particularly the education sector. In 1.0.2. it was shown great changes took place in 1988 with the advent of the Education Reform Act. This did not happen in isolation from the other national changes and political thinking of that time. The thinking of the 1980s was predicated on the view that private sector management practice models could be super-imposed on the public sector. It was thought private sector management practices were efficient and effective and that these processes would make public sector organizations successful. Four areas were addressed namely tighter budgetary controls, the decentralization of management and the introduction of mission statements, objectives and quality standards and performance management and performance indicators

Talbot (2001, p.293) argues that one unintended consequence of NPM was the growth of regulation inside government and the subsequent arrival of external audit and inspections, standard setting and review. A large number of local government functions were removed from the LEAs into the control of central government, quangos[10] and to local school management, (LMS) namely the Head Teacher and Governors. Local government was legally required to privatise significant parts of its functions under the CCT initiative (Compulsory Competitive Tendering). The reasoning given being competition and outsourcing would improve competitiveness and the quality of service delivery. It is worth noting CCT was largely abandoned by 1997, other than it being something to be considered in reviews of local and central government and quangos (Horton and Farnham, 1999; Talbot, 2001). Emphasis was placed on accountability. Horton and Farnham (1999, p.88) argue:

> "The public accountability role is to provide those outside the organization with a basis for judging performance and establishing accountability, for example, via League Tables".

A form of quasi-competition was introduced whereby different units within the same organization could be compared. Not only was this leading to League Tables in the public sector but to the Best Value concept, that is now an accepted part of public service. Under NPM, Governors were encouraged to act as a board of directors. Schools were encouraged to consider themselves as being akin to private sector businesses. Whilst the government felt the application of management theory and principles belong exclusively to the private sector, Drucker (1986, p.167) argues the origin of this thinking was in fact in the public sector – in the reorganization of the US Army in 1908!

An observation by Pollitt (1990, p.1) is:

> "managerialism is a set of beliefs and practices, at the core of which burns the seldom-tested assumption that better management will prove an effective solvent for a wide range of economic and social ill".

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[10] There are about 1000 quangos (quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations) operating apart from the government but for which ministers are ultimately accountable.

Pollitt continues by emphasizing the differences between the private and public sectors, saying the managerial roles are not easily transferable as one is market driven and the other is politically driven.

As shown in 2.0.2, choice and diversity were initial factors in the 1988 Act. This introduced competition and was supported by *per capita* funding. Successful schools received greater funding and schools found themselves in a market-driven situation. The LEAs had increasingly less influence and power and some schools developed partnerships with the private sector. Inter-school competition had arrived. The dominant culture was becoming one of service to the customer, (the stakeholder) and the focus was on the effective use of resources. Doubts about the success of these ideas have been raised, for example by Farnham and Horton (1993) and are mainly to do with how well the ideas were implemented. Horton and Farnham (1999, p.45) claim managing public organizations can never be exactly the same as managing market-driven companies stating " their ultimate subordination is to polices rather than to the market, which is the essential distinction between public and private organizations" This assertion may be questionable given further proposed changes in education legislation in the White Paper October 2005, where it is suggested schools may in effect become independent schools with control over the curriculum and the budget. They may therefore become "market driven".

Similarities can now be seen in the Foundation Hospitals scheme started in 2003. Hospitals deemed to be 'the best' are allowed to become semi-independent and backed by the necessary legislation, may set up Foundation Trusts. The government suggests these Trusts are analogous to cooperative societies and mutual organizations. The government considers this will make the National Health Service (NHS) more dynamic, efficient and 'patient responsive'. It is argued standards of performance will be raised considerably. Foundation Trust status, which gives managers more freedom over local decisions and the ability to provide a local service and meet local needs will, in theory, create innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit. Hospitals are able to set their own salary levels and conditions outside national agreements. These new style hospitals are governed by a stakeholder council drawn from the local community and NHS staff. It is however

suggested Foundation Trusts create unacceptable disparities in hospital resources and in nurse recruitment. The system is also considered by some to be two tier and elitist.

It was considered important to look at the hospital situation, as the argument for and against Foundation Hospitals is very similar to the ones related some years earlier to the education system. A question is whether this, together with the "Best Hospital" lists, is heralding the arrival of inter-hospital competition?

In defence of competition, Hamel and Prahald (1996, p.213) observe "competing involves establishing new standards of service" and "lack of a common standard can dramatically slow down the arrival of the future".

2.0.3 Summary

The evolution of school Governing Bodies goes back some 1400 years but the real changes have taken place since 1870. Initially boards of Governors were all powerful but what has been seen over 150 years is a dilution and neutralisation of School Governance (Gann, 1998, p.7).

Following a rapid growth of governance in the education sector between 1870 and 1944 there followed a sharp decline. Parental involvement was actively discouraged by the LEAs and the Head Teachers. It took the Taylor Act of 1977 to encourage stakeholder involvement and in the 1986 and 1988 Acts Governors were actively encouraged to become involved with their schools albeit with their roles and 'powers' being somewhat limited. Whether this was intentional or due to the paternalistic nature of schools is debatable. Head Teachers were seen to be the professionals, the experts and powerful in their schools. Governors were seen to be somewhat daunted by 'the professionals' and overwhelmed by the amount of paperwork forthcoming from the DES and LEAs. Bureaucracy at central and local government levels and the failure to define the roles and responsibilities of Governors until 1988 has questionably, affected the performance of Governors and had a detrimental effect on the communities they are there to serve.

Following the pattern of Governor involvement from 1944, the LEAs were in control and this continued until 1986 with the advent of NPM and the introduction of centralized and managerial approaches. Schools had the option of becoming self-governing with competition, choice and diversity becoming part of the education system. The LEAs lost much of their influence. The 1998 Act further developed the roles and responsibilities for Governors, but following the change of government, LEAs were once again represented on Governing Bodies. During the early 1990s many Governor vacancies occurred and Gann (1998, p.32) states "Governors probably felt they were not yet having much effect".

Today Governors are responsible for the standards of education in their schools and are charged with becoming the "critical friend" of Head Teachers. Their position has been described by various writers as one of "responsibility without power". Governors represent the community they serve. Whilst they have the basic function of safeguarding the interests of pupils, Annual Parents' Meetings are poorly attended. It could be assumed in general, parents are indifferent to or confident in Governors and senior management.

Clearly the role of School Governor continues in a state of transition, uncertainty and ambivalence. Governors are told they have power but it would appear this is 'controlled power'. For example, Governors 'control the school budget' but in reality most of this budget is subject to government regulation and the payment of staff salaries, leaving little room for genuine discretion. They are told they are responsible for standards but as part time volunteers they have to depend on the Head Teacher and staff but are accountable to the community and other stakeholders. 'The Way Forward' (2002); NRwS (2005) and White Paper proposals (October 2005) imply greater responsibility and accountability for Governors. This would indicate Governors are to be faced with even greater challenges than at any time in their long history.

2.1 The Meaning of Corporate Governance

"A Non-Executive Director does not work for a company, but is a member of the board and will assist in making policy and strategy decisions. It is considered good company policy to have at least one Non-Executive Director. They will often have commercial experience and will be formally selected by the company".

(Project North East, April 1998, No 25)

In 2.1 the characteristics of governance in sectors outside the education sector will be debated in terms of: what it is, volunteering and the functions and effectiveness of boards. It is often alleged schools cannot be compared to other public and private sector organizations because they are fundamentally different. Furthermore it is suggested School Governance is distinctive and management practices and concepts of other sectors are of limited use. However, Henry Mintzberg, McGill University, Montreal claims there are similarities in style and approach between managing the public and private sectors, but in order to manage you have to understand the context. He suggests the contexts of government, the social sector, or even small business compared with large businesses, are completely different (Caulkin, 2003). Perhaps by investigating the nature of governance and volunteering plus issues related to Non-Executive Directors, with whom School Governors are often compared, it may be possible to understand what motivates or demotivates people in terms of contribution and commitment to School Governing Bodies

2.1.1 What is it?

Corporate Governance is a term currently in vogue but perceptions about what constitutes good governance vary somewhat. Hudson (1999, p.42) describes governance as being about "ensuring the organization has a clear mission and strategy but not necessarily about developing it". This would seem to imply a separation between governance and management. Governors could be seen to be involved with policy and the management with the day-to-day running of the organization. Carver (1997, p.73) argues that boards can make an invaluable contribution:

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"good governance calls for the board role in long-range planning to consist chiefly of establishing the reason for planning and boards participate most effectively in the planning process by standing just outside it".

Johnson and Scholes (1999, pp.204-5) consider governance is about ensuring the organization actually fulfils the wishes and purposes of the owners. Bevir and Rhodes (2001, p.45) suggest one use of the term is the "directing and controlling business corporations". In the education sector Governors are accountable to all stakeholders whilst in the private sector the Non-Executive Directors are accountable to the shareholders. Carver (1990, p.198) suggests a way of viewing governance could be empowerment i.e. a board should pass its powers on to others and then expect the power be used assertively and creatively. To an extent Hudson (1999, p.42) supports this theory by arguing boards need to take responsibility for governing organizations but they need to delegate the management of policies and plans to the chief executive. Hudson claims governance is ultimately concerned with providing insight, wisdom and good judgement.

The Audit Commission and OFSTED (1995, p.5) define Corporate Governance in the Public Sector as:

"The framework of accountability to users, stakeholders and the wider community, within which organizations take decisions and lead and control their functions to achieve their objectives.
Good Governing Bodies combine 'hard' facts such as robust systems and processes with 'softer' characteristics such as effective leadership and high standards of behaviour, in particular:

o   leadership that establishes a vision, generates clarity and professional relationships
o   an open and honest culture in which decisions and behaviours can be challenged and accountability is clear
o   supportive accountability through systems and processes such as financial management, performance management and internal control
o   an external focus on the needs of the service users and the public".

Defining governance is therefore difficult. The narrative suggests strategy, policy, control, responsibility and accountability are essential features of governance. It would

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also suggest there is a clear division between governance and management. It is about ensuring the organization knows where it is going but not about implementation. The Audit Commission definition implies the need for objectives and a full understanding of the organization. In other words, the Governors and Non-Executive Directors need to know and fully understand what they are accountable for. It would appear boards are rooted in political philosophy, in performance, in tradition and in individual personalities. Carver (2001) asks the question if it is even possible "to design a part-time leadership role with any hope of addressing the massive burden of accountability?" One of the many paradoxes in the area of governance is, whilst the board of Governors are in theory in the 'driving seat' of the organization, it is debatable whether they have any real power or influence until a problem arises. An example of problematic governance and the resultant effect is the collapse in December 2001 of the USA oil company Enron, one of the world's largest energy, commodities and services companies. This collapse will lead to the largest bankruptcy in US history. The downfall of Enron is attributed to mismanagement of funds and inadequate auditing plus the fact that only a small group of executives actually knew the details of all investments. It has also been suggested people running divisions of Enron and the Non-Executive Directors were not focused on the big picture. The biggest effect of the Enron case is a rethink of the role of Non-Executive Directors, as it is considered they do not have sufficient counterweight in relation to executives (discussed further in 2.3).

The roles and responsibilities of Non-Executive Directors have also been highlighted by Lord Young[11] who on April 24 2002 declared the abolishment of the concept of Non-Executive Directors would improve the regulatory environment. He considered Non-Executives, who do not play a full-time role in the business, do not deserve such hard treatment as executives, when things go wrong. However, they do have a responsibility to stakeholders.

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[11] Formerly at the Department for Trade and Industry during the Thatcher Government, but at this point speaking as a member of the House of Lords

The Berry and Perrin Report (2000) states there is some mistrust of the Non-Executive Director role, for example, disruption of directorial team, breaches of privacy, loss of control and freedom. However, this should be balanced against the finding that only 2% of respondents felt that Non-Executive Directors had actually harmed their company. A further finding was:

> "the task of encouraging the take up of Non-Executive Directors is more likely to be successful if done via trusted sources, i.e. the bank or the accountant. There could be a role for policy makers in encouraging the education of banks and accountants to fulfil this new role".

This would appear to indicate the personal approach to professionals is the preferred method of recruitment. The overall view of the Berry and Perrin Report is the research has demonstrated the need for high level awareness of the Non-Executive Directors and highlights the fact their role is multifarious. It is considered that they 'provide value for money'.

The Cadbury Report (1992) recommended the majority of Non-Executive Directors should be independent which is defined as 'independent of management and free from any business or other relationship which could materially interfere with the exercise of their independent judgement' (further discussion in Chapter Three).

It therefore could be argued Non-Executive Directors who had previously been seen as the 'guardians' of a firm, could perhaps be seen as 'the weakest link'.

A contrasting view is offered by Letz and Lyles (1989, p.66). They consider board members have an insoluble dilemma in that they are the unwitting victims of excessive rationality and planning, of trying to meet public expectations and of understanding the complexities of the organization. The authors suggest many board members have inadequate understanding of these. It is concluded an over-rationalised planning process "can become an opiate for the stress of dealing with these issues".

There does seem to be a changing view of the role of a Non-Executive Directors since the mid 1990s. The Cadbury Report was extremely positive about the benefits of Non-Executive Directors and this is reflected by Berry and Perrin (2000) who suggest there are real benefits to companies with Non-Executive Directors which includes outside expertise, strategic planning and financial expertise (Complete list Appendix C). However, there would seem to be no doubt success is only achieved if Non-Executive Directors are of the right calibre. The MORI Report (2003) (Appendix D), suggests the greatest contribution made by Non-Executive Directors is their experience and knowledge. This is somewhat different from Berry and Perrin (2000) who say outside objectivity and strategic planning are the strongest contributions. MORI takes the research further and look at Barriers to Greater Effectiveness (Appendix E), which indicates lack of time or commitment, lack of knowledge or understanding and executive directors holding back information are the biggest issues.

However, there are points of common agreement which are that Non-Executive Directors are responsible when something goes wrong and their roles and responsibilities are now very much under scrutiny in the public domain. It is possible many of these opposing opinions and suggestions may apply, at least in part, to the education sector when it is discussed in detail in 2.3.

2.1.2 Corporate Governance – Theoretical Backgrounds

Management theories could be considered to be an attempt to isolate and explain the key elements in management practice and to identify the most effective method of management. The management theories underpinning corporate governance and related to Non-Executive Directors and School Governors are:

- Stakeholder/Shareholder Theory. It is considered the basic elements of corporate governance are the involvement and participation of stakeholders/shareholders and the transparency and accountability of the board. Stakeholder theory grew out of

the recognition by boards that the wider interest of the community and society need to be considered. Stakeholder theory is practised in the UK and USA.

In stakeholder theory the central issue is the business or school and an acknowledgement that survival is affected by shareholders and stakeholder groups such as employees, customers, the government. The emphasis is on the relationship with these groups. Given schools are publicly owned then it could be argued the Governors are morally obliged to communicate with the groups of people who contribute to the school. Equally, those groups should be allowed to say how the school is organized. Related to public ownership then it could also be argued a school has a corporate social responsibility for their community.

- Agency Theory (Principal – Agent theory). This focuses on the relationship between the Principal and another person (the Agent). The Principal engages the Agent to perform a service or services on their behalf and in doing so delegates some authority to the Agent. In this theory, the Principal could be regarded as "an instrument of control" (Dulewicz and Herbert, 2004, p. 236). The assumption is shareholder interests require protection by separation of board roles from the Chief Executive (this issue is highlighted again by Higgs, 2003). The Principal determines the work the Agent should undertake but the Principal then cannot be sure the Agent is applying maximum effort which can lead to conflict. In other words the goals and interests of the Principal may be different from those of the stakeholders and Agent. It could be argued this theory can be seen in schools; once inside their classroom teachers become responsible for the teaching and learning of pupils although the School Governors have statutory responsibility for standards. A Governing Body is therefore dependent on the Head Teacher for ensuring standards are met.

- Stewardship Theory. This suggests there is no conflict of interest between managers and owners/stakeholders and that there should be a structure which allows co-ordination. The basic premise is shareholder interests are maximised by

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shared incumbency of the roles. The core of Stewardship Theory is encouragement of learning and growth and it focuses on performance, development, improvement and self-actualization. This would seem to imply a valuing of employees and of equal opportunities, concepts frequently referred to in the public sector. Stewardship implies trust and it could be argued this goes hand-in-hand with accountability. In a school all teaching staff are qualified professionals and this should imply a need for personal improvement, self-actualization and accountability. The researcher questions if this is always the situation and that perhaps further controls are needed to ensure the delivery of quality teaching, learning and personal fulfilment of pupils.

However it is argued "Agency and Stewardship studies do not reflect the dynamics of governance – the interplay of power, conflict and ideology" (Dulewicz and Herbert, 2004, p. 264).

- Institutional Theory. This suggests social reality is a human construction created through interaction. It is a way of seeing the world and a way of doing things that are institutionalised i.e. the organizational activities and people are subjected to a variety of institutional rules and it is difficult for people to question or change things. Indeed they can come to be seen as the legitimate way of doing things (Johnson and Scholes, 1999, p.27). For example having to comply with professional bodies, policies and legislation. Therefore it would appear many of the aspects of management are not based on effectiveness and doing the job well but on social and cultural pressure. Institutional theory, whilst not documented as such, may well be an implicit aspect of the theoretical background of School Governance, particularly given the long history and the social nature of the role.

Whilst not part of the theoretical background of School Governance it is considered Policy Governance should be investigated. This has been developed by John Carver and is a style of leadership that helps to define the roles and relationships in which the Governing Body functions as the leader and is not involved in day-to-day management.

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The Carver Model[12] is based on four policies: (Appendix F, Policy Governance Principles)

1. Results or *Ends*. The work of a Governing Body is to determine the reason for its existence. It questions how the organization will know when it is successful, why it exists and what the results should be. The board is required to provide the management with very clear messages regarding *ends* or expected results.

2. *Means* or board limitations. The board should be concerned not only with what has to be accomplished but with how it should be accomplished. This is the role of management and the board has to be reasonably sure nothing goes wrong. In setting limitations, the 'out of bounds' areas, management has space to carry out its job efficiently and creatively and furthermore there is a requirement that all activities should be 'legal, ethical and prudent'.

3. *Board-staff relationships*. Included in this is the approach to delegation and evaluation, knowledge and understanding of the Chief Executive role.

4. *Governance*. The Governing Body should establish its own job description, its processes and structures. Clear expectations are needed and the theory holds that if the Governors have not articulated how things should be, then they cannot possibly judge how it is or how effective they are.

Carver sees this as a generic approach, applicable across a wide range of organizations because of "its focus on underlying truths rather than superficial or situation-specific features". He considers it to be a mechanism to establish control without meddling, a mode to enable substantive board leadership and eliminates ritualistic behaviour and 'rubber stamping'.

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[12] Carver maintains his model is the world's only complete, universal theory of governance-a conceptually coherent paradigm of principles and concepts (It is not a structure).

School Governance falls into the stakeholder category, which is based on the principle that all those with legitimate views or concerns about the operation of the school are entitled to have them heard. The model allows representatives of the local public, parents, community, business sector and local agencies together with school staff and the LEA to become part of the strategic governance of the school. The model stresses the need for the 'voice' of all stakeholders to be heard, in order to offer an appropriate education to the pupils. Whilst the stakeholder approach is the norm in the Public Sector, the researcher admits to becoming somewhat sceptical as to the effectiveness. It is a lovely idea but somewhat 'woolly'. The concept suggests a caring and sharing but it is questionable if this really works. The basic ideas of stakeholder governance is five fold: first a re-distribution of ownership; secondly an assumption of a commitment by individuals to have a say in what happens in their organization; thirdly stakeholders being able to participate in decision making; fourthly democracy and the view it will improve performance and finally stakeholders who support and shape the organization which they have in-depth knowledge of and then pass on this information to the community.

It could be argued that there is a distinct element of Institutionalism in schools. Culture is often a driving factor and this can inhibit growth and development. Similarly, there is an element of Stewardship Theory since teaching staff are trusted to deliver quality teaching and learning and are accountable to the pupils, parents and Senior Management who are in turn accountable to external bodies such as LEA, DfES and the community.

2.1.3 The Function of Boards

Higgs (2003, p. 21) describes what a board 'is' by describing what it 'does' by saying:

> "The board is collectively responsible for promoting the success of the company by directing and supervising the company's affairs. The board's role is to provide entrepreneurial leadership of the company within a framework of prudent and effective controls which enable risk to be assessed and managed. The board should set the company's strategic aims, ensure that the necessary financial and human resources are in place for the company to meet its objectives, and review management performance. The board should set the company's values and

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standards and ensure that its obligations to its shareholders and others are understood and met".

Hudson (1998, p.xxii) in relation to the voluntary sector describes a board as:

"The body that is legally responsible and accountable for governing and controlling the organization, sometimes called Council, Management Committee, Board of Directors, Board of Trustees or Members of a Governing Body".

Many writers agree with this role but consider the split role of boards that is neither management nor executive, but with at least in theory a leadership function, can and does lead to much confusion and sometimes conflict. Hudson (ibid., p.42) however is less concerned about this, arguing whilst there is no clear cut distinction between leadership and management neither do they need to overlap. They need to be distinct but complementary.

If boards are representing their shareholders and stakeholders then they have ultimate accountability. Literature suggests boards have overall responsibility for policy and strategy but in organizations where there is effective management and a set of shared values then there is less need for intervention. In summary, boards are responsible for clarifying and determining policy, aims and objectives, whereas management is responsible for developing these aspects and implementing board decisions. The board is responsible for monitoring performance whilst management is responsible for measuring performance. The board appoints the Chief Executive whilst the management team appoints the remainder of staff. The Chief Executive has a legal responsibility for the organization but at the same time, has different duties from those of the Board. The Chief Executive is in a position to rectify mistakes on a daily basis. Non-Executive Directors do not face the same risks. Leat (1993, p.26) argues it is the Chief Executive who actually educates or leads the board but their 'umbrella role' can, on occasions, provide continuity for the organization. However, boards should be able to hold their Chief Executive accountable and they do have a special function of being able to stand back from day-to-day issues and take a dispassionate overview of the organization. It therefore follows that holding an individual Non-Executive Director responsible could be difficult. It is

interesting to note in Australia, judges have ruled that if Non-Executive Directors do not have sufficient expertise to be able to guide and monitor the business of the company then they should refuse to hold the position.

A further vital responsibility is their fiduciary role. This role is one of trust and involves acting with integrity, having a moral accountability and the confidence of their shareholders and stakeholders. Carver (1990, p.102) when discussing budgetary responsibility says ' it does not mean controlling the number of phone lines but it does mean controlling the ability to pay the phone bill' Linked to the fiduciary responsibility, it could be argued the board is the guardian of the organization's values and ensuring the needs of the stakeholders are met fairly and honestly. It must however be acknowledged this is not necessarily clear cut and roles may vary somewhat depending on individual organization circumstances.

The Report of the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life (1996) relates to public service, selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. The report states "more needs to be done to promote and reinforce standards of conduct in public bodies, in particular guidance and training, including induction training". Whilst The Nolan Committee Principles are nationally accepted as a standard for behaviour, Painter et al. (1996, p.112) suggests they have not always worked for the benefit of the community nor addressed the wider concepts of public accountability. It could however be argued Nolan has led to a more open style of public decision making and many agencies are now working to improve their community links. The White Paper 'Public Services for the Future' (1998) introduced the idea of Public Service Agreements and emphasized the need for aims and objectives, targets, resource management and efficiency. This Paper made it clear the government was determined to use targets and performance indicators as a means of increasing productivity, performance and accountability.

The National Council for Volunteering suggests the functions of a board are to strive for continuous improvement, agree stakeholder needs and then exceed them, promote equal

opportunities and be accountable to stakeholders but do not give any indication of 'the how'!

Arsalidou (2002) states, "in common law the standards for non-executives are care, skill and diligence and the focus for the Non-Executive Director is on negligent omissions or failure to supervise". She continues by arguing that despite the growing tendency to formalise the appointment of Non-Executive Directors, their status is different from that of a Chief Executive who will have an employment contract. Arsalidou, when explaining the collective responsibility and nature of boards said "something which is everybody's responsibility is nobody's responsibility".

This overview of boards suggests that it is the intangibility of the functions of a board which create tensions and problems. It would also seem the stated functions are neither simple nor explicit. They do appear to be somewhat nebulous and furthermore accountability again would appear to be almost impossible. Fundamentally it could be argued boards appear to have no real function and are in fact serving no real purpose. It is possibly for this reason that Hudson (1999, p.66) talks of the need for boards to discuss and agree their roles and periodically review them.

A point of agreement by all writers is effective boards see their function as one of partnership with the senior management. A board is an holistic body and must therefore act as one and individual Governors/Non-Executive Directors are not powers unto themselves

2.1.4 Volunteering

The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering (1998, p.13) defines volunteering as:

> "Any activity which involves spending time unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individual or a group) other than or in addition to close relatives or to benefit the environment".

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The act of volunteering can be traced back to the Greeks with the word charity and philanthropy meaning love of mankind, practical and benevolent. Volunteering was originally linked to religious organizations. By the mid 1990s it had frequently become linked to government provided services. Just as there is some confusion as to whom volunteers are, there are differences in perception about the ultimate benefits of volunteering. There has been a history of *noblesse oblige*, or 'doing good to the poor' mixed up with altruism and idealism. This concept has now been expanded to include the benefits a volunteer receives, for example, increasing social awareness, increasing the feeling of self-worth and receiving training and development (Jackson and Donovan, 1999, p.24).

Leat (1993. p.5) talks of volunteers traditionally not being interested in management since doing good was seen to be sufficient. She argues that volunteers have yet to be convinced of the value of private sector concepts and techniques. Hudson (1999, p.22) adds to this view when he suggests managing volunteers can be complicated as their motives may be both philanthropic and self-serving. However, it is quite clear the boundary for volunteers is never clear-cut, objectives are often vague and effectiveness is difficult to measure.

The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering suggests the number of volunteers has tailed off slightly and predict this trend will continue. The survey indicates current volunteers spent a mean of 4.05 hours per week, this was an increase of 2.7 hours on the 1991 survey and there has been a decrease of some 1.4 million volunteers nationally. Further interesting and relevant survey facts are:

- people aged 45-54 are most likely to volunteer
- since 1991 there has been a sharp decline in volunteering amongst the 18-24 age group e.g. 1991, average 2.7 hours per week and 1997, 0.7 hours per week
- involvement in volunteering amongst the 65-74 age group is increasing
- men and women are equally likely to volunteer
- people from the highest socio-economic group e.g. professional and managerial, are more likely to volunteer than unskilled manual workers

- those who completed their education after the age of 21 are more likely to volunteer

- people with access to a car are more likely to volunteer

- the relationship to the neighbourhood is a significant factor i.e. respondents who knew more than 31 neighbours and had lived in the area for 5 -10 years are more likely to volunteer.

The survey indicates clearly the close link between volunteering and income. Those in the highest income band are over two and a half times more likely to volunteer than those on lower incomes. The main change since the 1991 survey is the 9% drop of those volunteers in the lowest income band. Further significant factors are, 76% of those surveyed had received no training in connection with their voluntary work and those involved with children's education, sport, hobbies, the elderly and the environment were least likely to have received training. Only 17% of volunteers had a job description, only 14% had been interviewed, only 9% of references had been taken up and only 25% of volunteers said someone was responsible for checking their work. The survey suggests volunteers feel the most important benefits of volunteering are the enjoyment of the experience, satisfaction in seeing results, meeting people, making friends and a sense of personal achievement. Respondents generally felt volunteering indicates a caring society and they offered something the state could not provide. There was a view however, that volunteers were not as efficient as paid staff. When former volunteers were surveyed about why they had given up, the main reasons were a lack of time, 'getting too much to do' and to a certain extent, a feeling that 'things could have been better organized'.

Four years before the 1997 survey, Charles Handy (1993) expressed a view that people join groups to satisfy their own needs of socialising, of affiliation and as a means of establishing a self-concept. A further view is it is a means of gaining personal help and support and sharing a common purpose. There is an obvious overlap in the survey results and the opinions of Handy.

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Public accountability could be a deterrent to volunteers, as shown in 2.1. Hudson (1999, p.387) argues people in the future will have to be inspired to volunteer and only organizations "that promote their missions powerfully will have motivated people who have the energy and commitment required to deliver a top quality service". He agrees with The National Survey that there will be more volunteers in the older age group.

The Home Office Citizenship Survey (2003) suggests the most common route into formal volunteering is through personal contact with people who are already members of the group, club or organization. The survey also indicates there is high prevalence of volunteering in the South East (outside London) and low levels in the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside. This obviously has implications for schools attracting new Governors. The survey further indicates the characteristics of people most likely to undertake volunteering are those living in areas classified as 'Affluent Urbanities in Town and City Areas', Living in the South West, aged below 50, their youngest child under ten, of white or black African ethnic origin, born in the UK, actively practicing a religion, in a managerial or professional socio-economic group, having a qualification at degree level or above and with a favourable view of their neighbourhood.

Whilst the age group differs from the one highlighted by the 1997 National Survey of Volunteering, it is understood the criteria for each survey were different and therefore a direct comparison cannot be made. Volunteers play a significant role in society, which is often demanding and specific. Numbers are decreasing and yet in many areas, for example education, having volunteer Governors is mandatory. The literature indicates a trend of less volunteering and a need for better procedures for recruitment, interviewing, training and retention are essential.

There are very strong indicators here of where volunteers are likely to be recruited and it gives invaluable guidance to organizations as to the reasons why people volunteer. This must surely be a strong basis for a recruitment and retention strategy?

2.1.5 Are Boards Effective?

Having considered the meaning and styles of governance, volunteering and the function of Governors, the question to be answered is, are they effective?

It is perhaps necessary to address in general terms the concept of culture before looking at effectiveness and accountability since each seems to be inextricably linked to the other. This linkage is highlighted in The Sunday Times, (2002) '100 Best Companies to Work For' supplement, where one of the criteria for judging the companies is a culture assessment. This assessment was allocated 50 points out of a total of 175 for evaluation of the company's policies, programmes and culture. It is argued culture is hard to define but the use of culture as a measure is significant in this particular listing. Culture has a direct influence on organizational purpose. Johnson and Scholes (1999, p.239) suggest there is not a 'best' and 'worst' culture. They argue the issue is how well the culture supports the organization. Culture is generally described as "how we do things around here" and is a pattern of beliefs, rituals and myths that evolve over time. This could be interpreted as the organizational values and beliefs and could include historical acts, stories and rituals, controls and organizational structures, the power structure and above all the paradigm. This paradigm is the taken-for-granted assumptions about the organization which will have developed over many years. It is partly subconscious and is used to make sense of given situations. It can therefore be seen the culture affects the way people think about their organization and that the culture of an organization can affect its group behaviour pattern, the way in which it reaches decisions, its attitudes to staff, its attitudes to each other, the level of involvement and resistance to change. Furthermore, culture can influence or inhibit individual and group behaviour which in turn could generate positive or negative responses to issues. A further consideration is culture could actually be in the minds of individuals, it is their perception and reflection of what other members know, feel, believe and mean. It could be rationalised that effective Governing Bodies have an understanding of their culture and of their roles as Governors and by having this understanding they can increase their effectiveness by improving their working patterns and methods.

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Hudson (1999, p.270) suggests culture is learned, is historically determined, is partly subconscious and is heterogeneous and that it has three levels of which the first one is visible representation, the second group behaviour and the third underlying beliefs. Hudson (ibid., p.47) argues effective boards create policy and avoid getting involved in detail. They ask for appropriate information and data to enable judgements to be made. He also sees their role as one of partnership with senior management. In theory, this argument makes sense but lacks depth. If the board members are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds and are not necessarily selected for their experience or skills the reality is that boards will find it almost impossible to be always effective. Hudson believes Governors bring with them a mass of assumptions about how a board should work and about the nature and purpose of the organization. He concludes this is why they find it difficult to "lift themselves above the purely managerial role and become boards that govern". This conclusion, whilst possibly true, does seem unfair.

As shown earlier, the actual role and function of a Governor is not absolutely clear and whilst they may have some ultimate responsibility (primarily when things go wrong) they have no real power, so how can they really know how to govern other than using their prior experience?

Carver (1990, p.181) has a slightly different theory, which is, if boards adopt a process of monitoring policies and developing them when required, then "if you haven't said how it ought to be, don't ask how it is". He stresses effective boards have a clear understanding of where the organization is going by laying down broad principles and it is a case of controlling "the inside from the outside". Carver continues saying boards will only be really effective if they recognize that "the job products of boards and executive are truly separate" and they each have different roles and responsibilities. He adds a board must not slip into acting as if the board works for the Chief Executive. Carver (ibid., p.189) further identifies the six common flaws of governance as being: first, too much time is spent on trivial matters; short term thinking, planning and perspectives; next reacting to events rather than anticipating and planning for them; rehashing and doing things unnecessarily; next leaky accountability and finally authority diffuse: a lack of clarity over who is

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responsible for what. Carver (ibid., p. 190) suggests fourteen actions or steps that could lead to "new effective governance". These are cradle the vision, address explicitly fundamental values, force an external focus and forward thinking. Separate large issues from small, enable proactivity and an outcome-driven organizing system, facilitate diversity and unity. Describe relationships to relevant constituencies, define a common basis for discipline and delineate the Governing Body's role in common topics. Finally determine what information is needed, balance overcontrol and undercontrol and of vital importance, use Governing Body time efficiently. In this, Carver is trying to encourage boards to develop and nurture a vision of the board and to return to this regularly, particularly in decision and policy making. He considers it important to be clear and open about collective values and to ensure new Governors know what these values are. Governors are there to represent views of a whole group, not just like-minded members of that group. Overall, Carver argues that a more complete and dynamic approach must be taken if a Governing Body wishes to improve its effectiveness.

Accountability must be central to effectiveness. Leat (1993, p.42) argues accountability operates on two levels, fiscal accountability and process accountability, which she describes as meaning how things have been done and what has been achieved. But Leat's argument is something of an over-simplification of accountability. The fundamental question is surely, who is the organization there for and how can the direction and purpose of that organization be delivered? This then leads to how the board can direct and ensure accountability, all within the standing orders and regulations of the organization. These should all be influenced by ethical considerations, which link to the culture, ethos and corporate responsibility to the various stakeholders, particularly those with little formal power, such as the community at large (Johnson and Scholes, 1999, p.203).

The concept of accountability can be divided into a number of components. It could simply be giving an explanation to stakeholders, it could be providing further information when it is requested, it could be reviewing and revising existing processes and practices to meet the needs and expectations of the stakeholders and it could involve imposing sanctions. It is apparent that access to information is an essential characteristic of

accountability and accountability relies on the availability of timely and relevant information. School Governors are accountable for their school, pupils, staff, buildings and finances. At the same time they are accountable to the government, the LEA and the community. However, the Nolan Committee findings (1996) suggest accountability is without question, essential in the twenty first century in both the public and private sectors and the upward trend is of judgement by results.

> "The concept of accountability lies at the heart of good government [governance] and public administration. Openness, transparency and effective functioning systems of accountability are positive attributes of a healthy polity, while governing systems of accountability which are deemed to be unaccountable or lacking accountability fail their citizens in important respects" (Massey and Pyper, 2005, p. 151).

For volunteer part time governors the concept and practice of accountability could be viewed as a particularly daunting situation.

Given the areas of effectiveness discussed so far it would seem to follow one of the greatest challenges facing a board is the recruitment and retention of new members. The demands for greater accountability and public expectation can be a source of pressure. Recent litigation (as discussed earlier in relation to Enron) is in effect redefining the legal responsibilities and possibly the roles of board members. It could be argued that despite willingness and best intentions many members just do not have a broad enough understanding of their organizations.

Hudson (1999, p.91) suggests talented board members are a scarce commodity so boards need to approach recruitment with the same rigour as when appointing paid staff. In the past being a board member was seen as a duty or even an honour and in some instances people felt they wanted to put something back into society. So just to attend meetings was sufficient. Recruitment was not rigorous and it was often a case of 'knowing someone'

Today, Governors need to contribute actively. Carver (1990, p.201) claims the biggest failure of boards is the inappropriate construction of board membership so it is perhaps

better to have vacancies rather than the wrong people. Obviously different boards have different requirements. Hudson (1999, p.75) considers boards that take actions to strengthen their own membership are in a much better position to govern than those who leave it to the luck of the electoral draw. The views of Carver and Hudson point to the need for the careful selection of people who have appropriate skills, experience, knowledge and values. Research suggests boards need to agree the representation required plus the skill base needed to have an efficient and effective team. Job descriptions should be produced so potential members are fully informed of the role, responsibilities and the time commitment required. Arrangements for induction may vary considerably but are essential if members are to feel part of the team (Carver, 1990; Hudson, 1999). In terms of effectiveness, Hudson (1999, p 79) discusses research undertaken in America in an effort to find a correlation between structure, role and effectiveness of boards. He comments the findings are interesting and indicate there is a positive relationship between board involvement in strategic planning and the organization's performance. He suggests ratings of organizational effectiveness are related to the extent to which board members feel informed about their responsibilities and duties and boards are largely risk-averse, playing only a limited role, mostly as trustees rather than entrepreneurs.

The Good Scrutiny Guide, The Audit Commission (2004) suggests effective scrutiny is the key to effective corporate governance across the public sector and states effective public scrutiny should include five aspects. Firstly it should enable 'critical friend' challenge to decision making and the role should be constructive and robust; secondly it should bring an independent view to discussion and the non-executives should lead and own the scrutiny on behalf of the public; thirdly it should reflect the voice of the stakeholders; fourthly in diverse communities plural views and concerns must be taken into account. Finally it should make an impact on delivery of public services by strategic planning and the promotion of community well-being. This Audit Commission concept of scrutiny is implicit in much of the literature and could be interpreted as a need for a risk management strategy being built into all aspects of school life. This should include such aspects as curriculum, pupil and staff care, pupil recruitment, financial management, policy changes, determining priorities in emergencies, capital build projects and the

purchase of large equipment and staff appointments. In other words, there needs to be effective and efficient identification of risk which should be looked at in relation to pupils, staff and other stakeholders. Whilst it could be argued this should be part of day-to-day management it needs to be overseen by the Governing Body. The literature suggests a Risk Register is needed with a structured schedule of reporting back to the executive.

Effectiveness can therefore mean:

"the level of value that can be created from a given level of resource" (Johnson and Scholes 1999, p.169)

"Effectiveness measures achievements from the available resources" (Hudson 1999, p.179)

The Audit Commission (1995) looked at problem areas of School Governance when giving advice on how a Governing Body could become more effective. The paper suggests the six warning signs of ineffective Governing Bodies are long-term vacancies and a poor attendance record, going through the motions at meetings without addressing the responsibilities of a Governing Body, conflict between Governors and the Head Teacher and too few Governors making a significant contribution, allowing individuals or small groups to become dominant and finally failure to respect and abide by decisions. The Paper then suggests some solutions which include the need for visible and effective governance, making the Governor role more appealing, good teamwork, obtaining outside help and quality training

Overall, the literature argues effectiveness, together with culture, effective recruitment, training, knowledge and skills, fall into five broad categories. First, accountability: Governors should be answerable to their stakeholders in all aspects of their work and at all times; this implies the need for stakeholder awareness, concern for quality and the establishment of criteria to measure performance. Next, participation, an acceptance that

the pupils are at the heart of the school and there should be regular attendance and contribution. Third, standardization, everyone working to the same agenda and rules and all know what to expect. Challenge is vital; Governors should question and be the 'critical friend' of the Head Teacher. Finally, transparency which refers to the availability of and access to information and also clarity of purpose

Drucker (1968) discusses the need for a well selected, effective board and whilst suggesting its function is something of a paradox, concludes "to focus on contribution is to focus on effectiveness" (p.72) and "effectiveness must be and can be learned" (p.169-177). But the literature also indicates effectiveness is ultimately the responsibility of the Chair who is better placed than anyone to ensure the board is governing and this must be in collaboration with the Chief Executive.

Therefore it is still difficult to identify exactly what effectiveness is. It no doubt includes all of the areas discussed earlier but research suggests since it is the outcome that is the measure, effective governance will perhaps always be subjective.

2.1.6 Summary

In 2.1 the meanings of governance, of volunteering and the function and effectiveness of boards have been considered. All of these issues are rather less than clear-cut. It would seem there is no one opinion of what governance really is, nor what the functions of a board are, other than in general terms. This review suggests all boards act differently and perhaps a new approach is required, bearing in mind the voluntary nature of board membership. It has been shown there are fewer volunteers and public expectation is increasing. Board functions are neither explicit nor tangible and therefore accountability is almost impossible.

Finally, are boards effective? It has been suggested at various points in this chapter that effectiveness is an end result. Culture, as with accountability, was shown to be important but virtually indefinable. However, if it is considered by boards it could help increase

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their effectiveness, recruitment and to a lesser extent training. Recruitment was considered to be a major area of concern and stressed by all writers. There does however appear to be a concern that culture can influence or inhibit individual and group behaviour, which in turn could generate positive or negative responses to issues.

The aim of this section was to identify some of the major areas of governance. However, the research has in effect created further questions. These are: What are the long-term implications of fewer volunteers? What are the long-term implications of ineffective governance? How can genuine power be given to boards and would they actually want this power? Do boards actually make a difference and add value to their organization? How will Non-Executive Directors respond to increased public scrutiny? Whilst not directly relevant to this study, the answers to these questions would be of great interest to organizations and could be investigated subsequent to this study.

Considerations relevant to school Governing Bodies are threefold. First, how do boards capture concerns of stakeholders before problems arise? Next, do organizations have formal or informal reporting processes and finally, how does a board ensure it is aligning local behaviours with corporate (DfES) values?

The Higgs Report (2003) on Non-Executive Director effectiveness investigated the population of Non-Executive Directors, how they are appointed, who they are and how to widen the pool, their independence, their effectiveness and their accountability. Recommendations from the report are considered in relation to the School Governor role (discussed in more detail in 2.3).

Arsalidou (2002) suggests legal changes are ahead in this country and that Non-Executive Directors cannot continue to take a passive role in their organization and inactive Non-Executives run the risk of being found unfit if they fail in their supervisory role. Quite obviously there are strong implications here for Non-Executive Directors and School Governors. It is hoped answers to many questions will be obtained during the course of the field work of this study.

A description of good governance based on the available literature may be:

> "Whilst meeting all legal duties and by use of appropriate skills, expertise and information, demonstrate accountability to stakeholders and achieve the mission of the organization".

Effective Governing Bodies do not just happen. To understand the issue of how effective School Governors are, there needs to be an understanding of their purpose. If they are to be effective and accountable, then their ability to hold the Head Teacher to account becomes critical. The literature and data suggests Governors do not find this an easy task. Perhaps Governing Bodies and Non-Executive Directors need to consider carefully their role and responsibilities, to focus more on their *raison d'être* and to increase their accountability.

2.2 The Non-Executive Director and Corporate Governance

> "Evaluation is particularly difficult for boards of directors because it requires members to make decisions about themselves".

> Conger, J.A. Finegold, D. and Lawler, E.E. (2000)

> "The most effective boards have highly knowledgeable directors, the information they need to make decisions and most important, the power to act".

> Conger, J.A. Finegold, D. Benson, G. and Lawler, E.E. (2002)

Corporate governance has become a focus of attention in recent years because of the widely held concerns about the effective monitoring of public companies in both the UK and the USA. High profile corporate problems in the business world have shown that in some instances, the people thought to be in control were not and in some instances were running the business to their own agendas.

In 2.3 the emergence, and the structure and function of governance and Non-Executive Directors together with their perceived value, will be considered. The view is taken that to

make any sense of the corporate governance debate[13] then the principle reports and backgrounds need to be investigated in terms of what is happening today. There needs to be an understanding of how issues in corporate governance have developed from Cadbury (1992) to Higgs (2003) and Penrose (2004).

Keasey et al (1997, p.60) suggests the term corporate governance was rarely heard of before the 1990s and since then there has been inconsistent usage of the term. In other words it can mean as much or as little as is wished. They also suggest many of the participants in the corporate governance debate hold the view that the principle problem rests in the abuse of power by corporate elites. The basis of this argument is that the status quo leaves excessive power in the hands of senior management, some of whom have abused this power. Pound (2000, p. 21) suggests governance is about ensuring decisions are made effectively and having a board which truly collaborates on decisions and regularly seeks input from stakeholders. He adds; "governance reforms should be put in place before a crisis, when a corporation is doing well".

2.2.1 Definitions and the concepts of corporate governance and Non-Executive Directors

Since the term corporate governance is defined in many ways it is perhaps fitting to list some examples:

Cadbury (1992, p.15) states, "Corporate Governance is the system by which companies are directed and controlled".

A more descriptive definition of governance is found in The OECD Principles of Corporate Governance (1999):

> "Corporate Governance ...involves a set of relationships between a company's management and its board, its shareholders and other stakeholders. Corporate

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[13] Corporate governance has become a world wide issue related to improving board performance. There is now a Commonwealth association for Corporate Governance with a Global Advisory Board. The International Monetary Fund (IMF). The World Bank, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations are now looking at how corporate governance may be improved.

governance also provides the structure through which the objectives of a company are set, and the means of attaining those objectives and monitoring performance".

The Johnson and Scholls (1999, p.203) definition is:

"Corporate governance arrangements determine who the organization is there to serve and how the purposes and priorities should be decided. Corporate governance has become more complex for two main reasons. First the separation of ownership from management control and second the increasing tendencies to make companies more visibly accountable to a range of stakeholders".

Hampel, (1998) states "particularly in small companies, Non-Executive Directors may contribute valuable experience not otherwise available to management" and added the suggestion that the Non-Executive Director role should move beyond representing the interest of shareholders to one of a trusted adviser role.

Unlike executive directors, Non-Executive Directors are not employees and are not expected to devote full time and attention to the company. They may not have a legal employment contract or a service agreement. However they do have a duty of care, are expected to demonstrate skill and diligence in common law and are the representatives of shareholders and arguably other stakeholders.

2.2.2. The emergence of Governance and Non-Executive Directors

From the corporate governance debate, theory has emerged related to the function of boards. Central to this is the monitoring of executive behaviour, strategy and resource management. Corporate governance now encompasses not only the interests of the shareholders but the interests of other stakeholders.

Over the past decade governance requirements have changed significantly and many reviews of Non-Executive Directors have emerged. The complexity of corporate governance arose through the need to separate ownership and management control of organizations. The result has been most organizations now operate through a hierarchy of

governance established through the developing backdrop of government policy related to competitiveness and entrepreneurial culture which started in the 1980s. The revitalising of UK private enterprise and increasing competitiveness were considered essential and leading to the introduction of New Public Management (NPM see also 2.0.2).

In the early 1990s there were great concerns and mounting criticism of financial reporting, corruption and the effectiveness of auditing. There were also concerns about high profile corporate collapses e.g. Polly Peck, forced into bankruptcy by its lenders in 1990 when its market value declined by £560 million in one day and the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) closed by the Bank of England in 1991 following vast international financial chaos on a global scale.

In an attempt to prevent similar occurrences the Cadbury Committee was set up by the London Stock Exchange in May 1991. The Cadbury Report (1992) established the vital need for internal controls and recommended the roles of Chief Executive and Chairman be divided. Cadbury emphasized the value of Non-Executive Directors stating they strengthened the independent governance role. The Cadbury Report (1992, page vii) suggests Non-Executive Directors should play a major role in improving the accountability of executives:

> "it is now generally accepted that boards gain from a combination of the breadth of view of outside directors and the depth of knowledge of the executive directors. Acceptance of the need for balance of that kind on a board clears the way for the next stage in the debate which centres on how to get the best out of a board made up in this way".

The Cadbury Report was followed in 1995 by the Greenbury Report. The basis for this report was the public concern about the perceived high salaries being paid to directors of privatised utilities. This report recommended improvements in the disclosure of directors' salaries and benefits. A further recommendation was that remuneration committees should consist of Non-Executive Directors who had no personal financial interest in the decisions taken. Furthermore, Non-Executive Directors should have a good understanding and knowledge of the company.

The Hampel Report of 1998 reviewed the effectiveness of the Cadbury and Greenbury Reports and the state of corporate governance. The report highlighted the need for directors to be responsible for monitoring non-financial and financial risks and controls. Hampel suggests boards, particularly in SMEs, should move beyond looking after shareholder interests and move to a more diverse role of trusted advisor, strategic advice to mentoring individual board members.[14] Many of the Hampel recommendations embrace the Cadbury and Greenbury recommendations. Hampel's Combined Code: Principles of Good Governance and Code of Best Practice (1998) is a non-statutory code which companies do not have to follow but, under Stock Exchange Listing Rules, listed companies as part of their annual reports, must state how they comply with the Code. Indeed businesses are reported in the press as saying they have now experienced 'compliance creep' and are concerned non-compliance could lead to litigation. There is a self-regulatory framework for the code and it is policed by the Financial Reporting Council. The framework is based on best practice of corporate governance in the UK. Hampel's Combined Code was closely followed in September 1999 by The Turnbull Report which concentrated on how the Combined Code could be implemented. In the section Internal Control: Guidance for Directors on the Combined Code, Turnbull recognizes the explicit need for risk management as part of managing a business, be it financial or non financial. It raises questions about boards having a risk management framework from which assessments of the quality of risk management practices and internal controls can be made. This is an area School Governors should also consider.

In general terms all of these reports are concerned with the relationships between businesses and shareholders and less concern is shown for other stakeholders. Turnbull made it clear that Boards of Directors were not only responsible but had not only to review the effectiveness of internal controls but had to provide assurance that these controls had been reviewed. This is therefore a 'comply or explain' approach.[15]

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[14] There appears to be similarities here to the current role of School Governors, particularly the 'critical friend' and strategic roles.

[15] 'Comply or explain' is considered to be a Yes or No *tick box* situation. It is perhaps easier for firms to tick Yes and ignore Explain. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) suggests Enron complied with all the *tick box* requirements of US corporate governance; they suggest a 'bit of "explaining" would have given a better picture'

Following further high profile business collapses e.g. Enron (see p.32), a further review was undertaken led by Derek Higgs (2003). The terms of reference for Higgs was to assess the population, "independence", accountability and effectiveness of Non-Executive Directors; to review their relationship with institutional investors; their remuneration and to propose ways of strengthening quality, independence and effectiveness. The Higgs Review of the Role and Effectiveness of Non-Executive Directors (January 2003) suggests the report "will blow away the last cobwebs from the boardroom". Higgs makes it very clear the boardroom remains the preserve of ageing, white males. The review found: only 6% of Non-Executive Directors were women; only 1% were from black or ethnic-minority groups and only 7% were non-British. It recommends a fundamental shift with executives on the board being balanced by Non-Executive Directors. Up to the present time, only one third of the board should be Non-Executive Directors or independent. The review recommends a senior independent director should be appointed to raise issues on behalf of shareholders. It could be argued this will/could lead to difficulties if separate discussions are held away from the boardroom, may lead to mixed messages and a degree of confusion. The report points out this will be a 'listening post' situation.

Key issues highlighted by Higgs are:

- Non-Executive Directors should serve no more than two three year terms of office. Only in exceptional circumstance should it be longer, e.g. if the Non-Executive Director has some special skill or expertise needed by the company
- after ten years a Non-Executive Director is not considered to be independent
- a senior independent director should be available to shareholders who have not been able to resolve concerns through normal channels
- Non-Executive Directors should meet at least once a year without the Chairman and executive directors
- there should be a more formal, transparent recruitment process[16]

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[16] The introduction to the review 1.20 states 'critical to improving the effectiveness of Non-Executive Directors is raising the quality of appointees'

- potential new board members should undertake a thorough examination of the company and the role, in order to satisfy themselves they have the necessary skills expertise and time to carry out the required duties.

- there should be a comprehensive induction programme and on-going professional development which is seen as a way to enhance the effectiveness of the board

The review showed 48% of Non-Executive Directors were recruited through personal contact with the board and 96% are never formally interviewed for the position. Only 6% of Non-Executive Directors in the private sector are women compared with 30% in the public sector. Higgs makes proposals related to the broadening of the pool of potential Non-Executive Directors. It suggests some candidates could be appointed from the non-commercial sector[17] (For example charity chief executives whose presence "widens the gene pool of Non-Executive Directors"). The Higgs Review includes Guidance on the Role of Non-Executive Directors (Appendix G). This not only highlights the role and requirements, it describes what an effective Non-Executive Director 'looks like' in terms of what they are required to do and how their performance should be evaluated. It also includes suggestions for Non-Executive Director appointment letters, induction, a Guide and Checklist for the board and for the individual members. It is recommended there should be a nominations committee which should lead the process of board appointments and make recommendations to the board (Appendix H).

In 2002, in their formal response to the Higgs Review, prior to its publication, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) recommended "the last closed shop in the UK, namely Non-Executive Directors should be opened up to include people whose experience is largely unrelated to the core activities of the company". The TUC stated Non-Executive Directors are the weak link in UK corporate governance and they are not doing enough to guide, challenge, and curb company management. It also recommends employees should be involved in the appointment of Non-Executive Directors, a pool of potential Non-Executive Directors should be organized and publicly funded and Non-Executive

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[17] This would appear to be a turn-a-round from NPM, when private sector management was 'imported' into the public sector. (see 2.0.2)

Directors should build independent relationships with all stakeholders. Concerns about the review have also been expressed by Sir Digby Jones, the Director-General of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) during an interview with Kemeny and Lewis (2003). His opinion is the enhanced role of the senior independent director has the potential to be divisive and make the relationship between the Chief Executive and Chairman less effective to the detriment of entire board. Digby Jones stresses a Chairman must be allowed to run an effective, unified board and senior independents should not be allowed to open up separate channels of communication with shareholders nor have exclusive responsibility for reporting back to other Non-Executive Directors.

The revised new Combined Code on Corporate Governance which has been applicable since July 2003 is derived from the Higgs Report. The key points of the Combined Code are Chairmen will now not be banned from heading nominating committees, there will not be a ban on Chief Executives becoming Chairmen, but the board will have to consult and explain to shareholders, small companies will only be required to have two, rather than a majority of independent Non-Executive Directors on the board and there will be no restriction on directors sitting on more than one committee.

Following the publishing of the Combined Code, reports in the press suggested most institutions accept their corporate governance processes and practices could be improved but are unhappy about the associated costs and extra time this will incur.

A view worthy of note was that of business reporter William Lewis, (Sunday Times, February 2, 2003), who stated that following Higgs, he had met with 54 senior business executives from public and private companies, who were concerned that running a public company would become more like being the leader of a local council than an entrepreneur interested in making profits for shareholders.

One year after the publication of Higgs, the Penrose Report (March 2004) related to the near failure of Equitable Life,[18] stated the Non-Executive Directors were ill-equipped to manage a Life office by training or experience, were totally dependent on the Chief Executive, were ill-prepared to take necessary decisions in any event because of the fragmented approach adopted to instructing them, were incompetent to assess the advice objectively and challenge the Chief Executive even if they had questions about the material supplied and they generally had a poor understanding of the financial position. The Penrose Report said the Chief Executive was obstructive of scrutiny and often failed to answer questions put to him but equally criticized the Non-Executive Directors who are said to have insufficient skills or knowledge of the business to properly challenge him.

2.2.3 Non-Executive Directors: Structure and Function

Berry and Perrin, (2000) suggest the role of a Non-Executive Director can be measured by examining what they actually add to the business. The main factors were found to be: outside objectivity, strategic planning process, financial expertise, operational expertise, network contacts and structured board procedures

A survey of Non-Executive Directors undertaken by KPMG (Accountants and Professional Services Firm) (2002) presented evidence to the effect that: more than two thirds of the Non-Executive Directors surveyed (from the FTSE 350 companies) believed they would benefit from formal appraisal, that less than one quarter received formal assessment, there were widespread deficiencies in Non-Executive Director training, nearly 70% did not receive training in crisis management and the identification of 'early warning signs' in failing companies and finally 40% felt they required knowledge of non-financial matters, for example, employment issues.

Higgs (2003) states:

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[18] Equitable Life plunged into financial crisis in 2000 after the House of Lords ruled it had to meet its commitment to guaranteed pension plans.

"The board is collectively responsible for promoting the success of the company by directing and supervising the company's affairs.

The board's role is to provide entrepreneurial leadership of the company within a framework of prudent and effective controls which enable risk to be assessed and managed.

The board should set the company's strategic aims, ensure that the necessary financial and human resources are in place for the company to meet its objectives, and review management performance.

The board should set the company's values and standards and ensure that its obligations to its shareholders and others are understood and met".

2.2.4 Summary

The main purpose of section 2.2 has been to examine the somewhat contradictory roles of Non-Executive Directors. It could be argued Non-Executive Directors are no better than the information they have access to or are given by the executives. But, owing to several major business collapses, they have attracted national and international attention and their effectiveness and accountability have been questioned over a number of years.

The UK government has seen accountability to stakeholders as a major issue and as a result a series of review committees have made proposals for reform related to increasing the quality, number and powers of Non-Executive Directors. The Cadbury Committee was criticized in that it appeared to suggest that accountability to shareholders was the basis of good corporate governance. This report has become the basis for subsequent reviews leading to the Higgs Review of 2003.

Professor Victor Dulewicz, (2004, pp. 263-280) says studies such as Higgs concentrate on conformance rather than performance and it is already being asked if 'Comply or explain' is enough? If Non-Executive Directors become risk averse then it is possible there may become a shortage of quality candidates. However, the contra argument is board rooms may have an increased number of amateurs if the Higgs proposals are followed to the letter, given a decreasing number of available Non-Executive Directors and the apparent lack of will to undertake training. The general questions would seem to be, would training

of Non-Executive Directors actually improve business performance? A further issue is Non-Executive Directors will have to want to change.

One solution may be more women Non-Executive Directors. At present women represent only 6% of Non-Executive Director posts and less than 1% are Chairman. There should be proper evaluation of potential Non-Executive Directors, not the 'old boys' network', with the interests of the business being at the forefront. New Non-Executive Directors should agree to induction and ongoing training and to performance appraisal and there should be transparency throughout the process. There is a need for Non-Executive Directors who are prepared to challenge executives and a 'whistle blowing' policy which would make it easier to stop problems before they become out of hand. Literature suggests having the right people who are well trained and with appropriate skills and expertise is vital. It has been suggested by many writers in the press that the old boy network of Non-Executive Directors, or as some put it, the 'gold plated pension arrangement'[19] which does not necessarily bear any relation to company results, is not only unfair but also inefficient since the selection process excludes many able people. A question now under national scrutiny is how do you 'derail the corporate gravy train' and treat the 'fat cat syndrome?'[20]

So, what is really new since Cadbury a decade ago?

It would seem Higgs (2003) has failed to find any link between the number of board members and company performance but proposes a higher proportion of Non-Executive Directors. If Non-Executive Directors are in the majority, with disparate interests and their own agendas, then possibly decision making could be near impossible. Giving more control to Non-Executive Directors who do not have day-to-day insight and knowledge of the company appears to be a recipe for board room controversy with the executives. Given the freedom within private businesses literature indicates there is a great possibility that many will ignore the guidelines as they will find them unworkable.

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[19] The average age for a FTSE 100 Non-Executive Director is 59 with over three quarters being over 55 years old

[20] These issues are now constantly reported in the media, particularly the large payments to less than successful Chief Executives who leave their companies with very large 'golden handshakes'.

The question high in the mind of the researcher is: Could Higgs be an over-reaction to problems in the USA? Nevertheless, Higgs contains some general leadership practices which could be applied to School Governance and would seem to be important to a variety of situations within the private, public and volunteering sectors. These practices include the need for awareness and a self-critical approach, ongoing self-evaluation, an understanding of the business, appropriates skills, appropriate training and clarity of the role.

2.3 The School Governor and Corporate Governance

"Every organization should tolerate rebels who tell the emperor he has no clothes".

Colin Powell, My American Journey: An Autobiography (1996).

The previous section concluded by raising questions about the roles and responsibilities of board members and Non-Executive Directors. This theme continues, but will focus directly on the education sector. It commences with an analysis of current literature into the roles and responsibilities of Governors. It will then address the issue of legal responsibility with reference to issues raised in 2.1 and will conclude with an exploration into the recruitment and retention of Governors.[21]

2.3.1 Main Roles and Responsibilities

The Fifth Report on the Role of School Governors by the House of Commons Education and Employment Committee 1998/1999 draws an analogy between School Governors and Non-Executive Directors. The report emphasizes the main purpose of a Governing Body is to help raise standards and states a priority is "to ensure they are able to exercise effective governance skills". The report adds Governors are a large, usually unsung, army of volunteers[22] whose contribution to the life of our schools has been too little appreciated. In 2003 The Secretary of State for Education stated Governors are

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[21] The DfES say there is a possibility of records being made as part of the annual Form 7 census form.

representatives of the local community and ideally Governing Bodies should reflect the different ethnic, cultural and faith backgrounds. Nationally there are some 370,000 School Governors and it is estimated there is a shortage of some 50/60000. The DfES does not have a precise figure and although Governors are considered to be a vital part of a school there are as yet no national records.

The 1998 School Standards and Framework Act lays down a number of principles and regulations which include a Governing Body must act as a corporate body, act with integrity, objectivity and honesty and in the best interests of the school, be open and prepared to explain their decisions and actions and take a largely strategic role in running the school by setting aims, objectives, policies, targets and within a culture of constant review

If the government emphasis is on strategy, then it is perhaps essential to decide what this actually is in the school situation, as it appears to be a word often used but not necessarily understood. Johnson and Scholes (1999, p.10) define strategy as:

> "the direction and scope of the organization over the long term; which achieves advantage for the organization through its configuration of resources within a changing environment to meet the needs of markets and to fulfil stakeholder expectations".

In the public sector however, strategy is developed by Government Ministers, passed down to the Local Authority and then to the particular establishment. It does therefore seem to be something of a contradiction to put emphasis on strategy. In relating strategy, as described by Johnson and Scholes, to education, it could be argued the government framework is not actually a strategy but an unending series of ideas coming from a variety of government departments. Hamel and Prahalad (1994, p.309) suggest in many cases strategic planning is often "functional and tactical, planning barely scratches the surface of deep down strategic issues". They go on to say corporate strategy is simply an amalgamation of individual business plans, and often start with 'what is' seldom with

[22] It is worth noting they are unpaid volunteers

'what could be'. Additionally, schools are required to apply the Principles of Best Value which requires them to compare their performance against similar schools; to challenge itself about the services it provides; to consult all stakeholders consulted and to compete. As public servants, School Governors are also bound by the Nolan Principles of Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. These criteria are applied during OFSTED Inspections to all aspects of Governor activities therefore addressing accountability and strategic issues. The OFSTED Inspection Handbook, (p.137) when describing the focus on leadership and management, states, "The quality of leadership, supported by efficient management and perceptive governance, is central to the effectiveness of a school". The Handbook goes on to say:

"Evaluation should focus on the extent to which leadership and management produce an effective school: one that promotes and sustains improvements in educational standards achieved and the quality of education provided".

OFSTED must evaluate and report on how well the Governors, Head Teacher and staff with management responsibilities, contribute to the quality of education provided by the school and standards achieved by all of its pupils. The handbook stresses the statutory responsibilities of the Governors, namely to provide a strategic view of where the school is heading, to act as 'critical friend' to the school and to hold the school to account for the educational standards it achieves and the quality of education it provides.

A link can be drawn between strategy and the Best Value Principles and is seen by many to be the way forward. It could however, be contended that the turbulent environment which currently exists in the education sector actually prevents meaningful implementation and long-term planning.

Gann (1998, p.46) contends School Governance has three elements namely planning, i.e. setting the aims, objectives, principles and targets of the school; monitoring, i.e. seeing what is planned is implemented and evaluating, i.e. seeing that what is implemented produces results. He argues if indeed Governors do have these responsibilities then the way many schools approach the process of policy planning is inappropriate. He argues

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that in many instances draft policy documents are presented to Governors by the Head Teacher, the result being Governors do not have 'ownership' of documents nor do they understand their content, omissions and silent assumptions. He continues, saying Governors must be in at the start and the end of each process and should lay down the underlying principles for the document. Corporate strategy must address questions about direction, values and the operation of the school. However, it seems School Governors have limited real strategic freedom, as to a large extent it is determined initially by central government and then by the Head Teacher in terms of implementation.

In a 2001 survey of Governing Body responsibilities, undertaken by the NAGM Research Group, several significant findings emerged.[23] First, there was a rise in acceptance of raising standards, responsibilities and an acceptance of responsibility for monitoring the curriculum. There was an increasing acceptance of the line management function of the Head Teacher and a decrease in the number of Governors wanting to retain responsibility for deciding pay levels. The greatest decline in acceptance was in areas where professional knowledge is necessary. Responsibility for staff appointments and safety of premises were the two main areas of concern. Only half of the respondents believed they should be responsible for the school premises outside the school working day.[24] Finally, Governors requested system improvements which included the need for a substantial increase in the quality of documentation to meet the specific needs of Governors and better support at all levels, i.e. in school, from the LEA and from national institutions, including government

The DfES (DfES, 2002a) suggests Governing Bodies have wide powers and responsibilities. Governors are expected to:

- Help raise the standards of achievement in their school and ensure the national Curriculum is taught
- Be involved in strategic planning

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[23] The survey results published and reproduced here by permission of Governor News.

- Appoint and set targets for the Head Teacher
- Establish and implement a performance management policy for appraising all staff
- Be involved in budgeting and staffing
- Ensure the pupils' moral, spiritual and cultural development
- Ensure all pupils are provided for including those with special needs
- Are accountable to the parents and community for the school's performance
- Be the employer of all staff in foundation and voluntary aided schools

Having issued the list of responsibilities, the DfES (2002b) suggests the role should be one of "Steering not Rowing". Much of the literature suggests this is a daunting list for individuals who after all, are unpaid, part-time volunteers. The literature highlights the gap between statutory intention and the reality of the situation.

2.3.2 Legal Responsibilities

The 1944 Education Act described education in England as "national service, locally delivered". Since then the Department for Education, using a variety of different titles, has determined the national school policies.

Local Management of Schools in 1988 places responsibilities formally on Governing Bodies although the LEA retains some powers, e.g. special educational needs.

In 2002 The Education Act gave Governing Bodies additional responsibilities which included raising school standards, setting objectives for and reviewing the performance of the Head Teacher and operating in a more strategic capacity. Governing Bodies are bound by statutory responsibilities, overseen by the DfES and are accountable to the community and parents for the way in which the school is directed and managed. This is opposed to the day-to-day management role of the Senior Management Team for the delivery of the curriculum, use of resources and the quality of the teaching and learning. In other words

[24] There are implications here, if Governors are not willing to fulfil this responsibility, the extended school day issues envisaged by Ministers may well not happen.

the Senior Management Team has a day-to-day management role similar to that of a company Chief Executive. Governors meetings have to be documented in approved minutes and are scrutinized during OFSTED inspections.

Today School Governors are responsible for almost 90% of the money spent in schools (compared to 5% in 1988) and have a responsibility to the community they serve. LEAs now have a legal duty to review the composition of Governing Bodies and they are required to appoint LEA Governors. However, the Governing Body is a corporate body and an individual Governor has no responsibility or power. It is a corporate body with decisions taken jointly and provided they are taken in good faith with all advice available then Governors are not personally liable for those decisions (Governors' National Council, 2001).

2.3.3   Recruitment and Retention

OFSTED has found the recruitment of Governors continues to be a problem and states the main reasons are: long meetings, time commitment and vast amounts of paperwork.

The TEN[25] document 'Do the Right Thing' (2003) states there are 347,518 Governor places nationally and there is currently an average vacancy rate of 12% and a clear indication this figure is rising. Governors represent school staff, parents, the LEA, sometimes religious organizations, community and local business.[26]

Their spending capacity is approximately £20 billion per year. TEN has also researched the most effective methods used to recruit new Governors and it is interesting to note the two most effective methods are other Governors and word of mouth. A comment made by TEN is that relying on other Governors and word of mouth to recruit others runs the risk of reinforcing the status quo. This it is suggested, could undermine any strategy to attract

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[25] TEN is an independent policy, research and information unit set up to develop, promote and disseminate the role and good practice of local authorities in raising educational aspiration and achievement. It is a non-party body supported by a wide range of LEAs and other bodies. TEN has given permission to quote and reproduce from their publications.

those who are currently under-represented on Governing Bodies. It is considered to be an extremely valid view if it is related to boards of Non-Executive Directors as discussed in section 2.2.3. All literature stresses the need for a breadth of experience on all Governing Bodies and is seen as a major strength both for the community and the school. Therefore Governors need to take their own professional development seriously and suggests "they should not shirk from sanctioning Governor expenses because it is right and proper for them to be reimbursed in this way. Failing to do this is a disincentive to existing and potential Governors" and TEN continues by citing a low-income parent who has to bear the costs for childcare when performing the Governor role. It is contended these are the very people who are needed "not only for themselves but, more importantly for the legitimacy of the Governing Body".

Although there is much discussion about the training of Governors, literature highlights a gap in the recruitment process. It would appear School Governors 'evolve or materialise'. If school staff are recruited formally with application forms and by interview, then placing the recruitment of Governors onto this professional level may enhance their image and ultimately the number of volunteers.

Earley (2000, p.208-209) has a view there is a clear need for Governing Bodies to use their limited time carefully and to focus on areas that appear "to make a difference". He concludes that insufficient is actually known about what theses areas are and he questions if it is within the capacity of most Governing Bodies to operate more effectively.

A possible aid to retention is considered to be Governor training, which again appears to be somewhat contradictory. If 'no qualifications are necessary' and the system is fully inclusive then many less experienced new Governors may be concerned to see training courses covering areas such as finance, employment issues and buildings. Does this make the role exclusive? A consideration related to retention is how to persuade long standing Governors, who have not contributed a great deal or have lost their freshness, to retire. Higgs (2003) recommends fixed term tenure of ten years. This could perhaps be an

[26] Pupils are not officially represented on the Governing Body

avenue for consideration by Governing Bodies when considering any reorganization. It is interesting to note there would seem to be very little Non-Executive Director training and recruitment would not seem to be a problem. It may be assumed the salary is an incentive! Acknowledging the importance of the School Governor role, Swindon Governor Support Services [27](GSS) say the essentials are a combination of good recruitment initiatives, effective induction, on-going support and local activity/promotion by individual Governing Bodies. They propose the Governor Recruitment Cycle as shown in Figure 2.1. 'Help Schools Help Children' is part of a 'Toolkit' (Appendix I) produced by the DfES (2003) to assist schools to recruit new Governors. It could be argued this will be a disincentive to professionals by using wording such as "School Governors do not need any formal qualifications" An article in a regional newspaper, (Appendix J) clearly states "No qualifications necessary", which is in line with the words of the DfES.

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[27]Swindon Governor Support Services has developed a 'Best Practice Guide to Governor Recruitment and Retention' The Recruitment Cycle Plan is part of the guide.

GSS Recruitment initiatives to fill vacancies	-identify potential sources -develop and circulate appropriate material -attract right calibre of applicant
Effective Retention of recruited Governors	-on-going training and support -increasing effectiveness -increasing local profile
Effective induction of recruited Governor	-made welcome and made to feel valued -made to feel useful early on -full understanding of role early on -effective initial training
Localised recruitment to fill vacancies (self-sufficient)	-increasing local awareness of role of Governors -seen as attractive by others -waiting list of applicants

Figure 2.1   The Swindon Governor Recruitment Cycle Plan.[28]

The Greenwich Director of Education, George Gyte is quoted as saying:

"In order for School Governors to be effective, they need to be trained. New Governors need their decision-making and strategic planning skills brought up to scratch quickly and more experienced Governors often need refresher courses. Yet, there are nearly always low turnouts at Governor training sessions, which has now become a national problem. They need a learning tool that enables them to train either alone or in small groups in their own time and at their own pace" (Curtis, 2002).

A further problem could be the raising of expectations for all potential Governors by the use of statements such as "School Governors are helping shape the next generation", if once 'in situ' they are not given the opportunity to contribute and work to this end. A

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[28] Reproduced with the kind permission of Swindon Governor Services

question could be, is this a case of over-promise and under-deliver? The answer to this may become apparent during the field work and in the analysis of questionnaires.

2.3.4 Summary

The aim of 2.3 has been to discuss relevant literature related to School Governance within the broader debate on corporate governance. At the empirical level, a body of knowledge has emerged which would suggest this area is in need of a degree of standardization. Much is written about the role of a Governor and likewise the role of a Non-Executive Director. It would seem School Governing Bodies are required or at least expected to be inclusive. However, if emphasis is placed on 'professional' people then the role may be seen as a no-go zone for those who aspire to be a Governor but have concerns about their management knowledge. The literature emphasizes Governing Bodies need to develop strategies which encourage access, inclusiveness and participation. Non-Executive Directors on the other hand are expected to have, although do not always possess, certain professional skills and up to date are often selected for who they know. This could be seen to be exclusive.

Literature however, suggests good corporate governance is essential if a business is to retain its competitive advantage.

2.4 School Governor Performance

> "I have an insatiable demand to be in charge of information flow. If you don't know what information is flowing through your organization, you don't know what is going on in your organization".

> Colin Powell, 'My American Journey: An Autobiography' (1996).

So far in this thesis, issues related to Corporate Governance, Non-Executive Directors and School Governance have been discussed. 2.4 addresses issues related to School Governor performance.

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In Managing Schools Today (May 1998) Brian Carter, NUT Regional Secretary in the Midlands, is quoted as saying he is amazed that a Governing Body, "made up of well meaning amateurs", is expected to make employment decisions about professionals. What business, he says would "let an untrained bunch of amateurs appoint its senior staff?" As far back as 1998 the Head Teachers' unions were calling for the relationship between the Head and the Governing Body to be defined so day-to-day management decisions stay with the Head Teacher and Governors are confined to strategy. The literature indicates more responsibility has been given to Governors since 1998. However, training is still somewhat *ad-hoc* and there are still 'grey areas' within this responsibility in terms of the respective roles of Head Teachers and Governors.

Since 2003, OFSTED has reviewed its inspection framework, following an earlier decision to quiz parents and pupils. It is suggested this is a way to increase accountability. It is argued the opinions and views of parents will help highlight the parts of a school OFSTED inspectors do not have time to investigate. There would seem no doubt this will lead to problems regarding the reliability of information. Governing Bodies will need to ensure they have reliable back-up evidence. The TES, Briefing[29] (Spring Term 2003), reported OFSTED was investigating ways on how to make more informed judgements of the Governing Body. It was suggested OFSTED will judge Governors effect on the performance of the school on the same scale as that used for teaching staff with a range from outstanding to bad. The outcome of this investigation has since been published and became effective from September 2003 and performance ranges from Excellent (1) to Very Poor (7) (see Annex, p.286 for full description). The School Self-evaluation Form (SEF) started in September 2005 is a continuation of this (The SEF is discussed in detail in section 2.4.1).

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[29]'Briefing' is the Times Education Supplement Governors' Information Network

It is here that further problems may arise since Governors are unpaid volunteers they do not have to stay, they do not have a contract and there is no compulsion related to on-going training.

2.4.1 Indicators: Features of an Effective School Governing Body

Governing Bodies now have duties which mirror that of the LEA in raising standards, i.e. setting objectives for the Head Teacher and reviewing performance and pay. Their role is largely strategic and they are responsible for 90% of money spent on schools. They are responsible for ensuring the school is accountable to the community it serves. Earley, (1994, p.6) suggests the main feature of an effective[30] Governing Body is a willingness to operate as a team, sharing tasks and responsibilities. He maintains it is vital to work well with the senior management and to have a commitment in relation to time and to the school. Other writers feel it of value to have a balance of skills, expertise and local community interests represented on the Governing Body. Earley (ibid., p.86) considers Head Teachers felt there were factors preventing Governors being effective, namely a lack of time, insufficient knowledge and awareness of educational matters.

Deem *et al* (1995) studied governance in ten schools and two LEAs and found an absence of debate on both teaching and learning and related this to Governors feeling they lacked sufficient knowledge to question and challenge. They also found determined attempts by Head Teachers to maintain boundaries, to becoming defensive and with differences in philosophy between teachers and Governors. In addition pupil perception of the education process was rarely considered. When Governors were asked what they most enjoyed about their role most emphasized service to the community, partnerships with the staff and learning about education. They least enjoyed the excessive paperwork, long meetings and the use of educational jargon.

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[30] In this research the definitions of effectiveness and efficiency, unless stated otherwise are; effectiveness, the degree to which an organization achieves its goals; efficiency, the amount of resource required to achieve the output.

Esp and Saran (1995) investigated the relationship between Head Teachers and Governors and comment that although much is said about the need for mutual trust, shared vision and respect there is little evidence these actually improved school effectiveness. The literature identifies three common factors in effective Governing Bodies, namely effective teamwork, a positive relationship between Governors and staff and efficient working practices. Emphasis is placed on the need for an active and effective Chair of Governors stressing it is difficult for a Governing Body to improve or become more effective if the role of Chair is poorly enacted. A good Chair will ensure every member has a least the opportunity to contribute to meetings, but it is acknowledged this can be difficult when the Governors are a disparate group of volunteers.

A telling comment made by Creese (2000, p.49) is, whilst it is possible to identify these factors "there is less evidence, however, on how Governing Bodies become effective – or how a relatively ineffective Governing Body can change its practice in order to become more effective". It is acknowledged that removing ineffective Chairs, who in many cases have held the position for many years, can be a difficult process. It is suggested a route to greater efficiency is meetings should have clear agendas, time limits, clear objectives and clear outcomes or improvements to be achieved in a reasonable amount of time.

The OFSTED School Governance Report (2001, p.4) identifies characteristics of an effective Governing Body and where Governors make a difference. These are when:

- Governors are clear about the aims of the school and the values they wish to promote
- the Governing Body and all its committees have clear terms of reference and an inter-related programme of meetings
- Governors bring a wide range of expertise and experience and attend meetings regularly
- the Chair of Governors gives a clear lead and meetings are chaired well and efficiently clerked
- there is a clear school plan, understood by all, which focuses on improving the school

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- relations between the Governors and staff are open and honest
- Governor training is linked to the school's priorities and the needs of individual Governors
- individual Governors are clear about their role
- the school's documentation is systematically reviewed
- Governors have rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work.

Deen (2001, p.131) identifies an effective Governing Body as one which helps create a vision which informs practice and fosters a climate which supports effective teaching and learning, ensures members share responsibility and are able to contribute and establishes a framework of principles and policies, monitors the work of the school, works in partnership with the staff and supports their work and is in touch with the views of parents. In relation to working practices it is suggested there needs to be an effective committee structure, effective meetings and teamwork using the knowledge and skills of individual members with planned training to meet the needs of its members. Furthermore Deen advocates an effective Governing Body discusses, approves and monitors the budget, has general responsibilities for the premises and health and safety issues, acts as 'critical friend' to the Head Teacher and ensures accountability.

The literature discusses the value of good relationships between Governors and staff. It suggests Governors need to visit schools during the working day to meet staff, meet pupils and to be involved in 'pupil trails'. In this way Governors will gain a picture of the school at work, have a better understanding of the work of teachers and the curriculum being taught, monitored and assessed. Earley *et al* (2002, p.61and p.143) state:

> "Governors and the business sector are not regarded by many school leaders as significant sources of ideas and inspiration. However, we often saw a lack of clarity about the role of the Governing Body, both about acting as a critical friend to Head Teachers and around their possible contribution to strategic leadership".

There is a slight hint that Governors are sometimes concerned about undertaking this role as they feel a real or perceived hostility from the staff. It is acknowledged there are unreal

expectations of time and semi-professional input from people who are volunteers in addition to their own full-time work and family commitments.

During a radio discussion Keats (2004) (NASUWT) suggested the School Governor role fails to take account of the volunteer nature of the role and that Governors have other demands on their time. The manifestation of this he says is the level of vacancies with some Governing Bodies "struggling to be quorate". He further suggested there needs to be a radical review of the Governor role as many Governors experience great difficulties with training and understanding, there is over-reliance on the Chair and Head Teacher and the challenging role can cause problems with many Head Teachers. He further suggested Governors are not in a position to respond to many issues, for example violence towards staff, there is a lack of awareness of what the job involves, of keeping up to date with current legislation, there is no 'attraction strategy' and there is a need to "explode the myth"

During the discussion, Jane Phillips (AGIT) stressed Governors play a vital civic duty and face enormous challenges which equate to a high level management job.

The programme concluded with discussion about possible professional Governors. This was in the main, related to financial issues, members' allowances and childcare and travel. The need for 'proper' advertising, interviewing and appointment systems were raised but came to no conclusive opinion as to whether the professional route was the way forward.

The absence of a national standard or a national Governor self evaluation scheme leads to differing Governing Body practices. The literature questions whether the LEA should be involved in helping Governing Bodies undergo a self evaluation programme, but suggests the less effective may not take advantage of this. The question is posed as to whether there should be direct intervention.

School Improvement Partners, (SIPS) part of the NRwS which started September 2005, may increase the awareness of Governing Bodies. The SIPS role is to act as a conduit between central government, the LEA and the school. Their role is to help to set targets, to identify support needs and to advise the Governing Body on the performance management of the Head Teacher and on performance management in the school. SIPS who are expected to be former or existing Head Teachers, LEA advisers and consultants will also consider whether the school is giving value for money, by using benchmarking data. SIPS are in a position to provide Governors with comprehensive information about examination results, attendance, exclusions, drugs and obesity.

Central to the discussions is the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) which has replaced some OFSTED forms. The SEF has become the key document which shows how well the school knows itself. Governors are expected to play an important role in helping to complete this form, in approving it and have responsibility for the main judgements. Governors need to assure themselves that the process of self-evaluation and planning is based on good evidence and on how pupils and parents feel about the School. Governors also need to be confident in the strategies adopted to bring about improvement. The SEF requires schools to evaluate their progress against an inspection schedule, set out the evidence on which the evaluation has been made, identify strengths and weaknesses and to explain what actions are being taken to develop strength and remedy weaknesses.

The SEF has seven aspects:

1. Characteristics of Your School.
2. Views of Learners, Parents, Carers and other Stakeholders.
3. Achievement and Standards.
4. Personal Development and Well-Being.
5. The Quality of Provision.
6. Leadership and Management.
7. Overall Effectiveness and Efficiency.

The Leadership and Management element covers the extent to which Governors discharge their duties. Therefore this indicates a need for Governors to critically judge their own performance and assess how they contribute to the overall leadership of the school. The NRwS also includes short notice, sharper inspections with in some instances only 48 hours notice and inspectors will use data from the SEF. An electronic School Profile replaces the Governors' annual report. All of these issues indicate the need for a heightened knowledge, awareness and time commitment by Governors. Governors may now need to question how they can assess the effectiveness and efficiency of their school if they don't fully understand their role and assess their own effectiveness. This new approach requires the involvement of all Governors, as given the 'short notice' inspections, any one Governor may be called upon to speak with and be answerable to OFSTED Inspectors.

An opinion offered by many writers is that a catalyst is invariably needed if meaningful change is to take place, for example, after a poor OFSTED inspection, a new Chair or Head Teacher, a major media issue or a *coup d'etat* by the Governors. However, the general view is there has to be an acknowledgement of the need and will for improvement if any change is to take place.

The researcher considers the SIP could be a positive catalyst enabling planned action to take place rather than waiting for a crisis situation or a poor OFSTED Report to take place.

2.4.2 Measures and Accountabilities

So far, various models have been referred to, OFSTED, the Nolan Principles of Public Life and the New Combined Code (Higgs). These three models will be considered in various parts of the study, in relation to the role of School Governing Bodies. The models should each have an influence on School Governance and main aspects of each model are illustrated in Table 2.1.

The group of individuals who constitute a Governing Body are varied and the number of Governors varies depending on the size and type of school (Appendix K describes the constitution, description and guiding principles from September 2003)

Model	Dimensions
OFSTED Inspection Criteria 2003	**Governors should:** Help shape the vision and the direction of the school Ensure the school fulfils its statutory duties Have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school Challenge and support the senior management
Nolan Principles of Public Life 1996	**Governors should demonstrate:** Selflessness Integrity Objectivity Accountability Openness Honesty Leadership (promote these principles by leadership and example)
New Combine Code of Corporate Governance 2003	**There should be:** Strong, effective leadership with a culture of trust and mutual respect Clear understanding of the division between day to day management and running the board Formal, transparent and rigorous procedures related to appointments Timely induction and on-going training and development Formal, rigorous annual evaluation of board and sub-committees A balance of skills and experience **Furthermore:** Members should be well informed to prevent risk of distortion and the withholding of information No individual or small group should dominate board decision taking

Table 2.1 Comparative Quality Models and their Dimensions

To place Governing Bodies and Boards of Directors into context, Table 2.2 compares the size of Community School Governing Bodies with Boards of Directors, as suggested by Higgs and Table 2.3 illustrates Governor statutory responsibilities and accountabilities as prescribed by the DfES. Together, these tables display an overall view of the School Governance structure and role.

SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES	BOARDS OF DIRECTORS
One third must be parent Governors	
At least two but no more than one third must be staff Governors	Four executive directors
One fifth must be LEA Governors	
One fifth or more must be community Governors	One Chairman
Up to two additional sponsor Governors may be appointed	Four Non-Executive Directors
The Head Teacher must be included	
The instruments of government of a school must specify size of membership, which must be no fewer than 9 or more than 20, which must not include any sponsor or additional foundation Governors.	*These figures are average for a FTSE 250 board=9. Average total number for a FTSE 100 =11 members. Other listed companies =6*

Table 2.2   Constitution of Governing Bodies and Boards of Directors

	Statutory Responsibilities and Accountabilities of State School Governors
1	Appoint, set targets and salary of the Head Teacher and be 'critical friend' to the Head Teacher
2	Strategic – Governors set and monitor the strategic framework and are statutorily and collectively responsible for: setting the schools vision, strategic aims, agreeing plans and policies, monitoring and evaluating performance
3	Financial – accountable for the spending of public money
4	Community - Ensure the school is accountable to the children, parents and the community it serves, to the funders and to the staff it employs.
5	It is their responsibility to deal with appeals, grievances and exclusions.
6	Ensure the publication of the School Prospectus in line with statutory requirements

Table 2.3   School Governor Responsibilities
(Based on Governing the School of the Future. DfES 2004)

Earley (2000, p.204) suggests as Governors become more experienced they are more likely to ask challenging questions related to school performance and by asking the right questions on a regular basis they could influence the curriculum. Earley does however point out the reluctance of many Governors to challenge as they did not wish to show their lack of knowledge by asking naïve questions.

The literature suggests Governors are more likely to be involved in the strategic development of their school immediately after an OFSTED inspection, particularly if weaknesses have been highlighted. They have a responsibility for the post-OFSTED school action plan and therefore have quality information about the school, its aims and

its management. This plan has been seen to give Governors a working document by which they can become involved and have a clear view of the targets. The question of time availability remains and even with this action plan Governors are still dependent on the Head Teacher who will possibly still only give the flavour of developments that have to take place (Earley, 2000, p. 43).

In reviewing the literature on governance and in particular School Governance, it has become apparent the general opinion is School Governors and Non-Executive Directors enhance and add value to their organization. OFSTED judges all school Governing Bodies using standardized criteria and yet Governors have no standardized practices.
The question then to be considered is how can all Governing Bodies deliver similar provision? In other words, what can be done to ensure a degree of equity between Governors and between Governing Bodies?

2.4.3 Summary

In this chapter there has been focus on five principal themes.

First an exploration of the history of School Governance was undertaken. It was considered this would help to place governance in the wider and more demanding context of the twenty first century.

Next the different descriptions and styles and functions of corporate governance were considered.

Following this, the Non-Executive Director role was investigated for two reasons. Firstly, it was felt inappropriate to conduct research into Governor efficiency in isolation from other sectors. Secondly, much research had already been undertaken into the practices of Non-Executive Directors and it was considered lessons could be learned from this.

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The previous section (2.3) concentrated on the main roles and responsibilities of a Governing Body. The literature indicates Governors in general terms know what their role is but do not necessarily understand it or know how to carry it out.

Finally, debates about the effectiveness and accountability of Governing Bodies were examined. This was against a background of the demand for greater accountability, fewer and 'lighter touch' OFSTED inspections, schools now embarking on self-evaluation, the NRwS Agenda and a decline in the powers of the LEAs.

The essential features and general agreements emerging from the literature are:

- Governors are an important part of the school leadership
- the Head Teacher is inevitably a major influence on the Governing Body
- there is a great variation in Governor knowledge, skills and practices
- there is a lack of clarity related to the Governor role
- skills and knowledge are needed
- with greater responsibilities, recruitment continues to fall
- training does not appear to be a 'cure all' and there is a question as to whether training enhances effectiveness
- there is a concern that numbers may further fall with the new OFSTED inspection of Governors. As volunteers, Governors may feel this would be too threatening
- Governors are told "no real qualifications are needed" but OFSTED talks about having a spread of skills and experiences. The criteria and characteristics on which inspectors pitch their overall judgement of Governors is found in the Annex, p.286
- Governors need to be fully aware of their strategic role
- there needs to be an effective structure and committee composition
- there needs to be a framework of principles, policy and practices

A general criticism of the literature is that situations are analysed and recommendations made, but practical, applicable advice is missing. Many Governors feel a degree of inadequacy related to some of their professional responsibilities e.g. staffing, safety, (especially outside school hours) and some aspects of finance. There are pointers in the literature for the development of a programme which should embrace recruitment, selection and induction. It is suggested training of existing Governors should take place following a review of the Governing Body and an identification of the range of existing competencies. Team development could then take place. It is further suggested this training could lead to a greater Governor knowledge base and increased confidence. It is acknowledged this may not be easy given the voluntary nature of the Governor role. The literature overall does not take the next step of describing how any of this could take place in the school situation.

However, a question raised by the literature is: Do Governors want to be so closely organized when they are there in a voluntary capacity? This would seem to overlook the importance and statutory nature of the role and not link competencies and skills to the role. It also raises the question of the lack of clear job descriptions which would imply the need for training. Roles and responsibilities as described would seem to be prescriptive rather than descriptive. An example here is the Governors' DfES 'Guide to the Law' (2000) given to Governors to help them fulfil the role given under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. In spite of owning their own copy and periodic updates, given the size and language of the document, many Governors are not sure how to use it nor do they understand its importance. It is a legalistic document with very little indication of practical application.

Overall in the literature, there would appear to be an element of defining what is wrong but less about what could be done to remedy shortcomings. However an exception is Higgs (2003) who has taken research a step further in that the recommendations follow a descriptive→prescriptive→codified route (Discussed in 2.2.2).

Taking the literature as a whole, it is quite clear similar problems occur in both the business and School Governance sectors. These problems are a lack of training, skills, expertise, evaluation of performance, challenge, understanding of governance issues, lack of information from Chief Executives and an overall lack of clarity related to the role. There is agreement a Governing Body needs to demonstrate a vision and direction for the school, fulfils its statutory duties, including developing and promoting inclusive policies in relation to race, disability and sex, understands the strengths and weaknesses of the school and will both challenge and support the Senior Management Team.

At the start of this chapter, the analogy was drawn between School Governors and Non-Executive Directors. Adams (2000) considers this to be somewhat inappropriate and suggests a better analogy is trusteeship. He considers trusteeship is more aligned with the motivation Governors report in coming forward as volunteers and that trustees have responsibilities of stewardship similar to that of School Governors. Whilst this is an interesting analogy it somewhat overlooks the accountability, the business nature of running a school, the responsibility for strategy and standards, the finances, the personnel, pupils and staff, the buildings, health and safety and legal aspects of the role. Furthermore the role and responsibilities of a trustee as described by the Charity Commission (2005, p.6) would seem to be similar to that of a Governor, indeed the words would appear to be interchangeable.

As to whether Governors actually help to raise school standards, which is indeed a main responsibility of Governors, there remains a question mark. Literature as a whole appears to skirt this area. What the research has highlighted is that the attitude and approach of the Head Teacher towards the Governing Body is a key to Governor effectiveness (Earley, 1994; Creese and Earley, 1999; Creese, 1995). In some schools, Governors and Senior Management work well together, but in many others, Governors are totally dependent on the Head Teacher for quality and quantity of information. There are some 'mixed messages' appearing. On the one hand Governors are vital to the school and on the other they are having no real impact. The latest survey by Earley *et al* (2002) questions the value of Governors in strategic planning, a main area of responsibility and it highlights

the power of Head Teachers and an implied control of Governors. Earley *et al* are the only writers who identify this trend.

Governing Bodies in England are in a state of transition and this is in part reflected by the ambivalence, uncertainty, confusion, fragmentation and impermanence (Deem *et al*, 1995, p. 104). Some of these thoughts were also highlighted by Gann (1998), Creese (1995) and Earley (1994) and it would appear a decade later, many of these problems remain.

2.5 Reflections: A new paradigm for School Governance ?

Over 350,000 people give willingly of their time as volunteer School Governors. However, they are being asked to take on more and more responsibilities which would arguably concern the salaried Non-Executive Directors in the private sector.

Emphasis has been placed on the need for teams and team building. If team building is to be effective then perhaps the constituent parts need to be present at the outset.[31] Literature suggests the ideal is to have an efficient and effective Chair, with a group of Governors and staff who work in partnership. The Governors, who as volunteers may/will only be available on a part time basis, should receive quality training for the 'job' although the 'job' itself is difficult to analyse. Governors are told they have a responsibility for raising standards and yet they have no real power, unless a problem arises. Many of the Governor responsibilities are seen to be of a professional nature, for example the appointment of the Head Teacher. On these occasions, Governing Bodies 'buy in' expert assistance, often from the LEA and other professional advisors and consultants. Problems do however remain and Earley *et al* (2002, p.145) state there should be further research into the role of the Governing Body in the appointment of the Head Teacher and senior staff.

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[31] Belbin (1983) suggested there must be a variety of personality types if a team is to be effective and he produced various psychometric tests to identify group role behaviour. He felt it possible to identify and distinguish eight distinct management styles; Chair, shaper/innovator, company workers, monitor/evaluators completer/finisher, team workers, resource investigators and specialists.

This raises many questions about the future of Governing Bodies, for example, should tenure be for a fixed term, as with the proposals related to Non-Executive Directors, will there eventually be a code of practice and will School Governors have to 'comply or explain?

Inclusiveness is being demanded by the DfES and there is a suggestion stakeholders,[32] namely parents and pupils, will have a greater say. This could lead to 'personalities' being a prime factor rather than efficiency and effectiveness. However, developing a team where all Governors feel they belong, with shared values and culture, when Governors in general only meet on a few occasions each academic year, does appear to be almost an impossible task.

A critical and recurring theme throughout Chapter Two has been the need for clarity and consistency of the volunteer Governor role and a need for a strategy to help Governors carry out this role within a limited time scale. The idea of a semi-professional Governing Body[33] as with Non-Executive Directors, would appear to be an answer to many of the issues. However, were a salary or retainer were to be paid, this leads to the question of who is the employer. It would doubtless be the DfES or the LEA who would hold the funding and maybe this would be interpreted as control from the centre, just as it was some 15 years ago, before the 1988 Act[34] when LEAs relinquished their hold on the governance of schools. Furthermore, the financial burden if the Governing Bodies were to continue with a large membership e.g. 350,000 Governors receiving £5000 per annum (this is half of the fee received by Non Executive Directors in the NHS) would be would be untenable. If this were to happen it is likely the size of School Governing Bodies would be quickly reduced.

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[32] Stakeholders are the individuals or groups who depend on the school to fulfil their goals and on whom the school depends. These are the pupils, parents, staff, the community, LEA and DfES plus perhaps local industry and commence.
[33] This suggestion is about appointing many of the Governors for their professional skills and experience. An analogy could be drawn with the boards of Hospital Trusts who receive payment for their services.
[34] The 1988 Education Act saw the beginning of inclusiveness; parents were actively encouraged to become part of schools.

The literature has reinforced the researcher's view that School Governing Bodies and Non-Executive Directors face similar challenges and lessons can be learned from the research and reviews undertaken in the business sector in the last decade.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

"In the final analysis, the researcher's creativity and imagination are of paramount importance and the research strategy and tactics are there to support rather than to hinder the researcher's creative faculty"

Dan Remenyi *et al.* Doing Research in Business and Management (1998).

3.0   Introduction

Chapter Three identifies and describes the methodology, that is, the research strategy and tactics, used for the research and how it 'fits' the existing literature.

The research aim was to define and develop a strategy for collecting information about the workings of School Governors and the governance of schools. In selecting an appropriate method, it was necessary to consider School Governance as being a contemporary issue about people; something of a 'messy' empirical inquiry and difficult to define.

At the outset of the study, a qualitative Case Study methodology was considered. It seemed to be a versatile method of data gathering and the analytic techniques and would lend itself to the study of School Governance, the people, processes, relationships, actions and experiences. Yin (1994, p.8) suggests the case study method is the best choice when examining contemporary events. He goes on to suggest case studies rely on many of the same techniques as history with the addition of direct observation and systematic interviewing. He adds case studies deal with a full variety of evidence namely documents, artefacts, interviews and observation.   However, a qualitative ethnographic methodology was finally chosen since it would not only fit and make sense but it would also be extremely interesting for the researcher who likes to 'be involved'. It was felt it would also be valuable for the reader. Much of the design is based on work by Yin (1989, 1993, 1994) Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) Gummesson (2000) Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Remenyi et al (1998). A minimum amount of quantitative data was used to help develop the framework for the qualitative field work. Commencing with two pilot

studies, methods of research used were five elite interviews, a questionnaire survey, field work in two state secondary schools and the use of secondary data.

Throughout the research it was considered vital to keep in mind the reason for undertaking the work. Table 3.1, Visual Description of the Research Focus, was designed and used for four main reasons which are to assist in keeping focused on the research objective, to keep the holistic nature of the study in the foreground, to inform the research design and to provide reference points for discussion of the literature, methodology and the analysis and synthesis of the data.

This chapter describes and explains the nature of the chosen methodology, its application and appropriateness and the need in this research for an holistic view of the processes and practices of Governing Bodies. Table 3.2, Research Activities, demonstrates the 'route' and activities of the research. It was considered this method of working not only fitted with the methodology literature but was also the researcher's preferred and normal tried and tested working practice.

Vision and Background	Key Concepts	Methodology and Data	Leading to	Desired Outcomes
Vision: To help School Governors improve their performance and effectiveness in carrying out their statutory responsibilities School Governors are 'controlled' to a great extent by history and current and on-going legislative change. The Governing Body is responsible for: Strategic Planning Standards Head Teacher targets Being 'critical friend' to the Head Teacher and is accountable to the community it serves	School Governor and Governance Non-Executive Director Boards New Public Management Effectiveness Volunteering Culture	Critical literature review Qualitative Ethnographic Study Data: Pilot studies Questionnaires Interviews Fieldwork All undertaken ethically and with academic rigour	Inquiry Theories Observations Research findings Perceptions Comparisons Conclusions Recommendations Reflection and being in an 'insider-outsider position see the 'real world' of School Governance	A relevant, understandable narrative with applicable outcomes and recommendations. Clarification and description of the of the Governor role A method of assisting Governors to: Increase their effectiveness Improve their organization, processes, practices accountability and transparency Improve their status within the school and the community Increase their support of the SMT **and ultimately to:** **Improve the standards of teaching and learning**

Table 3.1 Visualization of the Research Focus

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Formulation of Research Question

Literature Reviews (on-going until completion)

        Two Pilot Studies

                Questionnaire Survey

                        Pilot Elite Interview

                                Five Elite Interviews

                                        Fieldwork School 1

                                                Fieldwork School 2

                                                Analysis – Coding
                                                and Comparison

                                        Reflexivity and Reflectivity

                                                Conclusions and
                                                Recommendations

                                                        Development of
                                                        Model Guidelines

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2001_____2002_____2003_____2004_____2005_____2006_____
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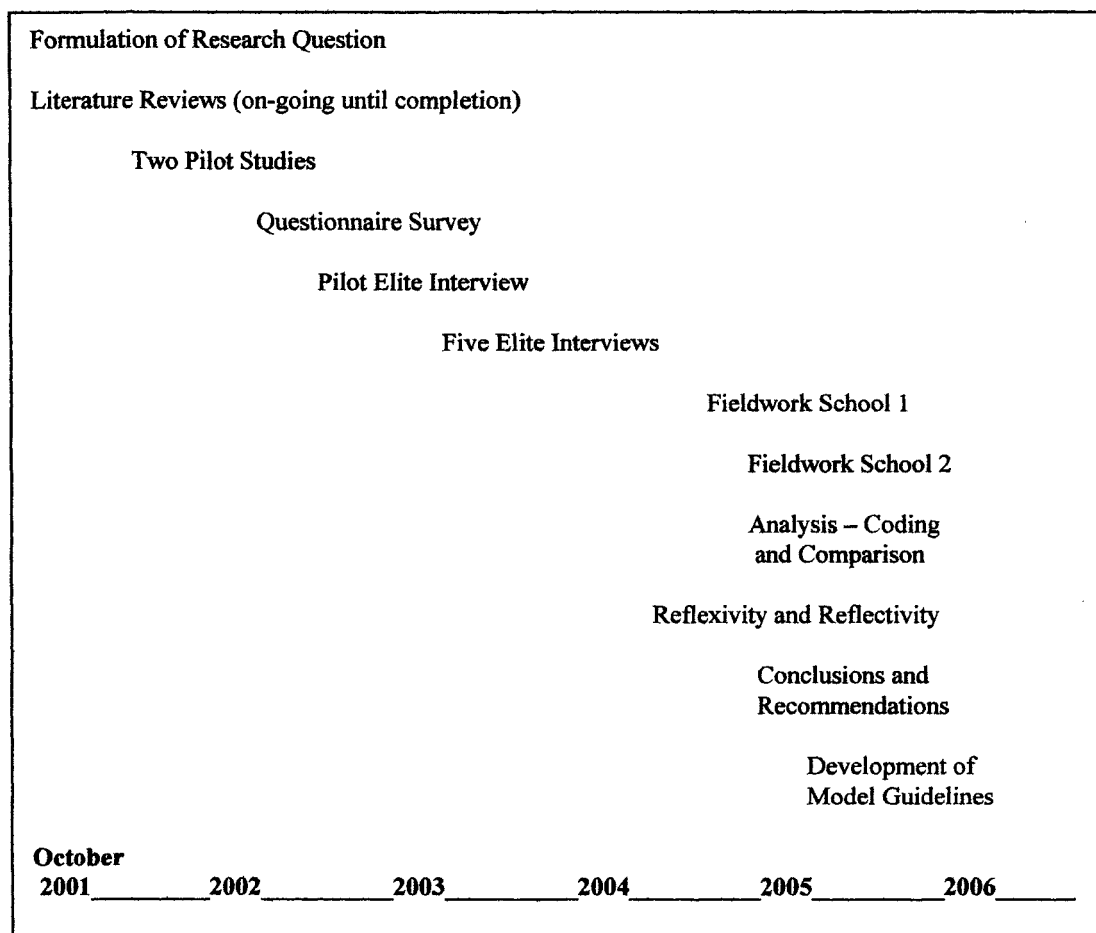
Table 3.2   Research Activities

The findings of the Literature Review are presented in Chapter Two. The purpose of the literature review was to identify variables and key influences on state Secondary School Governing Bodies. The Literature Review was supported by the researcher's pre-understanding of schools, by attending courses and being a member of a LEA Governor Support Group. In the process of undertaking the review, it became clear that, whilst there are a number of theoretical works in the area of School Governance, there was an apparent lack of empirical work on what actually characterises an effective Governing Body. In other words, there is a lack of a set of practical application guidelines. The literature also suggested a lack of awareness and clarity about the Governor role and indicated a need for better day-to-day processes, for example, recruitment, training, performance and cultural variances.

The review of methodology literature, both historical and current, gave an understanding of research methods and methodology. Gummesson (2000, p.105) argues strongly against the use of historical analysis stating "History becomes a defensive routine that prevents adjustments being made". However, he concedes there are many authors who consider history is a diagnostic tool that can help put a problem in its context and environment. A general opinion is history can actually prevent 're-inventing the wheel'. An issue particularly relevant to this study is the concept of preunderstanding which means the researcher has insight into the issues before the research is started. Acquisition of institutional knowledge and knowledge of the social interaction process is the most difficult task facing a researcher Gummesson (ibid., p.81). Gummesson (ibid., p.66) issues a warning about blocked preunderstanding, as this, he maintains, can create bias and block creativity and innovation. He gives an example of researchers reinforcing their own preconceptions in the belief they have universal validity. However, he stresses openness even if disturbing and uncomfortable - is imperative.

In this research, openness plus the researcher's educational background both as an educational practitioner and as a former School Governor were considered to be of prime importance. It is hoped feedback to Governing Bodies may allow them critically and constructively to review their current situations through the eyes of an 'insider-outsider'.

3.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

Given the research was intended to be Applied Research for Practical Application, it was considered a qualitative, ethnographic, approach would be most appropriate. This methodology assumes knowledge can be gained and this approach allowed focus to be on the dynamics of the groups.

Researching the theory of methodology is obviously not an end in itself. Although Table 3.2, Research Activities, gives an impression of the research being a linear process, there was constant interaction between the literature, the methodology, the data collected and reflection. This chapter, whilst describing the methodology and various aspects of data

collection, also illustrates how each aspect links to the other to ultimately produce the final recommendations.

The process of carrying out the research was considered in detail at an early stage. Yin (1994, p.63) maintains a complete study plan showing the entire process from initial design to reporting is essential to the successful completion of a study. The Research Study Plan, Table 3.3, illustrates the process followed and used with the Research Activities, Table 3.2, was found to be an ideal method of keeping the research firmly in focus throughout. Remenyi (1998, p.102) makes the observation:

> "it is important that the researcher should be clear about the research process through which the work will progress, this will not be set in stone and will change as the understanding of the research area progresses".

This has indeed been the situation; a complete and rich understanding has been gained by in-depth study of the literature on methodology, careful planning and by allowing where needed, the method to evolve.

Action Areas	Action Details
Research question and objectives	Discussion with supervisors.
Pilot studies	Questionnaire survey Self evaluation project with one school Elite interview
Identification of theoretical literature and review	On – going
Questionnaire design	Review other questionnaires
Selection of Elite interviewees	Identification and approach to knowledgeable respondents
Selection of fieldwork schools	Identification and approach to two different schools re: achievement, geographical location and socio-economic situation

Primary data collection	Questionnaire survey
	Five Elite Interviews
	Fieldwork in two schools using:
	        -Interviews
	        -Observation
	        -Document analysis

Secondary data collection	School data Non – Executive Director surveys Governor periodicals School surveys
Processes	Piloting Data collection Analysis and synthesis Evaluation Reflexivity and reflection throughout the study Conclusions Recommendations
Model Guidelines	Design Validation Modifications
Limitations Contribution Implications for further studies Final reflections	On-going consideration and recording

Table 3.3   Research Study Plan

The theoretical underpinnings of the research process namely qualitative research, ethnography, grounded theory, triangulation, interviews and interviewing, sampling, ethical issues and research protocols, are discussed individually as each has had a significant bearing on the study.

3.1.1   Ethnography

This study is an example of a qualitative, ethnographical, methodology. But what is ethnography?

Hussey and Hussey (1997, p.77) describe it as when the act of investigating reality has an effect on that reality and considerable regard is paid to the subjective state of the individual. They further suggest:

> "Ethnography is an approach in which the researcher uses socially acquired knowledge to understand the observed patterns of human behaviour. Ethno – means folk and graphy – means description. The main method of collecting data is participant observation where the researcher becomes a working member of the group being studied".

Hussey and Hussey (ibid., p.132) suggest it takes time to become an accepted member of an organization and to be able to understand what is happening and the length of time this takes depends amongst other things, on the researchers' preunderstanding, their professionalism and the help they get from gatekeepers. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p.1) however give an explanation which ultimately confirmed an ethnographic approach would not only fit the research brief but would also suit the personality of the researcher:

> "We see the term as referring primarily to a particular method or set of methods. In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens; listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the focus of the research".

They go on to suggest in many respects, ethnography is the oldest form of social research and resembles the routine ways in which people make sense of their lives. Ethnography is therefore a form of research which focuses on a community, allows for immersion in the culture and requires a commitment of the researcher to get close to the community. This was considered to be an appealing methodology since it is an approach used in everyday life to make sense of our surroundings.

The goal of an ethnographer is to tell a story. This is achieved by becoming part of the social setting with both an inside and outside view. When writing the story an ethnographer uses figures of speech, metaphor, analogy, simile and irony (Hussey and

Hussey, ibid., p.245-253). The transformation of the fieldwork into text is therefore the art and craft of story telling.

Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp.252-259) consider four items require early attention which are to make initial contact and gaining entrée to the site, to negotiate consent, building and maintain trust and to identify and use informants. They stress that in practice, all four activities go on more or less simultaneously. Trust, however, is not established once and for all, it is fragile and can easily be destroyed in the face of ill advised or inappropriate action (ibid., pp.252-259). Pointers and issues raised by the literature have been acted on in this study and are summarized in Table 3.4, Features of the Ethnographic Research Process. The result has been the creation and development of detailed, quality information which will add richness to the story.

The research cycle undertaken was: select the schools and obtain access → interview, observe and collect data → keep a diary → transcribe notes and tape recordings → analyse, compare and reflect → identify patterns and feelings → write up the ethnography. This was something of an on-going cycle with some 'back-tracking' and the researcher returning to the schools on many occasions. The relationship built between schools and researcher was a vital ingredient of the process. The main challenge encountered was being the 'research instrument' and balancing existing skills, competence, flexibility, tacit knowledge and insight through pre-understanding of governance. Undoubtedly perceptions during the study have been influenced by previous experiences.

The literature on ethnography stresses we move within social worlds and therefore the cultural context has to be considered. It is obviously made up of values, practices and relationships, in other words 'the way we do things around here'. The two Governing Bodies studied had very different cultures, rules, expectations and tacit and explicit knowledge. A further challenge of the research was to try to understand what it would be like to be a member of each of the groups, to try to make sense of what they were doing as Governors and how they were carrying out the Governor role. There was a dependence on

the honesty and openness of the Governors. Not being judgemental in terms of what was heard, seen and felt until each study was completed was also challenging but essential.

School Governance - Features of a Qualitative Ethnographic Study		
1	**Researcher Behaviour**	Commitment to: • Get close to participants • Develop an inside-outside view • Become the research instrument
2	**Relationships**	Build up trust Develop strong relationships with gate keepers Develop strong contacts with key informants Learn the language and culture
3	**Focal Points**	Historical detail Observation Interviews Language and culture learning Study of a single field/domain
4	**Conduct of Research**	Natural setting Holistic in nature Period of action Research Environment and insider perspectives Participant observation Write up field notes immediately after leaving base Include own thoughts and experiences
5	**Data Collection – Multiple methods**	Pilot questionnaire Pilot elite interview Pilot effectiveness study Overall triangulation: • Survey • Elite interviews • Fieldwork Fieldwork triangulation: • Interviews • Observation – everything no matter how minor it may appear • Documents
6	**Data Generated**	Tape recordings of interviews Descriptions and anecdotes Quotations Observation notes Excerpts from documents A diary
7	**Outcomes**	A reflective narrative A Story told and retold

Table 3.4   Features of the Ethnographic Research Process

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3.1.2 Qualitative Data

It is argued qualitative research can be used to explore not only 'what is' and 'what may be' but also 'what could be'. The suggestion is, by selecting appropriate cases on some *a priori* basis to see what is really happening, it is possible to discover what could be. A useful strategy for studies of this nature is said to be to select an ideal case and a sharply contrasting case as a comparison. This idea was used in the selection of the two field work schools.

There are two simple descriptions of qualitative data. Firstly, qualitative evidence uses words to describe situations, individuals or circumstances surrounding a phenomenon (Remenyi *et al* 1998, p.121) and in broad terms means a kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p.11-12). Secondly and the one preferred by the researcher is the down–to–earth view of qualitative research given by Gummeson (2000, p.36, Figure 2.3) using the iceberg metaphor. He discusses the idea of only 10% being obvious and the need to get under the surface to see the rest. The point of this metaphor is to emphasize the issue of access to accurate and undistorted information. A common area of agreement is that the researcher is the 'human instrument' of the data collection. This highlights the need for particular awareness of human relationships, emotional states, the use of preunderstanding and the ethical issues emanating from this plus a consciousness of the privileged position of the researcher.

Both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data is described by Remenyi (1998, p.141) as being evidence collected from a primary source, when the researcher goes directly to the originator of the evidence. Primary data can be obtained by observation and by direct or indirect communication. In this study all three methods were used. The questionnaire was designed and elite interviews conducted with a view to gathering information which formed the basis of the fieldwork. "Secondary data is evidence available in some intermediary form and are not delivered directly to the

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researcher" Remenyi (ibid., p.141). The World Wide Web has for example, been a valuable source of secondary data.

3.1.3 Grounded Theory

In this qualitative study, to make sense of School Governance, a grounded theory approach was adopted. In other words, there was a need to understand the reality of the School Governor situation and ultimately to help Governors make sense of their role and manage their situation. The overall aim of the grounded theory approach was to generate an applied theory of Governor practice.

Remenyi *et al* (1998, p.283) suggest grounded theory as a method of discovery which allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the situation being studied whilst simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations. This theory consists of plausible relationships and a process of constant comparison and while the data have no linear stages the emerging theory is cumulative. It could be argued the value of this approach depends on the ability of the researcher to identify, reveal and highlight new theory and questions. Grounded theory can therefore allow for analysis and synthesis of the findings plus a degree of creativity. The findings allow the explanation of the situation to be presented in a plausible and convincing manner although they may be unstructured. Grounded theory is derived from data systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. A researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind unless their purpose is to elaborate and extend existing theory. Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data. In this research there was a need to look beyond the details of the situation to understand the reality or the reality working behind the situation. Each reality then became an artefact in its own right and each had to be understood and taken into account. Theory from the data is more likely to resemble reality than is theory derived from putting together a series of concepts based on experience or gained solely through speculation or how one thinks things ought to look (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.12). The reality is we inhabit a

subjective world and therefore the world is shaped by our interactions to it. In other words, you can't pin the world down.

The approach adopted was holistic and allowed complicated situations to be examined. The data were collected with a view to generating an emergent explanation or substantive grounded theory. Therefore it was important to approach this method with an open mind as to what would eventually emerge.

The area of study was carefully defined and the explanations emerged inductively from information collected from the respondents via interviews, observation and documents. Since a considerable amount of data was collected, coding was essential with a delineation of concepts, a clustering of categories and an identification of the theory. The data obtained told the story of reality of the situation i.e. what is happening now. Reflection and comparison were core processes and the data obtained from the research identified links and relationships between groups of people and situations. It was accepted the work would not lead to law-like generalizations. Indeed it is not really conducive to generalizations other than to say the phenomenon has been shown to occur at least once and it is most probable that it will occur again. It was an iterative process, somewhat messy and ambiguous at times but it developed the story and given the real life nature of the study, it was considered to be effective and appropriate. Furthermore, it was also very enjoyable and it worked!

However it is accepted some problems were encountered but overcome, namely the volume of data and at times a degree of uncertainty related to where and when the research would/should finish. There is no doubt the past experience and pre-understanding of the researcher were of great benefit in resolving these problems.

3.1.4 Triangulation

In social science terms, the concept of triangulation relates to the strategy of fixing a position and examining it from at least three different viewpoints. The degree of agreement gives an indication of the degree of reliability and possibly the validity.Yin (1994, p.91-93) suggests that it is examining a fact from a least three different perspectives and all sources coincide, it could then be considered you can have confidence about the conclusions. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p.231) comment 'if we rely on a single piece of data there is a danger that undetected error in our inferences may render our analysis incorrect'. They also added that, even if the results do tally, this in no way guarantees the inferences involved are correct. It may be that all of the inferences are invalid. They are obviously warning here not to be naively optimistic that triangulation will guarantee validity.

Given the obvious centrality and importance of the data, in this study it was still felt a single measure would be inadequate and data from other domains was required if a degree of reliability was to be achieved. Otherwise the data would only be reliable in relation to the individual case study schools. However, Gummesson (2000, p.142) points out the use of multiple methods has to be carried out with distance between the methods. It is assumed by this he meant each method should be complementary to the other. The limitations of triangulation were considered namely, the danger of using theories and methods with different philosophies, the need for research skills in more than one method and the risk of using an unfamiliar approach which could lead to skewed data in that only one part of the triangulation carries weight. Despite these limitations triangulation was considered to be appropriate since it could be applied within and between each domain it helped to overcome any inconsistencies and the problems of missing or suspect data. Triangulation was applied twice in the research: initially in the overall plan with the questionnaire, the elite interviews and the fieldwork; latterly in the fieldwork, interviews, observation and documentation notes.

3.1.5 Interviews and Interviewing

Ethnographic research relies heavily on interviews and direct observation. The interviews led not only to extremely interesting facts about governance in schools but also to rich anecdotal information. Murray and Lawrence (2000, p.119) suggest a disadvantage may be that the interviewee tries to please the interviewer by masking some issues or tries to create an argument. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.257) also express a word of caution by warning some respondents will not be freely forthcoming. They may for their own reasons agree to participate but they will do so reluctantly.

Problems that may have been expected such as embarrassment, dominating stereotypes and gender issues did not materialise. Whilst most interviewees agreed to the use of the tape recorder, it was interesting to note individual reactions. Some, although appearing very confident, were initially tense and spoke quietly and nervously. This was particularly noticeable with the clerks. Some were very confident, whereas parent Governors seemed to be hesitant about being recorded (This was not related to what they might say but how their voice would sound). There seemed to be no problem with expressing thoughts, with memory or with recall and the overall feeling was the interviews were effective and powerful in bringing the issue of School Governor practices into focus.

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.269) describe various categories of interviewer and respondent relationships as being 'hostile' where the interviewer is the 'enemy' and the relationship is 'combative', the 'limited survey' where the interviewer is an 'automaton', i.e. a data recorder, the 'rapport' interview where the interviewer is a 'human being in a role', the 'depth' interview where the respondent and interviewer are peers, and the 'phenomenal interview' when both the respondent and interviewer are 'caring companions' with a commitment to 'empathic' search.

In the interviews undertaken for this study it is considered there was care, honesty and openness (occasionally too much openness by the respondents in terms of confidentiality).

Indeed many participants were asking for help in solving problems.[35]. Using the Lincoln and Guba typology it is considered that overall the interviews were 'phenomenal'.

For this study it was felt crucial to have elite interviews and interviews with practicing Governors. Elite interviews are described by Marshall and Rossman (1989, p.94) as being interviews with individuals 'who are considered to be influential, prominent, and/or well informed people in an organization or community. They are selected for interviews on the basis of their experience in areas relevant to the research' They continue by saying relative, valuable information comes from elite interviewees as they understand past history, organization policy and future plans. A warning is issued related to control in that these respondents sometimes assume the interviewer role. It was considered these participants would have an holistic view and an understanding of relationships between other organizations, for example the LEA and businesses. The questions used in these interviews were adapted from the questionnaire. The elite interviews produced a greater amount of information than had been anticipated and the questions were widened somewhat as interviews proceeded. The questions became more open ended than originally planned but this added to the breadth and the depth of discussion. The themes and questions for the questionnaire and the elite interviews arose out of preliminary work undertaken as a pilot survey,[36] extensive reading and areas of questioning noted in earlier surveys plus the past experience and preunderstanding of the researcher.

Interviews with Governors, both past and present were undertaken during the field work and the questions used were those developed for the survey. It was felt the quality of the data was enhanced by making each interview into a conversation rather than an interrogation.

On the basis of the preceding discussion, the following typology can be proposed which notes the distinct differences between the interviewees.

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[35] In one case study school the researcher was invited to advise Governors on the selection procedure for a new Head Teacher and appointed to the interview panel
[36] The findings of the pilot survey can be found in Appendix M. These findings confirmed the view of the researcher that further study in the area would be rewarding and enlightening.

Elite Interviews	Standard Interviews
Privileged information	Mainly general school information
Privileged position of interviewees	Position variable
Universal understanding, national, present and future	Mainly local understanding
Familiarity of subject, language and politics.	Mixed levels of general understanding.
Tacit and explicit knowledge	Mainly tacit and cultural knowledge
Understanding of the theory and history	Generally only local history and facts
Grounded up-to-date knowledge	Local up-to-date knowledge
Know the 'real' position	Mixed knowledge of 'real' situation
Ability to generalize	Much anecdotal information
Facts rather than assumptions	Many assumptions, as well as local facts
Understanding of the culture	Some misunderstanding of local culture
Eloquent and confident	Mixed responses, but extremely helpful
Access less difficult than anticipated	Ease of access
Some slightly formal but helpful	Very friendly
Phenomenal Interviews – caring and with commitment to empathic search	Phenomenal Interviews - caring and with commitment to empathic search

Table 3.5   Interviewee Comparison

3.1.6   Sampling

De Vaus (2001, p.79) makes the distinction regarding sampling:

> "Just how efficient and accurate depends on the type of sample used, the size of the sample and the method of collecting data from the sample. In the end, the decisions about samples will be a compromise of cost, accuracy, the nature of the research problem and the art of the possible".

Given the number of School Governors throughout the country (some 350,000) it was felt to be extremely difficult to obtain a sample which would be totally representative of the population, and their acknowledged diversity as volunteers in the field. Whilst it was felt

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this may result in some bias, it was considered whether a sample is representative or not is a subjective assessment by those carrying out the survey and those using the results (Remenyi *et al.* 1998, p.192).

However, since the questionnaire was only one part of the research and there would always be a degree of variability in any sample, there was sufficient confidence in the method used. This was considered appropriate and at the pilot stage the participants were chosen for their knowledge of the research area. The pilot study was not intended to be statistically representative of the population but the information obtained was invaluable in the production of the final questionnaire. De Vaus (2001, p.78) acknowledges the value of purposive sampling by arguing that useful information is provided when respondents are judged as typical of some category of interest to the researcher and not selected randomly.

Following the pilot stage Non-Probability Sampling was undertaken, i.e. the subjective knowledge of the researcher was used in selecting the sample. From the point of view of a phenomenologist, the selection of a random sample is seldom, if ever relevant. Thus the non-probability sample which is based on some sort of subjective assessment of the sample is an appropriate approach (Remenyi *et al* 1998, p.193). One of the benefits of this method was the ease of access to informed and appropriate respondents throughout the country. The sample constituted a range which allowed the exploration of the process, similarities, differences, and the generation of support data.

The selection of sample schools was again non-probability sampling. They were selected on the basis of being different geographically, socially and academically (See 3.1.2). Further criteria for selection were the degree of access allowed, being allowed to take part in Governor activities, access to documents and becoming participant-observer. An additional essential criterion was the enthusiasm and willingness of the Governors of the schools to join in. Being given this level of co-operation by the schools was both fortunate and unexpected.

3.1.7 Ethical Issues

The literature discusses two levels of ethics, first is the veracity of the researcher in relation to the study and second is the care shown to respondents. Detailed explanations and explorations of ethics are given by many authors but it is generally accepted researchers have a moral priority to protect the rights, interests and moral welfare of respondents These should take priority over the needs of the researcher.

The validity of the research is also an ethical consideration. It is incumbent on the researcher to obtain the very best data possible, to have worthwhile outcomes and not to plagiarise. Researchers 'should pursue a topic with honesty and objectivity, bearing in mind the limitations set by the methodology' (Murray and Lawrence 2000, p.21). Berg, (1998, Chapter 3) expresses his concerns about the situation of voluntary respondents, asking whether they are in fact voluntary. He suggests they are sometimes coerced or manipulated into volunteering. He also gives a counter argument which is that if everyone was a completely willing volunteer then there would be less meaningful understanding of the subject.

Confidentiality is also an area of agreed discussion and is described as an active attempt to remove from data anything which can identify a respondent. This must also be applied to questionnaires by ensuring there are no identifiable marks. It is considered impossible to give complete anonymity since respondents are known to the researcher; therefore they must be offered a high degree of confidentiality (Berg, ibid., Chapter 3). The general warning from authors is researchers must not only be extremely careful how they discuss respondents, they must be equally careful how they discuss settings.

In this study all participants were fully informed about the purpose and use of the information, no participants were pressurised and issues and material were handled sensitively.

An interesting view of ethics is put forward by Hammersley (1999) who maintains a concern with ethics has expanded to fill the space. He argues a downplaying of technique in research reduces the quality of that research. He expands on this by saying:

> " what I mean by this is a tendency to see research almost entirely in ethical terms, as if its aim were to achieve ethical goals or the exemplification of ethical ideals".

He continues:

> "Previously, ethical considerations were believed to be a set of boundaries as to what researchers could do in the pursuit of knowledge, now ethical considerations are treated by some as constituting the very rationale of the research".

Despite the opinions of Hammersley, ethics have been given a high priority and it is contended this has not reduced the quality of the research. This study is about people and the teaching and learning of children. Given the large respondent base, ethical considerations were considered to be vitally important. The rights and dignity of the respondents were a primary consideration, e.g. the Head Teacher of each school was consulted before an approach was made to the Chair of Governors and all respondents were fully informed about the research and were willing participants in the enquiry.

The ethical principles of beneficence and non-malificence have been applied in accordance with the Ethics in Research and Consultancy – Policy Statement, of the University of Northumbria.

3.1.8 Research Protocols

Yin (1994, p.63-65) suggests a protocol is a major tactic in increasing the reliability of the research, i.e. to guide the researcher in the study. He says it reminds the researcher what the case study is about and forces the anticipation of problems. He argues the areas to be covered by the protocol are an overview of the Case Study Project, the field procedures, third Case Study questions, a pilot study and then the Case Study Report.

It is contended these areas have been appropriately covered with the overall plan established at the outset. However, other issues, some of which are closely linked to the ethics section, related in the main to respondent care are:

- in all situations, the research has been truthfully described

- all respondents had the procedures explained to them, including the issues of confidentiality and anonymity where and when required

- where promises were made, they were kept, for example, sending feedback to respondents

- for each field work school, permission was obtained from the Chair of Governors and the Head Teacher

- when questionnaires were sent out, a covering letter of explanation related to the study being undertaken was included (Appendix L)

- a schedule of data collection activities including times and anticipated completion dates was used by the researcher and given to the schools

It is considered by having an overall plan in the initial stages of the study, in other words a workable protocol, the quality of the work has been enhanced and potential problems averted.

3.2 Theory into Practice

In 3.1 the theoretical underpinnings were discussed, in 3.2 the practical applications of the research method are considered, namely the research design, pilot enquiries, questionnaires, elite interviews and fieldwork practices.

3.2.1 Research Design

The design stage of the work is literally the plan which helped the researcher to visualize and work out the progress of the study. It is covers what data is required, how it will be

collected, the identification of any potential problem areas and the ethical issues. It allows the researcher to visualize the project in its entirety. This research, carried out over the period October 2001 to April 2005, was designed to obtain sufficient base line information, from a range of respondents, including those with a wide and informed view of both the education and business sectors. It was planned to provide insight into key aspects of Governor practices, to obtain a wide range of perceptions and opinions and as a means of developing practical help and support for School Governors.

The data were gathered using a mixture of research techniques, specifically face to face and telephone interviews with elite interviewees, questionnaires and fieldwork in two schools. The two schools were selected to help identify, reveal and where possible, explain unique features related to effectiveness, processes, practices and culture. Table 3.6 illustrates these in more detail.

	Primary Evidence Sources	Secondary Evidence Sources
Pilot Studies	A questionnaire survey/interviews: group and individual discussions A self-review exercise with a Governing Body experiencing problems One elite interview	N/A
Survey	Questionnaires	Some respondents, without being requested to do so, enclosed details of their procedures and details of what they considered should be included in job descriptions
Elite Interviews	Face-to-Face and telephone interviews	N/A
Field Work	Interviews Direct observation: location, culture, ethos, individual and group interaction. Observation grid Fieldwork diary	School DfES data (PANDA) OFSTED reports Policy documents Minutes of meetings Appointments policy Training schedule Governor Reports to Parent

Table 3.6   Sources of Evidence

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.248) suggest there needs to be congruence between the problem, the inquiry paradigm and the context in which the research is conducted, for there to be meaningful results. It is contended the research design of this study was appropriate since there was a match of the issue of School Governance, the underpinning theory and the research paradigm. Therefore there is confidence in the findings.

Table 3.7, Comparison of the Characteristics of the Information Gathering Processes, illustrates the differences and similarities of the data obtained from each. Individually there were gaps but collectively 'no stone was left unturned'.

Type of Data	Characteristics
Elite interviews: Meso, national and regional	Respondents selected for their comprehensive expertise, knowledge and ability to give 'insight' into governance. Data were subject specific and not related to a specific school. No direct association with survey or field work schools. Information obtained via semi-structured interviews. Allowed for follow-up questions. Some emergent data. Single methodology. Qualitative content analysis difficult, but generated valuable background information. Some incomplete answers. Some missed questions. Low cost. High response rate. Analysis organization relatively easy as only five respondents. Data - a facilitator for questionnaire and field work.
Questionnaire survey: Meso, national and regional	Data analysed from a wide range of schools. Data provided a range of information about a county; afforded little opportunity to analyse data of an individual school. Postal association only. Data analysed about a specific range of issues. No follow-up questions. Little possibility of emergent data. Single methodology. Data obtained quantifiable. Allowed some flexibility. Some prolonged answers. Some digression. Some rich, detailed information. Time consuming. Some unusual, unexpected responses. Allowed for some comparative study
Field work: Micro, two schools	Data analysed about a wide selection of features of each individual school. Allowed for some follow-up study. Some emergent data. Mixed methodology: interview, observation and document analysis. Mainly qualitative data, obtained through observation, document review and interviews. Some quantitative data used to enhance and support qualitative data. Excellent quotes and anecdotes. Rich data from interviews and observation. Difficult to know where to stop. Produced a real understanding and helped to make sense of the situation. Time consuming and hence more costly. Aided understanding of the functioning of Governing Bodies.

Table 3.7   Comparison of the Characteristics of the Information Gathering Approaches

3.2.2   Pilot Enquiries

Three pilot studies were undertaken, initially interviews with knowledgeable Governors followed by a self-evaluation survey with one school and finally an elite interview.

i. Pilot Interviews

There were two main reasons for undertaking the pilot survey. Primarily its purpose was to confirm, or otherwise that there were difficulties related to the effectiveness of School Governance and it was therefore a suitable research topic. Secondly it was a pre-test to allow standardization of the questions likely to be used in the main survey. It afforded respondent anonymity, it was possible to obtain a spread and volume of information in a relatively short time, and it gave the respondents time to consider carefully their answers. The pilot survey was also undertaken to test the sequence of questions, the timing/ length of interview and the quality of information obtained. Further issues were related to the wording, e.g. did each respondent understand the question and did each question contain sufficient information to allow an expression of opinion? Initially there were too many questions and they were found to be too simplistic. Further questions were constructed and piloted for reliability, the quality of answers obtained was considered extremely valuable.

Literature suggests access and geographical proximity can be the main criteria for selection (Yin 1994, p.75). In this study no problems were experienced in relation to either of these. The respondents assumed the role of the laboratory for the researcher, facilitating the change and reorganization of some of the questions and also allowed observation of non-verbal responses.

ii. Pilot Self-Review with a Governing Body who considered they had problems

This review was in the form of a questionnaire which was analysed and followed by spending time with the Governing Body and individual Governors discussing issues that needed to be addressed. A pro-forma was used, but it is considered were the same pilots to be undertaken now, after four years of research, a different approach would be used.

The findings of the pilot survey are shown in Appendix M, and the Report from the Pilot Self Evaluation Study is shown in Appendix N

Examples of responses are:

> "I feel Governors are in general lacking in skills and too often allow themselves to be led by the Head Teacher. They make an assumption the Head is always right and many feel they cannot question the Head's competence. I even doubt if performance management will solve the problem as it does seem to be rather 'tepid' in content and in execution"

Related to failings of the existing system:

> "Too many Governors do not understand their role"
>
> "Governor imbalance of experience and expertise"
>
> "Governors have to rely on the Head Teacher's honesty related to quality of teaching and learning in the school"

An interesting but worrying aspect of the pilot survey was that none of the Governors could say how well their school was actually performing but relied heavily on General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results by which time it is too late for remedial action to be taken with those pupils.

Findings from these pilot studies confirmed the researcher's views that there was need for applied research in the area of School Governance.

iii. Pilot interview with an elite respondent

This interview highlighted five areas for improvement which were the need for slightly more structure to the questions, the need to link some issues and questions, questions should be offered to respondents in advance, a need to avoid general discussion where possible and finally a need to watch the time!

3.2.3 Questionnaire Survey

De Vaus (2001, p.3) argues surveys are characterised by a structured or systematic set of data. This means information is collected about the same variables or characteristics from at least two or normally far more cases. The output is a data matrix. De Vaus acknowledges criticism of the survey and concludes these criticisms can be divided into the three categories of philosophical, political and technique based. In social research questions are being asked about society, he also maintains it is not just about 'What' is going on in society but also 'Why' it is going on. In other words, the aim should be both to describe and understand society.

The data provided by the surveys are descriptions of attitudes, values, feelings, habits and some background information. All of these are relevant to this work and it was considered to be an appropriate method of research when considered with elite interviews and the fieldwork.

The aims and motivation behind the questionnaire was to gain a level of understanding from a sample population from England about views and feelings related to School Governorship, recruitment, interviews, training and management. These key areas were based on the results of the pilot study. It is believed the questionnaires were adequate in obtaining data on which to base the fieldwork and were generally consistent with the pilot study.

The questionnaire was thought to be appropriate as it was a practical, convenient method of obtaining corroborative evidence. It was accepted the analysis may be relatively difficult as it was expected many of the answers would be complex.

Arguments against questionnaires were considered namely possible low response, problems with data quality, lack of control related to the context of answers, misunderstandings by respondents and the concern that many respondents may prefer to speak rather than write their answers. Administration fell into four categories which were

mailed self-completion, emailed self-completion, telephone and personal interview. The same questions and standardized recording system were used in all categories and although there was a slight change of wording from time to time in the personal interviews, all answers were recorded using the same format. Thirty six questionnaires were distributed and nineteen were completed. Respondents were happy either to fill in questionnaires and /or be involved in answering questions by phone and face-to-face. Many paper and pencil respondents gave extra information, their name and telephone number as they wished to continue the discussion. There appeared to be no uncertainty related to wording of the questionnaire or its completion

3.2.4   Elite Interviews

Elite interviews were considered vital to this study and participants were selected for interview on the basis of their knowledge and expertise in the area of education and governance. In reality they were prominent and influential and were able to give an holistic view of the subject, as well as being in a position to give an insight into 'what may be'. There were five elite participants and whilst it could perhaps be argued this sample was not totally representative, it was considered to be of sufficient size and breadth to give a professional, highly informed view and opinion.

Gummesson (2000, p.25) describes access as the ability to get close to the object of study and to be really able to find out what is happening. He describes this as the researcher's Number 1[37] challenge. In reality this was not the case and all interviewees gave of their time willingly and generously.[38] Setting up the interviews was by direct contact, telephone and email. There were no refusals, questions were supplied in advance and whilst a general time limit was established at the outset of each interview all over-ran to some degree. This was mainly caused by a broadening of the questions by the interviewees.

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[37] It is interesting to note Gummesson (2000, p.14-17) suggests the Number 2 challenge is Preunderstanding and Understanding. The Number 3 challenge is Quality

[38] Undoubtedly the background of the researcher, having an in-depth knowledge of the education sector aided credibility and the access.

3.2.5　Field Work

Since the fieldwork was central to ethnographic research, it was considered essential to undertake triangulation as described in 3.1.3 to obtain corroborative evidence although the limitations of triangulation were accepted.

During the field work there was uniformity of general proceedings and recording which enabled a comparison of the similarities and differences at the analysis stage of the research.

3.2.5.1　Overall Aims

1. To gain a grass roots understanding of governance related to 'what is' 'what may be' and 'what could/should be' the role and responsibilities of School Governors.
2. To obtain data for comparison with literature, questionnaire survey and elite interview findings.
3. To investigate the culture of the schools being studied.

3.2.5.2　Specific Objectives

1. To investigate the organizational processes related to:

    - school development planning
    - policy development, statutory and non-statutory
    - recruitment and retention of Governors
    - induction and on-going training of Governors
    - relationships between the Head Teacher and Governors
    - Governor impact on teaching and learning and raising of standards
    - Governor contribution to strategic development
    - the community role of Governors

- how Governors are the 'critical friend' to the Head Teacher

2. To examine secondary evidence from school DfES data, OFSTED report, policy documents, minutes of meetings, appointments and training policy, school attendance figures and school league table position

3. To observe the culture, climate, psychological and sociological aspects of the Governing Bodies

3.2.5.3 Design and Field Work Procedures

The method of inquiry for the fieldwork was a collective study involving two geographically and socially differing schools. This enabled issues emerging from one school to be contrasted and compared with issues from the other. It was considered this would not only contribute to robustness and understanding but would enhance the validity of the findings. The original approach was to the Head Teacher of each school who in turn opened the door to the Chair of Governors. From the outset, the nature of the research was explained and the role to be played by each Governing Body was described. As the study progressed there was constant interaction and it is considered this enabled authenticity. Once again access was not a problem.

The design of the field work was, to a great extent, based on responses received from elite interviewees and the questionnaires. The Chair of Governors and the Head Teacher were interviewed individually to establish how they felt the Governing Body was performing and contributing to improving school standards, acting as a 'critical friend', acting strategically and providing a financial overview. To help the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors, a list of questions was given to them ten days prior to the interviews. Interviews were recorded either by hand or on tape, so particular points and anecdotal evidence could be reported precisely. Copies of interview notes were offered to the respondents and they were invited to make additional comments and correct any errors.

A study was then made of the organizational processes of the Governing Body, covering development planning, policies, recruitment, retention, induction, the nature of the relationship between the Governors and the Head Teacher and the Governor impact on teaching and learning. The Clerk to Governors was interviewed in relation to the working practices of the Governing Body and working conditions of the Governing Body. The Head Teacher, Chair of Governors, individual Governors and Clerk to Governors were interviewed separately to discuss:

- Governor contribution to raising standards
- Governing Body performance and working practices
- how Governors act as 'critical friend' to the Head Teacher
- Governor contribution to the strategic development of the school
- Governor link to the school community
- Governor vacancies, turn-over and length of service
- attendance at meeting.
- Governing Body self-assessment relating to effectiveness
- any emergent issues

This was achieved in a number of ways e.g. being participant observer, the use of an observation grid and a fieldwork diary started as a simple timetable sheet but developing into a most useful source of reference. Also by obtaining anecdotal information, analysing documents, interviewing and discourse analysis and finally identifying and observing the culture, ethos and individual and group interactions.

In ethnography, the approach to data collection is 'unstructured and raw'. In this study it did not mean it was not systematic, it simply meant data were collected from a variety of sources: e.g. interviews, observation and documents. The views and opinions of interviewees were captured in verbatim quotes which were often very descriptive and sometimes anecdotal. Where respondents agreed, tape recordings were made and transcribed and in other interviews case notes were made. Excerpts from documents were

collected and collated manually. All comments, data and observations were incorporated into reports and used as a basis for the data analysis.

3.2.5.4 Sources of Evidence

The secondary data or desk research was found to generate ideas which supported the primary data. The included indicators were school examination results, school league table position, school attendance figures, Governor attendance figures, length of individual Governor service, agendas and minutes of meetings and Governor reports.

This information was used to obtain a 'flavour' of each school, as a lead in to questions and as a contributory factor to the primary data. It was considered essential to obtain as wide a picture as possible from both primary and secondary sources (see Table 3.6, Sources of Evidence). The strategy was to obtain a broad view of the situations and to explore key issues. This evidence created a wide range of material but it is acknowledged it is the use of it in terms of comparison, analysis, perception, synthesis and evaluation which determined its final value.

3.2.5.5 Observation and the School Culture

A major advantage of the fieldwork was observation. It allowed the researcher to move back and forth in time, to reconstruct the past, interpret the present and consider the future (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.273) and provided the 'here and now' experience. It helped the researcher to 'see' each school as it was, for example its, beliefs, concerns, interests and patterns of behaviour. It allowed the researcher to observe group behaviour and the culture of the Governing Body. An ethnographer is concerned with a detailed understanding of the society being studied and how it works, i.e. its culture (Remenyi et al 1998, p.52). Culture is made up of certain values, practices, relationships and identities and therefore it was necessary to try to define what made individuals insiders or outsiders. Other questions were: What is going on here? How do you do this? Is there a better way? One hopes to be told about 'the way we do things here'.

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Together with interviews, Governor meetings were attended and a grid was used to record climate, culture, sociological factors and psychological factors at these meetings. The grid was also used whilst present in each school and 'picking things up'. An example of this in School 2 was the cumulative but hitherto unspoken concerns related to a long serving Governor.[39] The diary, originally intended to be a chronology, became in effect a reflective diary. Notes were made during and after sessions in school and these notes included emotional as well as factual issues and factors that needed to be followed up at a later visit.

All respondents, and other staff of the schools, appeared welcoming, willing, open and trusting. There were occasions when some nervousness was sensed but this was at the start of interviews, initiated possibly by the presence of the tape recorder. However, during the interviews nervousness quickly disappeared and respondents relaxed. When problems of recall occurred respondents returned later with the answers. A surprise was the speed in which hesitancy disappeared and the researcher was absorbed by and almost became part of each school. Although a participant-observer, the role ultimately became one of short term supporter and catalyst for change.

> "It has always been recognized that building and maintaining trust is an important task for the field inquirer. While no one would argue that the existence of trust will automatically lead to credible data, the inverse seems indubitable. Respondents are much more likely to be candid and forthcoming if they respect the inquirer and believe in his or her integrity" (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p.256).

It is considered trust was achieved in both schools.

3.3   Analytic Strategy and Evaluation

So far in this chapter on methodology, the research theoretical underpinnings and the practical applications have been discussed. In this section on the issues discussed are coding and classification, validity and reliability, reflexivity and reflectivity, generalization, transferability and trustworthiness credibility and confirmability.

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[39] This is discussed in the report related to School 2

Yin, (1994, p.102) suggests data analysis consists of examining, categorising, tabulating or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial proposition of the study. He adds analysing case study evidence is especially difficult because the strategies and techniques have not been well defined in the past. He argues there is a need for an analytic strategy which prioritises what to analyse and maintains an analytic strategy will reduce difficulties and there will be a reduced tendency "to play with the data". He suggests four principles for high quality analysis which are it should rely on all relevant evidence, it should contain all major interpretations, it should address the most important aspects of the study and the researcher should bring their "own prior expert knowledge" to the study. Being aware of or having been involved with current thinking and debate on the subject and having in depth knowledge is a strong preference. Having an analytic strategy, that is an organization plan, is essential and makes sense since the research aim is to obtain thoroughly well researched data, which is both relevant and accurate, which then leads to accurate conclusions.

The research strategy almost naturally, fell into four areas which are: the necessity to account for all of the data obtained; to analyse the questionnaire data, the interview data and the case study data with continuous reflection; to identify differences and similarities and relate to the literature and finally to synthesise all findings and make recommendations.

3.3.1 Coding and Classification

Data management involves the procedures used to establish a systematic, coherent process of data collection, storage, and retrieval for the purposes of high quality, accessible data, the documentation of analysis and retention of data (Huberman and Miles 1994, p.427). In this study, the questionnaire analysis involved coding and labelling the data. This was achieved in the main, by the use of highlighting and allocating a code related to themes and groups of answers. The tabulation was based on the principle of a large sheet of drawing paper, scattergrams, a spider's web with memos in margins, on cards and a large

floor space. Categories were allocated, relationships were looked for and some word processing tabulation was undertaken. Diagrams, lists, charts and tables and graphs were all used as tools. As already suggested the strategy became almost 'self-sorting' and pointed naturally at various avenues of thought.

Yin (1994, p.123-125) acknowledges the evidence needs to be in some order prior to actual analysis but suggests this can be manipulative and, unless carried out particularly carefully, bias can result. He also suggests that by undertaking too much tabulation the idea of whole case analysis may be lost. The analysis in this study was based on constant comparison, comparing items in each category, drawing up new categories and then comparing them. This process enabled the data to be viewed from different angles and in different ways.

The following steps were undertaken in order to arrive at conclusions:

- Collection and preparation of data
- Storage of the collected data – use of coloured files
- Coding – use of highlighters, cut and paste, 'post its' and memo cards.
- *Revisit data, compare and coding*
- Analysis – category linkages – memo writing, *large sheet of paper*, notes on a grid, *spiders web* diagrams and *mind maps*
- *Revisit data, compare and coding and data framework*
- Concept linking – outcomes: identification of relationships, key themes and issues
- *Reflection – use of log, notes/recordings and observation grid together with overall impressions and feelings*

Huberman and Miles (1994, p. 429) suggest a similar process of data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. They also suggest a set of thirteen tactics to generate meaning from the data. These tactics are arranged from the descriptive to the explanatory and the concrete to the abstract. In this research many of

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their suggestions have been used e.g., noting patterns and themes, counting, making contrasts and comparisons, noting relationships, building a logical chain of evidence, comparison of data with literature. Other steps included examining the data for gender differences, making comparisons, building categories and identifying any 'taken for granted' assumptions and refining of categories. The value of displays of data is emphasized: "Displays beget analysis, which then beget more powerful, suggestive displays" Huberman and Miles (ibid., p.433). There is little doubt that by using a large area of floor space and displaying findings, patterns became fairly easily recognizable.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.319-320) however, there should be an audit trail, which they say should comprise:

- raw data which could include field notes and tape recordings
- data reduction and analysis products e.g. theme identification
- data reconstruction and synthesis, could be clustering of themes and reports
- process notes e.g. methodology planning notes
- information about intentions and disposition could be the research proposal
- instrument development details which in this study could be the questionnaire design

This suggestion was not followed or documented in this precise order but all steps are covered in the study. In the fieldwork, cross case study analysis was essential since it pointed out the unique features of each school and allowed a comparison to be made. This in turn, allowed comparison with the data obtained from the questionnaire survey and elite interviews.

It is maintained by having rigorous analytic strategy and data handling the validity of the research has been greatly increased.

3.3.2 Validity and Reliability

Important challenges to the research were validity and reliability. Accurate measurement is central to research and whilst minimizing error in the study was considered vital, it is accepted it is almost impossible to achieve a research project which is totally error free. For example respondents may not be completely accurate in their answers. In the opinion of the researcher, being aware of the possibility of error in respondents, the methodology and acknowledging the limitations, the validity and reliability of the research has been increased. However there remained questions which were constantly in the mind of the researcher namely is the question valid, is it suitable and legitimate? Is the respondent giving the answer they intend to give, is it reasonable and logical and is it reliable?

Gummesson (2000, p.91) defines reliability as:

> "The favourite criterion of science...Simply put, this means that two or more researchers studying the same phenomenon with similar purposes should reach approximately the same results. A study with high reliability can thus be replicated by others. Reliability fulfils three functions: first a police function: Curb dishonest research and nail the villain! Next an intelligence test: Are the scientists clever or stupid and is their reasoning logical? Finally a substitute for validity when validity seems to be beyond reach; reliability then plays the part of the validity crutch. The researcher establishes reliability and assumes validity".

This citation embodies the idea of replicability or repeatability of the results and observations. However, Remenyi *et al* (1998, p.181) suggest some researchers will argue all situations and organizations are different and the same results can never be replicated and therefore reliability *per se* is not a central issue.

Yin (1994, p.36) describes the idea of reliability particularly clearly; he says:

> "The objective of reliability is to ensure that if a later investigator conducted the same case study all over again, the later investigator should arrive at the same findings and conclusions".

Yin notes that the emphasis is on doing the same study over again, not on replicating the results of one study by doing another case study. He suggests a general approach should be to make as many of the steps as operational as possible and to conduct the research as if someone were looking over your shoulder.

Error reduction in this research was related to four main areas namely the wording of the questions e.g. did each person understand the question? Did each question contain sufficient information to allow an expression of opinion? The consistency and accuracy of carrying out and recording observations and finally undertaking robust and accurate document analysis. However, given the researcher's pre-understanding and close involvement as participant observer, although the data collecting procedures and observations could be repeated by another researcher, it could be assumed they would arrive at exactly the same conclusions.

> "In qualitative research, validity means in essence, that a theory, model, concept or category describes reality with a good fit, just as a map properly describes Earth or an architect's blueprint is useful for erecting a functioning building" (Gummesson 2000, p.93).

Validity is seen as a continuous process that is integrated with theory and requires the researcher continuously to assess his assumptions, revise his results, and retest his theories and models. Validation is therefore to investigate, ask questions, check and to double check and to theorize. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.290-291) suggest four main questions need to be addressed which are related to truth validity i.e. how can one establish confidence in the truth? Applicability i.e. how can one determine the extent to which the findings are applicable in other contexts or subjects? Consistency i.e. how can one determine whether the findings can be repeated if the inquiry were replicated? Neutrality: i.e. how can one ensure the findings are determined by the subjects and not by the biases and motivations of the researcher? Lincoln and Guba suggest the criteria which have evolved from the four questions are internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity.

Although the outcome to this study is academic it has practical applications and validation was considered to be essential. Based on suggestions by Yin (1994, p.33-36), the four forms of testing validity were:

1. Construct Validity

   This was achieved in three ways: initially during the pilot phase, interviewees were asked for and gave feedback which was incorporated into the final questionnaire and interviews. Subsequently by establishing correct operational methods e.g. triangulation and finally, the 'Devil's Advocate' idea. A Devil's Advocate was felt essential given there was concern about the closeness and involvement of the researcher as participant-observer in the research process.

2. Face Validity

   Opinions of serving Governors were obtained related to 'does it seem right?' and are the Model Guidelines usable?'

3. Content Validity

   The opinions of two experts who are aware of the idiosyncratic finer points of School Governance were sought related to the accuracy of the framework.

4. Concurrent Validity

   Does the set of Model Guidelines agree with models from similar domains, e.g. New Combined Code?

There is a question of how to test the reliability and validity of a qualitative study. Triangulation (3.1.5) is typically a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of qualitative research and has been used in this study on two levels.

This ethnographic study is considered to be high on validity and lesser so on reliability. However, it is contended the greatest contribution to reliability and validity is the rigour and honesty which has gone into all aspects namely the planning, the prolonged time

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spent in the field work school, the persistent observation, the data collection, the analysis and the synthesis.

3.3.3 Reflexivity and Reflectivity

On studying the literature on ethnography it became apparent reflexivity and reflectivity were being fused and used together. It is considered there is a difference, namely reflexivity is a position and reflectivity is the process. Therefore, in this study the researcher was in a reflexive position, a part of the story and this position allowed the researcher to reflect on actions, assumptions and preconceived ideas. This led to both a change within the two fieldwork schools and a change in the researcher.

There would seem to be no doubt that reflexivity is a significant feature of social research, it involves being part of the social world as a participant observer and allows constant reflection on that world. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p.21) suggest "we act in the social world and are yet able to reflect upon ourselves and our actions as objects in that world". "The provision of a natural history of the research as experienced and influenced by the researcher is a crucial component of the complete ethnography" Hammersley and Atkinson (ibid., p.192).

Hence in ethnography, reflexivity is seen to be vital. "We place ourselves into the research and write, perhaps even systematically exploiting our participation in the settings under study as researchers; we can produce accounts of the social world and justify them without placing reliance on futile appeals to empiricism" Hammersley and Atkinson (ibid., p21). In this study it was felt it much better to engage with the fieldwork schools rather than undertake one-off interviews. Whilst past experience could not be ignored it enabled the researcher to investigate the broader issues and culture and to consider what was pleasing, what was sad, and lent itself to influences such as intuition and enthusiasm. "We cannot avoid relying on 'common-sense' knowledge, nor often, can we avoid having an effect on the social phenomena we study. In other words, there is no way in which we can escape the social world in order to study it" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.17).

3.3.4 Bias

Murray and Lawrence (2000. p.43) state the word bias is perhaps misunderstood. They consider the word is important in social and educational research and that it is a technical term that suggests influences beyond the control of the researcher. They do not try to defend bias but stress the need to recognize it.

It is accepted this study is perhaps not perfectly objective given the subjective nature of obtaining evidence. Information from the interviewees and on the part of the researcher can be biased. However attempts may be made to minimize it and clearly it is the primary function of the researcher to minimize or at least identify biases (Remenyi *et al*, 1998, p.169). Bias, he suggests may be minimized by a process of triangulation (p.170). Yin (1994, p.59) stresses the need to be aware of bias, particularly if the researcher is prone to preconceived ideas. He suggests a test of this is the degree to which the researcher is open to contrary findings.

A degree of bias would seem to be inevitable when the researcher has close involvement with the research situation and subject. It is considered the skill is in recognizing the bias, not in necessarily trying to eliminate it. In this study, by using the process of triangulation, by obtaining corroborative evidence from various sources during the field studies, by accepting bias may be an issue, by following the research process honestly and accurately and by having a 'Devil's Advocate' who critically questions, then data bias is considered to be within acceptable parameters. In this study Devil's Advocates were supervisors and an elite interviewee.

3.3.5 Generalization

Generalization is considered to be the characteristic of research findings that allows them to be applied to other situations and other populations. There is a need for appropriately developed theory which in turn leads to generalization. The theory can be used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the selected studies rather as a scientist selects experiments. Furthermore, if two or more studies support the same theory then replication may be claimed A further consideration is, if two or more cases do not support a rival theory then the results can be considered "yet more potent" (Yin, 1994, p.31). Generalizations develop within a person as a product of experience. They derive from the tacit knowledge of how things are, why they are, how people feel about them and how these things are likely to be later or in other places with which this particular person is familiar. Better generalizations are those which are more parochial and personal (Hammersley and Foster 2000, p.22 and p.27). Lincoln and Guba however (1985, p. 110) express the view "The only generalization is - there is no generalization"! Ethnographic research is not readily conducive to generalization, other than the type that states since the phenomenon has been shown to exist or occur at least once then it is most probable that it will exist or occur again (Remenyi *et al.* 2003, p.35). This study is based on the notion that human behaviour is predictable and very little human behaviour is unique, idiosyncratic and spontaneous and scientific. Generalization has been sacrificed for a thorough and rich knowledge related to how things are, how people feel and how things could be.

3.3.6 Trustworthiness, Credibility, Confirmability and Transferability

Trustworthiness is defined by the question, "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audience, including themselves that the findings of an inquiry and are worth paying attention to, worth taking note of" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290). It is generally accepted by many authors that trustworthiness of research findings can be judged by asking the questions, are they truthful? Can they be replicated? Are they sufficiently neutral and do they reflect the study rather than the biases or interests of the researcher?

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Trustworthiness was established and based on the Lincoln and Guba Framework (1985, p.328.). This framework includes the criteria of credibility, transferability and confirmability. These were achieved by prolonged study, accurate observation, triangulation, accurate descriptions and by diary keeping. The trustworthiness of research depends on "what counts as knowledge" (Lincoln and Guba 1984, p.295). In this study, knowledge has been both applied knowledge and process knowledge and which together with understanding has led to theoretical and practical solutions.

It is considered by the use of triangulation, acknowledging the possibility of bias, having a 'Devil's Advocate', by using the same questions for each respondent, having rigorous data collection procedures and an explicit process of analysis, this research can be considered trustworthy and is justifies attention.

Credibility refers to being able to demonstrate the study is an accurate identification and description of the phenomenon. Gummesson (2000, p.186) lists areas of credibility, all of the items refer to honesty, e.g.: correct data, avoidance of any deception, appropriate methods and techniques, demonstrated confidence in findings and recommendations and how analysis and interpretation are supported by data. In other words, can the findings be believed? In this study credibility has been derived from an in-depth and accurate description of the research setting and every effort has been made to ensure honesty on the part of the researcher, the respondents and in the findings. There has been prolonged observation, use of multiple sources of information and multiple methods of obtaining that information.

Cofirmability is considered to be 'objectivity'. Remenyi *et al* (1998, p.281) in defining confirmability pose the question, does the research confirm general findings or not? They suggest the test is whether the findings can be confirmed by another similar study. The results of the study will be compared to the results of other studies in the same or similar field. Hence, evaluation will be on two levels; firstly, the objectivity of the researcher and secondly, by the comparison with existing literature and research. Whilst every effort was

made to ensure credibility, it has to be accepted there is no acknowledged research in the specific area of the study for a detailed comparison of findings. It is accepted the research may not be truly representative of all Governing Bodies but based on the findings, the literature and the preunderstanding of the researcher, there is every reason to believe the research findings would be applicable to a great number of schools.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.316) transferability can be aided by 'thick description' of the research field, so an audience can identify the elements of setting and contexts in which the inquiry was conducted and to know how sufficiently applicable the findings are to their own settings. Transferability therefore cannot be demonstrated by the researcher who can only provide the necessary data. Others must judge the transferability of the work

3.4 Justification of Methodology and Summary

In summary, the factors determining the choice of a qualitative, ethnographic methodology using grounded theory were:

- the method reflected the personal preference of the researcher
- it was a suitable method for uncovering patterns, features and the culture of Governing Bodies
- it allowed scope for multi-data gathering methods, each helping to tell their own part of the story
- it afforded an opportunity to investigate an issue of particular personal concern within its real life context
- it lent itself to rich results obtained from direct observation, content analysis of documents, anecdotal evidence, interviews and survey data
- it was felt by studying the 'what is' and the 'what may be' situation of School Governors the 'what could be' would emerge

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The overall process as described in 3.2, Research Activities, was not designed to obtain favourable results related to theory, but to obtain 'real life' answers even though they may not be in total agreement with current literature, practice or the preconceived ideas of the researcher. It is acknowledged such studies have in the past been criticized. It would seem there was a common assumption that only quantitative, quantifiable, statistical data would give an accurate 'picture'. It is maintained if care is taken in the selection of the process and the sample not selected to reflect bias, then the results should give an honest and valid representation of the entire population.

Having considered the views and opinions of the various writers, the subjective nature of the inquiry, the qualitative element and the need to seek underlying reasons, culture, perceptions and experiences of people, the choice of an ethnographic study was appropriate. Furthermore, having undertaken the research, it has been shown to be most effective. This ethnographic study about the effectiveness of School Governors has had the capacity to explore and explain the gap between rhetoric and reality.

CHAPTER FOUR: RHETORIC, REALITY OR ACT OF POLITICAL FAITH?

"We can discover the meaning of our situation only by discovering the way in which we are, as it were, attuned to the situation".

Warnock, M. (1996) Existentialism

4.1   Introduction to Research Findings

This research commenced with a pilot self-evaluation survey with a secondary school and a pilot survey and interviews with knowledgeable Governors. The results indicated the need for further research in the area of School Governance. The information so collected, supplemented by an analysis of recent research and literature, became the basis of all subsequent questions both written and face-to-face.

Chapter Four draws on data from the questionnaire survey, five elite interviews and case studies in two schools. Much of the analysis has been concerned with an examination of the differences and similarities between these. The issues addressed in the research were varied but in the main, covered areas associated with the Governor statutory role, recruitment and training, effectiveness and 'is there a better way of governing a school'?

The three principal elements of empirical research are described individually and then compared and contrasted with a view to finding common ground, any discrepancies and possible solutions. These elements are:

- Questionnaires - 4.1.1
- Elite Interviews - 4.1.2
- Fieldwork: Interviews, Observation and Document Analysis - 4.1.3

In section 4.2 the relationship between the analysis and the literature is considered and finally in section 4.3 the researcher reflects on the overall findings.

4.1.1 Questionnaire - Survey of State Secondary School Governors

The questionnaire is a 14 question paper. A copy of this with the covering letter sent to respondents is in Appendix L.

These results of the questionnaire are based on responses from 19 School Governors, 12 female and 7 male, spread across England during March/April 2003. The response rate was 53%.

The responses were a combination of telephone interviews, self-completion postal questionnaires and self-completion email questionnaires.

For some questions multiple answers were given and for others no answer was given. All respondents' replies have been used in compiling the data.

The data have not been weighted.

Question 1: Why did you wish to become a School Governor?

Responses	Female	Male	All
Community involvement	1	4	5
Own children attend/attended the school	7	7	14
Improve/ contribute to education/standards	4	2	6
Other	3	3	6

Table 4.1 Reasons Given for Wishing to be a School Governor

Views were varied, but some responses suggested a real desire to "make a difference".

For example:

"I wanted to become involved with the school because it was in the neighbourhood and I felt I had something to offer"

"To help pupils with their education and development and to bring my experience from industry to education"

"To put something back into the community"

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"To gain some skills that might be useful for my career"

"Because I have always been interested in education"

"To contribute to the school, especially as my own children had been pupils there"

Question 2: How were you recruited?

Responses	Female	Male	All
Direct school contact	2	5	7
Offered services to the school	2	2	4
LEA appointee	2	-	2
Elected parent Governor	2	-	2
School news letter	2	-	2
Through a work colleague	2	-	2

Table 4.2 Responses to the Question : How were You Recruited

Responses included:

"This was not something I set out to do, but there were two strands that came together. I firmly believe education is the most important part of a civilized society and education of the highest standard should be freely available to all. I was a founder member of a dual-gender Rotary Club in Manchester and contributions to local society are made under a number of Heads. This took me into inner city schools and it was the wish of a newly appointed Head Teacher to get someone like me onto her Governing Body. There were no formal recruitment procedures other than meeting the Chair of Governors"

"I was approached by a retiring Governor who was a colleague at work"

"I was asked to apply by the Chair of Governors"

One Governor explained he didn't wish to be a School Governor but was asked to undertake a School Fund Account Audit and finished up as a Finance Governor and responded "I was a Governor almost before I knew it!"

Question 3: Do you consider there are any difficulties associated with recruitment of Governors?

Responses	Female	Male	All
Governing Body tends to appoint like-minded people, same class and background.	1	-	1
4 year term off-putting, 2 year term would attract more people.	1	-	1
Difficult for working people to make daytime visits to the school.	1	-	1
Insufficient advertising	2	1	3
The role of Governor is unknown to many parents and general public	-	4	4
Difficulty in finding people with commitment and necessary skills/expertise	3	2	5
Achieving a balanced board is a problem	1	-	1
People do not know about the job or what is involved	3	-	3
Issues related to volunteering, vast amount of paperwork, time commitment and knowledge	1	2	3
Media coverage is often negative	1	--	1
Governor role is not made to look professional or attractive	1		1

Table 4.3   Difficulties Associated With the Recruitment of Governors

There was unanimous agreement that there were problems related to recruitment. There was a tendency for women to offer more and wider ranging solutions than the men and in general, the responses from men were related to the actual 'job' itself.

The following comments reflect the tone of the responses to this question:

"There needs to be a raising of awareness and professionalism associated with the role of Governor, so that it is seen as an interesting and attractive role for people to go into, irrespective of whether they have school age children. I think the role of School Governor is a national scandal and needs to be put on a proper footing. Without change there is no hope of expanding the 'pool' or getting the best people into the pool".

Similarly, other Governors said:

"Yes – my own experience was one where no formal procedures were undertaken. I think I filled in a form. The difficulties are the whole thing needs putting on a professional basis if these bodies are to be effective. There needs to be a proper Code of Conduct and selection process to ensure the best balance for each board and this will ultimately affect its performance. Difficulties stem from its voluntary, unpaid basis and people going in ill-prepared and for the wrong reasons".

"Yes. The volume of paperwork and increasing workload. Some Governors start and within one year have given up because of the workload".

"Yes, there are difficulties. These include understanding the role of Governors and achieving a balanced board".

A further problem highlighted was related to Special Schools:

"I am a Governor of a Special School where the pupils have mild to moderate learning difficulties and recruitment is difficult. Finding parent Governors who can make a full contribution is a problem".

Finally, in response to the question of recruitment, the view of one Governor gave an overall flavour of the other responses:

"Yes. It is clear many schools have difficulty recruiting the right calibre of Governor. This is particularly found when schools are in poor socio-economic areas. Even in affluent areas few people are prepared to commit the time required to do a really good job of governing. The demands of the role have developed considerably. It is not something for the 'good hearted' volunteer. Specific skills and commitment are essential".

Question 4: How were you appointed to the Governing Body?

Responses	Female	Male
Elected by parents	5	1
Only candidate	-	3
Interviewed by Chair of Governors and then Head Teacher	1	1
Via LEA	3	-
Interviewed by Head Teacher and bursar	1	-
Local business appointment	2	2
Invited by Head Teacher	-	1

Table 4.4   How were you Appointed to the Governing Body

The responses to this question uncovered no evidence of an appointment process other than the election of Parent Governors. Only two respondents considered there had been a form of interview:

"I had a meeting with the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors – hardly an interview, more a discussion of philosophies about what the Head wanted to achieve for the school. From a personality point of view, I decided this would work and the role interested me – although I accepted the appointment with no knowledge of the extent of my responsibilities".

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"I was initially interviewed by the Head Governor and then by the Head Mistress and Bursar".

Other responses revolved around being an LEA or parent Governor and these comments included:

"I was not interviewed but I was known to the Labour Party" (put forward as an LEA Governor).

"I was the only woman standing so I came top of the poll. When the children left school I was co-opted as a Governor".

"I was not really interviewed, just invited onto the Governing Body by the Head Master".

Question 5. Do you have a job description?

Fifteen respondents said they did not have a job description, four said they did have one.

Question 6. What does the job description constitute?

There was very little evidence of job descriptions although as four respondents noted, the DfES publishes a statement of the Role and Purpose of Governing Body.

Two respondents enclosed a copy of their job description (Appendix O).

Comments included:

"No job description was provided and early on I judged the Governing Body to be dysfunctional. We did initiate the allocation of people to sub-committees according to skills or inclination"!

"Not specifically, I've seen general guidance".

However, one respondent indicated his Governing Body was in the process of producing job descriptions for all committees and another Governor said all new members on his Governing Body received one. Whilst in general, job descriptions were not available, this does not appear to be a problem to most respondents.

Question 7: Have you had initial training and subsequent development opportunities?

Responses	Female	Male
LEA induction course	8	3
Various sessions of varying value from excellent to a waste of time	1	-
Interviewing training	1	-
Special needs training	1	-
Sessions related to recent legislation	1	-
All round excellent LEA courses	2	3
School self-evaluation	-	1

Table 4.5   Sources of Training Opportunities

Thirteen of the nineteen respondents said they had undertaken training. The answers to this question revealed Governors feel there is a need for training and development and that it should be in line with school requirements.

One respondent said:

"No training what-so-ever on a formal basis. The training advertised by the LEA seemed to be standard stuff – not appropriate to the role of Governor. Needs to be more training related to management of the school - e.g. data analysis, OFSTED, finance, premises, interview technique (this is very very poor)".

Other comments were:

"Our LEA runs excellent training courses through their efficient Governor Support Team".

[I] "have attended about 40 courses and visited about 20 other schools.
We have an excellent Governor Support Service Team here in Swindon and when appropriate we have bespoke training for the full Governing Body".

"Yes, [I attended] a LEA Governor Induction Course, followed by various training sessions run either by the LEA or within school. Some were excellent and some were pretty basic and a waste of time. All paid for by the school budget".

Therefore it would appear there is some good training available but the indications are this training is not always undertaken by Governors or as one respondent commented,

"Not many Governors grasp the opportunity".

Another respondent explained:

"There were opportunities for attending training days but I was unable to take advantage of these owing to other commitments".

When asked how training could be improved there were only four responses which were related to improved venues and time.

Question 8.   In what way has being a Governor met your expectations?

Responses	Female	Male
Feel allowed to have an input	1	1
Majority of Governing Body and Head Teacher work together to same agenda	2	-
Expectations exceeded	1	-
Involved in adapting premises for disabled pupils/improving school environment	2	1
Enjoyed assisting in personnel matters/staff discipline	1	1
Great deal of job satisfaction	1	-
Enjoyed promoting education/welfare	-	1
Mixed views	1	3
Had no expectations	2	2

Table 4.6   Ways Role has met Governor Expectations

A range of views were expressed with Governors in general, expressing their enjoyment of the role:

"You do feel involved".

"I feel I have left my mark on the school".

"Felt initially dissatisfied, no real job to do. Then I decided to find a role for myself in finance and human resources (My expertise).

"I think my expectations have been exceeded! Having joined I wondered what I could possibly add/contribute, however, I soon found I did have skills that could add value and make a difference across a wide range of activities".

"It has been interesting. I have learned a great deal and it has helped me develop many new skills".

"There has been more and more involvement over the years which is a good thing. It has met my expectations in that I feel I have added some value to the college, particularly in those areas where I have expertise such as performance appraisal, recruitment, manpower planning discipline etc".

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Two respondents were in no doubt about the role:

"It was harder work than I thought it might be".

"During my term I went through the worst and the best of times. Being a Governor was a salutary experience. Most of all I enjoyed the changes in the environment which in part were the consequence of our support of a 'visionary' Head which went far beyond any expectations I might have had".

Question 9: In what ways has being a Governor failed to meet your expectations?

Responses	Female	Male
Frustrated at lack of organization of Governing Body	1	-
Poor clerking	1	-
Poorly managed meetings and lack of formal planning	1	-
Management attitude of *we decide, you agree*	2	1
Lack of finance	2	1
Poor management practices of senior management	-	2
Only brought in as Governor when a staffing crisis	-	1
It took a long time for my expertise to be used	-	1
Constant change	2	-
Expected more support	1	-
Constraints of LEA and DfES	3	-
School does 'its own thing' regardless. Have no real impact	1	-

Table 4.7 Ways the Governor Role has Failed to Meet Governor Expectations

Whilst question 8 showed people enjoyed the Governor role, in contrast, question 9 identified a great many frustrations. Comments were in general, related to three broad categories namely management and politics, lack of knowledge and skills and policy changes and the amount of work involved

A recurring view was:

"Management attitudes in particular instances – 'we decide you agree' and failure to involve as well as inform".

This opinion was reflected in other responses:

"The regime was a 'telling' mentality that did not believe Governors should do any more than just listen therefore little 'real' contribution, no Governor teamwork and no involvement in strategy".

"It seemed as if asking questions was taken as confrontation".

"Too much time seems to be spent on the 'politics' of the LEA and doing things which sometimes seemed to add no value".

"An on-going reticence by some teachers to access change, monitoring and accountability and their lack of understanding of business, work pressures and accountabilities".

The views of three respondents are worth noting as they reflect a problem related to lack of knowledge:

"I felt my lack of knowledge about the curriculum and education was a drawback and I could only contribute on the periphery in some decision making".

"I believe as a Governor you can only influence the development of the college in general terms by setting the strategy and targets for senior teaching staff".

"Sometimes I felt my lack of knowledge about the curriculum and education was a drawback and I could only contribute on the periphery in some decision making".

Related to policies and work, one respondent noted:

"There are so many policy changes in the education system. Just when you think you understand what is required it changes and you begin again".

Question 10: What do you consider to be the role/s of a Governor?

Responses	Female	Male
Vital that Governors consider where the school is and where it is going	3	-
Make sure the effect on children is uppermost when making decisions	2	-
Set the strategic framework annually	3	3
Appoint the Head Teacher	-	1
'Critical friend' to Head Teacher	4	1
Have an overview of staff performance	1	1
Set and review Head Teacher targets	1	1
Monitor and review school progress against targets	1	1
Promote the school	1	-
Attend meetings	1	-
Create a forum for discussion	1	-

Table 4.8   Perceptions of the Governor Role

Some respondents seemed in little doubt about their Governor role:

"As a Governor I expected to be like a Non-Executive Director, bringing additional skills and experience to assist the executive i.e. the Head and her team. The role I expected to cover was:

- Setting the strategic framework
- Performance issues related to standards and compliance
- Risk related to duty of care in management
- Financial in budget setting and decisions related to expenditure
- Some Governors being expected to represent their stakeholder group i.e. parents, LEA, teachers.
- To be a 'critical friend' – supporting the school but pointing out where things could be improved.
- To keep an overview of what is happening in the school".

Respondents covered the DfES stated role of Governors. One respondent did however say:

"I know what we are supposed to do but – I feel it is mainly a case of agreeing to decisions made outside Governing Body meetings. The strategic framework only came to light following OFSTED".

Question 11: What skills do you consider to be essential to be an effective Governor?

a. Essential Individual Governor Skills.

Responses	Female	Male
Honesty when expressing perception of the school and outside opinion	1	-
Ability to be positive as well as being 'critical friend' to Head Teacher	2	1
Discretion and confidentiality	2	-
Ability to work as member of the team	5	3
Communication skills/ gathering and absorbing information	5	-
Community links/public relations	-	1
Listening skills	2	1
Counselling skills	-	1
Financial skills/knowledge	3	4
Management skills/ management procedures	1	1
Knowledge of the curriculum	-	1
Fundraising	-	1
Building and grounds maintenance/health and safety	-	3
Marketing skills	1	1
Commitment to the school	1	1
Ability to question	3	1
Debating skills	3	-

Table 4.9 Perceived Essential Individual Skills Required by a Governor

The responses cover a wide area of skills but one respondent said:

"The role of Chairman is critical and 'behaviours' are as important as skills. There must be clear leadership and the relationship between the Head and Governors needs to be transparent".

Other comments were:

"Courage to speak up constructively and the will to try to improve education standards".

"Commitment, listening skills, decision making skills, a probing mind, teamwork and trust".

One Governor considered the essential individual and collective skills as being:

"Commitment to the good of the school; loyalty to the Governing Body; a clear understanding of the [Governor] roles and responsibilities".

b. Essential Collective Governing Body Skills

	Female	Male
Support collective decisions	1	-
Need to visit school during working day not just evenings	1	-
Fund raising	-	1
Annual parents meeting	-	1
Setting pay procedures and levels	-	1
Be known to parents and pupils	-	1
Financial skills	3	3
Human resource skills	-	1
Legal knowledge e.g. grievance procedures	-	1
Skills related to data	1	-
Act as corporate body	1	-
Good communications	1	-

Table 4.10   Perceived Essential Collective Skills Required by a Governing Body

Some Governors were in no doubt skills were needed:

"Accept collective responsibility and act as a part of a corporate body. Understand finance, premises, health and safety, HR issues and legal issues e.g. grievance procedures and staffing".

"I feel you do have to look at the bigger picture and not get too involved in the detail. You need to exercise good judgement and trust the teaching staff to do their job. You have to bring something to the Governing Body — knowledge of education, knowledge of childcare, business and management skills. We all have to care about what is best for the pupils' development".

"Attending meetings! Support for Head and school on a range of issues like strategic, practical and friendship. Creating a forum for discussion".

Question 12: How should the effectiveness of the Governing Body be measured?

Responses	Female	Male
Difficult unless a specific aim has been listed	1	-
A good OFSTED report	4	2
Balanced budget	1	3
Improving examination results/school performance including sport, music, drama	3	4
Atmosphere of school/ good relationships	1	1
Staff, Governor, pupil relationships	1	-
Staff morale	-	1
PANDA results	-	1
Evidence of good teamwork	1	-
Ask staff, parents and pupils	1	1
Self evaluation	2	2

Table 4.11 How Should the Effectiveness of a Governing Body be Measured?

The responses to this question revealed very little evidence of Governor self-assessment. What it did highlight was a 'hint' that it should take place. Three respondents were explicit in their views:

"As a group, the performance of the Governing Body needs to be tied to the performance of the school, creating an environment in which the teaching staff can perform and keeping the school to a plan which is financially sound. As individuals, performance should be measured in terms of individually agreed contributions according to interest, expertise and the particular needs of the school".

"It would seem Governors do not assess their effectiveness. Do not look at their own strengths and weaknesses and just 'carry on carrying on'. A somewhat blinkered approach. They don't seem to see what others are doing nor look at processes e.g. interview technique".

"Annual or bi-annual self-evaluation done by an outsider. We use our LEA.
Feedback from the organization, comparative PANDA results and Value Added outcomes".

Other responses indicated Governors consider their success and school success to be one and the same:

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"In the long term, by the success of the school both academically and financially".

In contrast to this view one Governor said:

"Good or improving school results do not necessarily imply that the Governing Body is effective. Perhaps if staff and parents are not aware of the Governing Body it means we should be more hands-on. Some Governors do not realize they are there to question".

Question 13: There is a national shortage of School Governors. How do you think the 'pool' of potential Governors could be increased?

Responses	Female	Male
Write a book 'My Governor Experiences'	-	1
Pay Governors	1	-
Employ independent 'Chairs'	1	-
Cultivate the local community	1	-
Direct links to local business	2	-
Good parental links/raising awareness	-	1
Keep climate attractive if people are to volunteer	1	-
Reduce number of Governors in each school	1	-
Good PR using case studies and quality publicity	5	3
Co-opt for special tasks; less time consuming	1	-
Make role more acceptable and understood	1	-
Make school and Head Teacher more welcoming	1	-
Sell the position and minimize the downsides		2
Million dollar question, no idea	1	

Table 4.12 Respondent Suggestions for Increasing the Pool of Potential New Governors

All respondents agreed there was a problem with recruitment.

One respondent said:

"The number of people willing to become Governors is more likely to decrease with the possibility of litigation. The climate must be kept attractive for people to volunteer their time".

Another respondent said:

"Make it [School Governance] more public. Stress the need for quality Governors e.g. the press and perhaps the local forum. Perhaps groups of schools should link together, primary and secondary. If they [Governors] are important then there needs to be a change of tactic in recruitment".

"Raising awareness – I don't think people know what Governors really do or are responsible for".

"Recruitment could be improved with some or all of the following:
- co-opt governors for specific tasks
- reduce the workload generally making the role more acceptable/understandable
- appoint/employ an independent Chair person
- encourage industry/commerce to support schools as part of their employment policy".

Many of the comments reflected the need to keep the Governor role interesting and attractive by selling the positives.

One Governor offered the following comment:

"Widespread advertising by local authorities that emphasizes the positive outcomes of being a Governor – improving schools and personal development of the Governor. The training opportunities and the satisfaction of being part of a good Governing Body and in making schools better".

A repeated view is that the LEA should have a pool of potential Governors.

Question 14: As a Governor have you ever challenged an important decision of the Governing Body or Senior Management?

Four respondents said they had never challenged the Governing Body or senior management, eleven said sometimes and three said often. Women would appear to challenge more frequently then men.

The main issue related to challenge were:

Wearing of school uniform
Use of school premises
Curriculum changes
Discipline/exclusions
Management attitudes to staff and poor communication with staff
School becoming a specialist language college
Financial management
Employment of unstable deputy Head Teacher
Staffing issues
Chair becoming too involved in day-to-day management of the school
Structure of school administration
Governors meetings a 'talk shop'
Strategy to market the school
Competence of leadership and management

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The effects of challenging may be seen from the following quotes:

> "Thought to be a 'trouble maker' and hence I let other issues pass to save problems"
> "Sidelined by the Head Teacher"
> "Criticism taken well and new guidelines agreed for more consultation in the future"
> "My resignation"
> "Appointment of extra staff"
> "Relocation of administration area"
> "Permanent rift in relationship"
> "Head reflected and modified action"
> "More regular financial updates"
> "Two years of school problems until deputy seconded to LEA"
> "Given more and more paper by the Head Teacher"
> "Increased funding from LEA"
> "Resignation of Head Teacher"

Of the respondents who said they did not challenge, two comments stand out:

> "Not sure it's appropriate to challenge decisions".

and

> "I have never done this. Governing Body decisions are reached following informed discussion. We very rarely reach the need for a vote as we aim to reach consensus by debate".

Reflection on Key Questionnaire Findings

It is felt the findings speak for themselves. Respondents were open in their views and opinions. Some respondents gave multiple responses to some of the questions and in some instances no response was given. In general the gender issues were not significant but some points were highlighted. Males were more likely to be recruited through direct school contact. More female respondents than male had received training and development and that received by females was wider ranging. Male respondents felt stronger than female that meeting times and venues could be improved.

An overwhelming majority of respondents do not have a job description and whilst commenting they should have one, do not appear to be making any efforts to change this

situation. Whilst training is available, it appears to vary in quality from some being very good and some less so. Training is considered important but there is reluctance to undertake training by some Governors. It would appear Governors consider on-going professional development in their working life is necessary but do not feel the same is necessary in their Governor role. Governors are concerned about recruitment and some suggestions were made as to how this can be improved. However there was no evidence that these suggestions were being put into practice in the schools.

Whilst respondents enjoyed their Governor role, the general tone of responses identified concerns about education and management practices. However, when asked about improving Governing Body effectiveness in Question 12, issues related to these concerns were not raised. Responses related to effectiveness highlighted areas such as school examination results and OFSTED Reports. It could be argued these issues are more related to school catchment area, the Head Teacher, staff and the home environment of the pupils.

There were many comments related to excessive workload, constant changes in education policy and excessive paperwork problems. No suggestions were offered as to how this could be remedied. Whilst Governors consider the 'critical friend' role is vital, an issue emerges related to the Governor – Head Teacher relationship. Although Governors in general do not challenge decisions, several concerns were raised related to ill feeling and resignations, some rivalry between Head Teachers and Governors, Governors not fully understanding the differences between the day-to-day management of the school and strategic development, resentment of Governors by some Head Teachers and the extent to which some Governing Bodies are allowed to carry out their strategic role

In order to become effective, the overall view is there needs to be greater clarity of the role and responsibilities. It appears this clarity is lacking but in general, Governors continue with their role without asking for changes to be made.

The research highlights Governing Bodies in general, do not monitor their own effectiveness but at the same time consider they should. Many Governors have professional management skills but they do not apply them to the Governor role. This raises the question of why not and has the Governing Body culture absorbed them? In other words, have they become 'institutionalised'?

The researcher was surprised at the effort many respondents had made in completing the questionnaire, the answers were thoughtful and some were very personal. It was as though respondents really wanted to tell someone about their experiences, thoughts and concerns. By using a questionnaire the researcher was able to gather a body of background knowledge about the workings of Governors and Governing Bodies for use as a basis in the fieldwork.

4.1.2   Elite Interviews: Introduction

In the previous section data from the questionnaires is discussed and highlighted with quotations. In 4.1.2 the elite interview data are considered and key issues illustrated with quotations. The term elite interview could be said to contain a value judgement given non-elite interviews were also undertaken. However, this was considered not to be an issue and interviews were open and frank. There had previously been no personal connection with any of the respondents and they were selected on the basis of their reputation. Gaining access was not a problem and no refusals were received. With this ease of access, it was felt the researcher needed to demonstrate a professional background and knowledge of governance. As a result there appeared to be no guarding in responses, there was a refreshing professional openness and frankness, a real interest in the research and no power imbalance. All conversations went beyond the pre-formed questions but only one respondent dominated the conversation. He was a professional communicator on a wide range of education issues and was very persuasive in his responses sometimes giving an answer before the question was asked. Overall, many similar opinions were expressed.

The criteria for identifying representative elite interviewees were seniority level, functional status, professional history, national and local knowledge and wide ranging knowledge and experience of the sector.

	Background	Gender	Age Range	Location
1.	Business/Education/Political	male	50/55 years	North
2.	Former Chief Inspector of Schools	male	55/60 years	National
3.	LEA Director of Governor Support	female	35/40	South East
4.	Chief Executive, Learning and Skills Council	male	60/65	North West
5.	Business/Political/FE Reorganization	male	65 years	Midlands/London

Table 4.13   Elite Interviewee Profile

4.1.2.1   Responses to Questions

Question 1: The Governor Role: Do you think this role is appropriate?

The general view was it is a demanding and complex role with high government expectations and one respondent noted:

"The Governor role goes well beyond the well intentioned amateur".

The role was seen to be vital with Governors being equal partners with the Head Teacher and expected to bring their outside experiences to the school and assist in strategic planning. There was a view that Governors are happy to be supportive but don't really understand their role or the consequences of not doing the job properly.

Comments included:

"What is obvious to inspectors are the differences between areas. Some [Governors] are wonderful but it is a very mixed situation".

"They need an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, to have an understanding of the external environment, to know what others are doing and how effective others are compared to themselves. No Non-Executive Director has this breadth of responsibility; in fact they [Non-Executive Directors] would not take on the job if there were these number of strands, all of that is particularly difficult without the added legislative responsibilities".

"There needs to be clarity about the Governor role, it is not management. It can't happen with a group of twenty".

Question 2: Appointment and Training:
Do you think there should be a formal recruiting/ appointment process for School Governors and Non-Executive Directors?
Should there be a job description?
Should there be formal training for school Governors and Non-Executive Directors?

It was generally considered essential Governors must have job descriptions and training.

Comments included:

"It amazes me you can appoint anyone without a job description. The key four/five features need to be set out and arguably a candidate specification...what would make a good Governor...not just 'Oh we'll ring a few people and see if they have some spare time to come along'. This is amateur and likely to be ineffective".

There was a slight difference of opinion between the former Chief Inspector and other respondents when discussing training. He remarked:

"We must not turn a Governing Body into quasi educational professionals".

In relation to qualifications, he did however add:

"Overall it is an advantage if a Governing Body has individuals who have specific experience. A school is blessed when they have members who have skills and qualifications e.g. legal, employment, business and financial skills".

Other respondents considered appropriate training to be essential.

A comment from the LEA Director of Governor Support was:

"If Governors don't have a job description it is not surprising they don't do it very well. New Governors should be told before appointment what the expectations are and what the time commitment will be. They should not accept the role unless they are prepared to accept what is being asked of them".

Further comments were:

"Training is poor".

and:

> "It is very important to have training but it should be appropriate training based on the needs of the school at that time".

Question 3: Effectiveness of Governors: How can a Governing Body/board of Non-Executive Directors assess its own effectiveness? Given the nature of the role, what essential individual and collective skills are required to carry out this role?

As far as effectiveness is concerned, the discussions ranged from the need for self evaluation, an understanding of strategy to the need for working as a member of a team and as a team.

Comments from individual respondents included:

> "There needs to be audits and self evaluation".

> "What is required today is a good understanding of the legalities of education. It cannot be ignored. An effective Governing Body looks at and asks for information about other schools".

The former Chief Inspector said:

> "Should not necessarily have eminent educationalists on the Governing Body, better they are able to 'stand outside', ask layman's questions and reveal truths.
> In terms of professionalism, a Governing Body should be fully in touch with the community it serves and the members should have intelligence and integrity. If this is not the case, they will be ineffective. If a potential Governor does not have this to start with then it 'cannot be put there'.
> An effective Governing Body looks at and asks for information about other schools, not just similar to themselves but schools which are achieving better results. Then use this data to improve their school result and performance. It is difficult as there is no standard to which Governors can work".

**Question 4: Challenge: So far, my findings suggest to challenge can lead to Governors being marginalised and/or being seen to be a trouble maker.
What is your view of this?**

Governing Bodies have a challenging 'critical friend' role and comments from respondents would suggest this is an essential but problematic role.

Issues raised by individual respondents were:

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"Problem with some Heads is they seem to believe they belong to the papal school of infallibility".

"The Head Teacher really does have to tell the Governing Body what is going on. They are entitled to know and to have the information they ask for".

"Governors are lovely people but it has been known for OFSTED to come along and the Governing Body 'being hung out to dry'. The Head says everything is fine and they believe the Head".

"Some Heads don't like challenge. There is a way to challenge and some things should be challenged e.g. examination results, attendance and behaviour".

"They should be intelligent, confident lay people who will happily represent all stakeholders and their concerns and will challenge".

"They should be a sounding board for the Senior Management Team and the community".

Question 5: Shortage of Governors: there is considered to be a national shortage of School Governors. How do you think the pool of School Governors can be increased?

It was generally accepted this is an area of concern and a variety of issues were discussed including reducing the number of Governors on a Governing Body, recruitment difficulties of other public bodies, making the best use of available time and whether Governors should or shouldn't be paid.

Two comprehensive answers were:

"Without any doubt Governors should be paid...this would increase accountability. The role of a Governor has to be made more attractive and there has to be more incentives if people are to volunteer to be Governors. People have so many calls on their time if something is more attractive then they will usually go for that option. The system for getting the right Governors really has to change. If people can, then they should be a Governor but there should be a standard".

"I think it is a matter of going back to the drawing board and deciding how many Governors are actually needed to govern a school. A typical school budget would perhaps be £2/3 million pounds. Are 20 directors needed? Unilever with billion pound budgets has perhaps only 20 directors To have that number seems

excessive, so you need to define what the number should be...Lets say it should be ten, then that would seem to make the existing pool larger and capable of servicing twice the number of schools. Now it may not be quite be that simple as some Governors may not have the necessary skills.

Non-Executive Directors are paid a daily rate of £200 or £300 or even ten times that. Paying Governors at that sort of rate would not be financially viable. What you have, as in other public/voluntary sectors, is people being asked to come and do what they do in their daily working life. It would seem to me many Governors are retired. Perhaps younger people could be attracted and be recruited from local business as part of their professional development. It would be the company's responsibility as part of their social responsibility to foot the bill...after all they take a major part of their workforce from schools".

An interesting view of one respondent was:

"...torn about the formal process, it must be seen to be open and this doesn't always get the best people".

Question 6: Are School Governors Needed?

It was commonly voiced that it was important to have School Governors. Governors were considered to have a watching brief but they must have knowledge to do this.

A view was:

"Lots of Heads would say they are not needed. I think they are becoming more important now with the changes in education. If you really want to know how a school is going on ask the community Governors, it saves time going out into the community, they are there".

The community aspect was also highlighted by the former Chief Inspector who said:

"It is an essential role. They represent the interests of the local community which their school serves".

One respondent offered a slightly different opinion:

"I don't know if they [schools] would be better or worse [without them] perhaps a comparison is needed. What are the measures of success or failure? On balance, providing you have the right number of Governors with the right skills, then it is fine. However, I still feel it is the Head Teacher who runs the school and if that

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Head can get something from the Governing Body e.g. a sounding board then I guess that Head will be better than if the Governing Body didn't exist".

The political/education respondent had no doubt about the need for Governors:

"School Governors are essential...they are needed as the interface between their community and the school...they are in a position of being able to stand back and look at their school objectively. It should not just be parents with an interest in their own children who volunteer".

Question 7:   Is there a better way of governing schools?

Whilst there was a feeling change is needed, no respondent offered an alternative. Respondents could identify some of the changes needed but no overall view of what an alternative style of governance would look like.

One respondent said:

"Things need to be done to the structure, i.e. make it smaller. Some Governing Bodies are effective others are ineffective. There ought to be some accountability, I am not convinced it is right. There needs to be more professionalism and a better structure".

Other comments were:

"I think it is all there, there is sufficient flexibility to get representation. It is about doing right, not about grabbing anyone who is willing to do it. All schools are different and it is up to them".

"One of the best things about training is allowing them [Governors] to free up their thinking, especially those who have been at it for say 10 years, opening up their eyes. Unless Governors have a vision of where their school is going they cannot move forward. Outside training is best with Governors from other schools; internal training can sometimes just re-cycle bad practice which reinforces the culture".

"Businesses use 'inter firm comparisons'. The only thing you seem to have in education are things like exam results. If there was a cross fertilisation either by being a Governor in more than one school or by spending two years in one school and two years in another, perhaps rotating with someone else. This would lead to the transfer of ideas and both organizations would gain. Perhaps this is something that can be learned from business".

Reflection on Key Findings of Elite Interviews

Again the responses speak for themselves and give a clear view of the thoughts of the respondents. The general opinion was the Governor role lacks clarity, is too complex and demanding and there is lack of real knowledge about the role. The size and structure of the Governing Body were generally thought to be problems. Concerns were expressed about the recruitment and appointment system of Governors and the lack of professionalism. Job descriptions are considered to be essential. Respondents considered self evaluation is necessary. Training is not always aligned to the school, Governor needs, skills and the necessity to understand strategy. Respondents expressed unease that not all Head Teachers give Governors appropriate data and information. A further concern was that the 'critical friend' role is not universally understood nor is it particularly effective. All respondents considered there should be a more overall professional, business-like approach to governing a school but agreed Governors are an essential part of the school.

All respondents expressed great interest in the research and each asked if they could be given a copy of the final recommendations. At the conclusion of these interviews the researcher felt they had been very productive and all of the key questions had been covered. There was surprise and pleasure at the way respondents were forthcoming with their answers and opinions. Respondents spoke enthusiastically both about governance and broader issues.

4.1.3 Fieldwork: Interviews, Observation and Document Analysis

In this section data obtained from field work in two schools are discussed.

The two schools were selected because of the sharply contrasting differences between them in examination results, attendance, geographic location, environment, socio-economic and parental involvement.

In each school Governors were interviewed, meetings attended and the researcher was given the opportunity to 'walk the talk' in the school. Access was given to relevant

paperwork in each school and the researcher was subsequently asked to assist in managing an aspect of change. Field notes were made using a grid which helped focus on the holistic nature of the Governing Body together with special points of interest.

The two schools are presented as individual cases with relevant points compared in a cross case-study conclusion and a view given as to whether the existing model of governance is working effectively in each school.

The aspects of fieldwork considered in each school include:

a) Context

b) Interviews - eleven issues were raised with each respondent based on the initial survey questions and findings

c) Emergent issues

d) Document analysis

e) Observation

f) Reflection and key observations

g) Summary

4.1.3.1 Fieldwork: School 1   October 6th 2004 to March 18 2005

a) Context

This school is an 11 to 18 Specialist Technology College with Foundation Status. It was formerly a Grant Maintained School. The school is non-selective and committed to comprehensive education. The school prospectus states the Mission of the school as being:

'Learning together...learning for life'

The school sees itself as catering for the needs of the entire community and practices an inclusion policy. There are a number of pupils with learning difficulties and there is an active learning support unit. Initiatives are in place aimed at encouraging better behaviour

and improving attendance. However, it is acknowledged there is potential for indiscipline and this is a concern for many staff.

The 2001 OFSTED Report stated the school is in an area of relatively high social disadvantage and most of it is part of a local health action zone.

The report further states:

> "There is a lack of strategic leadership at this time, but there is a determination amongst present Governors and senior staff to do better, and a clear potential for improvement. The previous high levels of funds in reserve have been eroded away, and now the school must manage to avoid a budget deficit. When taking all these factors into account it is not providing satisfactory value for money at this time. The Governors and new Head Teacher[40] will have the task of addressing the agenda for action this report indicates".

The 2001[41] OFSTED Report of School 1 stated the areas of concern related to Governors and in need of improvement are:

- Strategic leadership, related to improving standards
- Governors' understanding of the school' strengths and weaknesses so they can contribute more to the strategic governance of the school
- The use of assessment data to help set targets for pupils and evaluate progress more systematically to inform school-wide planning

These areas for improvement formed part of the basis of the Governors' post OFSTED Action Plan.[42] A general statement from the 2001 report says:

> "Governors only have limited first-hand knowledge of the work of the school and of its strengths and weaknesses. In particular, they have yet to develop procedures that will give a structure to them to help them gauge the progress the school is making year on year. They want to develop their association with subject departments, for example, to see the work of the school for themselves and talk about how examination results can be analysed to set targets. In this way the Governing Body can extend its knowledge of the quality and standards of work in school and have greater confidence in its opinions. The need now is for Governors to build upon their strengths to improve and evaluate the quality of development

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[40] The new Head Teacher was appointed just prior to the inspection and took up the position immediately after inspection.

[41] The 2001 OFSTED Report is the most recent in School 1.

[42] Following an OFSTED Inspection it is the Governors who receive the report and are responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of the Action Plan. In practice however it is more likely to be the Senior Management Team who undertake this task.

planning at a strategic level, whilst always basing decisions on the principle of contributing to the standards and quality of education in the school".

b) Interviews

The eleven issues considered during the interviews are discussed individually and are illustrated with verbatim extracts from conversations.

Issue 1: Governor contribution to the raising of standards

The examination results have improved over the past three years from 30% to 40% A-C grades at GCSE level.

Attendance is an issue of concern to some Governors and the Head Teacher. An attendance officer is employed to help improve this situation. Attendance is 89% while the school DfES target is 93%. A significant percentage of absence is attributed to illness and parental choice of holidays during term time. Exclusions are generally low as the school practices its inclusion policy by dealing with behavioural issues in school.

The general view of Governors was they did not have a direct or even indirect contribution to the raising of standards. There seemed some surprise when the idea of standards being related to attendance and behaviour was raised.
Only one Governor saw the link:

> "Not all Governors understand, or are aware of the impact of attendance on standards".

Other comments included:

> "Not sure that I did directly. We were given examination results after they were published and told the annual targets and we somehow just accepted these. Bad, isn't it?"

> "Attendance and behaviour, there is no discussion".

Issue 2: Governing Body performance and working practices

There are seven vacancies on the Governing Body and filling them is presenting a problem. The issue of reducing the required number of Governors had not been considered.

The planning and organization of meetings appears to be very good. Governors paid tribute to the Clerk to Governors who is responsible for organizing this:

> "We are very lucky to have good support staff. The Clerk to Governors/Bursar is talented and motivated and he knows what he is doing".

Governors' meetings are very structured both in content and time allocation. Policies are seen to be the responsibility of the Chair and/or Head Teacher.

Comments from individual respondents included:

> "Policies, when presented…there is generally no comment by anyone".

> "Policies…the Head Teacher reads and re-writes, no one else. You cannot possibly know what is actually going on in school all of the time".

> "I never felt comfortable, never felt relaxed. Felt everyone knew more than me".

> "We have a Chair who is diligent, has a systematic approach and a good organizer. We leave it up to the Chair. It works well".

Issue 3: How Governors are acting as 'critical friend' to the Head Teacher

The Head Teacher said:

> "The Chair is very challenging and at the same time, a very strong support".

Governors all said the there was a friendship with the Head Teacher with 'friendly' challenge and support. However, one former Governor noted:

> "More of a friend than a 'critical friend' I think. Perhaps this was not a good thing. We were not as objective as we should have been. We like her".

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Another Governor observed 'critical friend' is the wrong terminology. Governors should listen and be supportive, "they should be less critical, as being a Head Teacher is difficult, particularly in a challenging school".

Issue 4: Governor contribution to the strategic development of the school

Whilst all Governors interviewed are committed to the school, there did appear to be a lack of understanding of strategy. Several Governors referred to the Action Plan drawn up after a poor OFSTED inspection and commented how bad things were at that particular time. Two comments were:

> "The Senior Management Team, Chair and immediate people do this".

> "The full Governing Body would have great difficulty as they don't understand the business side. There are one or two strong Governors and the Head Teacher…that is all".

Another Governor suggested there should be forward planning;

> "The Governing Body doesn't do this. Perhaps we should employ someone to lead our thinking and do fund raising – make their own salary. It is a quantum leap".

Issue 5: Governor link to the school community

There was an acknowledgement there are no meaningful links with the community the school serves. The Head Teacher said:

> "It is very very weak. We pay lip service more than anything else. We do have a clergyman on the Governing Body so I guess he is a link and 'spreads the word' ".

Issue 6: Governor vacancies, turn-over and length of service

All Governors stressed their concern at the shortage of Governors. There are currently seven vacancies, four of them parent Governor, two teaching staff vacancies and one co-

opted. The message from all respondents was there is most definitely a recruitment problem. A long serving Governor (10 years) commented:

> "The job has changed considerably. At one time it was seen [being a Governor] as a civic duty. Now it is different, more responsibilities and political agendas. It is impossible to actually do the job now on a voluntary, very part time basis. Skills are now required that weren't before".

The Clerk to Governors remarked:

> "Yes there are vacancies but understandable. There is now a bigger time commitment than 10 years ago".

Issue 7: Attendance at meetings

Attendance is becoming an issue. One recent meeting was not quorate and had to be cancelled. The Clerk to Governors commented this was the first time he had known it happen. He also said:

> "Attendance figures in general, are getting worse".

Issue 8: Governing Body self-assessment related to effectiveness

There was little evidence of Governors looking at their own effectiveness. The subject was raised by a Governor, who has since left the Governing Body. It was on the agenda five times but, other than completing an anonymous survey sheet, there was no follow-up other than an increased number of meetings. Comments included:

> "Gave us a blank piece of paper so it was not judgemental".

> "We don't actually look at what we are doing as a group. We don't make space to assess how effective we are".

> "We did have a discussion once. The Governor leading it did really well, but she left. I felt she was the only one taking the Governors forward".

There were several comments related to the Governor who had left the Governing Body. It would appear she was the only member who felt this issue was sufficiently important

actually to do something about it. This particular Governor was formerly the vice-Chair and had a corporate business training and background.

Issue 9: When asked if they thought there is a better way of governing a school, comments included:

> "There should be paid professionals like in an NHS Trust. Needs to run like a proper board and co-opt people as needed. Perhaps induce some with payment".

> "Payment would bring responsibility – need to look outside to see what else is happening".

> "In England we have become emotionally blackmailed – made to see it as our duty although we know nothing about education".

There was an overwhelming feeling there was too much work for volunteers to undertake, that a board cannot run effectively with 20 plus members and an understanding of education, governance and business are necessary. This was a topic raised by Governors regularly both formally and informally.

Issue 10: Main features of their Governing Body

Respondents were asked to describe the main issues, problems and features of their Governing Body. These are listed in Table 4.14 together with the response frequency.

Main Features Identified by Respondents	Response Frequency
The present:	
Very strong Chair who ensures everything is done properly and it is left to him, e.g. vetting policies; Governors pass them without question.	4
Good atmosphere, everything is friendly.	3
Frustration and pressure being a Governor	2
Diverse range of people and skills. The right people are busy. Many others with less knowledge and skills are overawed by their job, e.g. paperwork	4
Difficulty in recruiting new Governors	7
Hard getting Governors to meetings	2
Others need to take some of the weight	1
Head Teacher is challenged but is more of a friend	4
Time is a big problem	5
Lack of support from other Governors. No one ever thanks Governors	2
Some Governors do not take the role seriously. Needs to be more commitment	1
Because of lack of knowledge, there are limitations to what you can actually do. It is a daunting role	2
You cannot know what is actually going on in school	3
Not sure of actual contribution to the school	3
The Future:	
Challenging times, you cannot run a board with 20 people	4
Having paid Governors is wrong	1
There should be paid, professional Governors	3
Have no boundaries between primary and secondary school Governing Bodies within the same catchment area	1
Need to bolster checks and balances if it is to work properly. Be more professional	3
Should be run like a proper board with co-opted people who have necessary expertise	2
May have to induce some Governors with payment of out of pocket expenses	1

Table 4.14   Perceived Main Features of the Governing Body - School 1

Issue 11: Statutory responsibilities

Each Governor was finally asked to give their opinion on ten statements. These opinions are listed with the response frequency in Table 4.15.

The Governing Body:	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
1. Fulfils its statutory responsibilities	4	2	1
2. Is fully involved in strategic planning	3	2	2
3. Understands the role of 'critical friend'	3	4	0
4. Contributes to improving standards	2	4	1
5. Has strong links with the community	2	1	4
6. Is well informed about the working of the school	2	4	1
7. Is clear about the role of the Governing Body	2	3	2
8. Is clear about the role and responsibilities of the Head Teacher	3	3	1
9.Has a clear policy on recruitment, retention and training of Governors	1	1	5
10.Collectively, has appropriate skills and knowledge to govern effectively and efficiently	2	1	4

Table 4.15 Governor Perceptions of Statutory Responsibilities – School 1

c) Emergent issues

When speaking to staff in the school related to staff Governor resignations, it became evident there is a great deal of discontent amongst staff. They are concerned about the poor behaviour of pupils and the lack of support they receive from the Senior Management Team. They feel Governors do not know about or understand the issues they face daily. They feel, if they speak out, they will be penalized in some way. There was a feeling staff are being completely de-moralized. An example was given by a senior member of staff who said "when the Head Teacher was approached about the manner in which badly behaved children were treated another member of staff and I were removed from the Senior Management Team".

When Governors were asked about staffing issues they appeared not to realize there is a staffing problem. One recently retired Governor who is now employed by the school said:

"No-one knows how bad behaviour is. The Governors just don't know. The staff are very disillusioned".

This Governor felt she could not do anything now since she is an employee.

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d) Document Analysis

Although many documents were seen, e.g. prospectus, agendas, policies, the main documents analysed were the 2001 OFSTED Report and Minutes of Governor Meetings covering the past two years (10 meetings)

The OFSTED Report was self explanatory and is now three years old. Governors were obviously concerned about the highlighted problems at that time and the opportunity was taken during the interviews to see if they now had a firmer understanding of their role related to the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It was generally considered by the more dominant Governors that the Head Teacher was considered to be the school's greatest strength.

Minutes of Governor Meetings

Governor meetings last approximately two hours and normally have ten items plus 'any other business'. Agendas are produced by the Chair of Governors and the Head Teacher and are formal in that items are allocated time with actions to be taken and by whom recorded against each item. The agendas and minutes were analysed with a view to assessing how much time was spent on issues related to the statutory duties of Governors. It is accepted this may not be absolutely time accurate as only by attending all meetings could other aspects, for example, informal, unrecorded discussion be evaluated.

Topic of Discussion	Frequency	Comments
Head Teacher Report	Every meeting	Much domestic and congratulatory content. Little evidence of questions or discussion Governors have this in advance and the Head Teacher talks to it at the meeting.
Governor Effectiveness	6 times up to 02.04	First raised 12.04 as item 9 (This followed a self evaluation survey undertaken in 2001). Agreed a strategy for following 12 months: • team work • monitoring and evaluation • effectiveness 02.03 item deferred to next meeting 03.03 proposal for action: • main roles of Governors • where Governors can make a difference • ways of getting involved Some group discussion followed. 05.04 proposer absent so item deferred 07.03 agreement to set date for start of training 10.03 agreed SWOT analysis to be undertaken
Reports from Department Heads	02.03 Head of Learning Support 03.04 Head of Science 05.04 Head of Technology	Little evidence of discussion, contribution or challenge.
Other Staff Input	07.04 Two Newly Qualified Teachers	No discussion followed
Health and Safety	02.03 Report on Audit	Governors have a responsibility for the Health and Safety of staff and pupils and other user groups. Part of OFSTED Inspection agenda.
Pupil Monitoring	02.03 Report from Head Teacher Item 7	No comments or discussion other than congratulatory
School Mission and Aims	02.03 Report from Head Teacher Item 10 Change of Mission wording	No comments or discussion
Finance	05.03 Budget Item 4 02.04 Financial Planning Report Item 4	The Finance sub-committee meets prior to each Governors meeting
School Policies	07.03 Adoption of Policies Item 4: • Admissions • Sex Education • Curriculum • S.E.N.	Presented by Head Teacher. No input from Governors
School Targets for following year	07.03 Item 8	Presented as a statement by the Head Teacher
Governor Vacancies	02.04 Meetings in jeopardy as seven vacancies Item 11	No evidence of productive discussion related to these vacancies

Table 4.16   Governor Meetings Agenda Items - School 1

Over one hundred items were raised over the period February 2003 to July 2004. Table 4.16 illustrates the items discussed related to the Governor role. These figures are intended to give a flavour of the content of meetings and are not intended to be a mathematical analysis.

Domestic and congratulatory issues take up a relatively high proportion of time. The only issues raised under 'any other business' were domestic, e.g. water for staff in hot weather. Whilst, Table 4.16, Governor Meetings Agenda Items, gives an itemized analysis, it is considered the graphical representation shown in Figure 4.1 adds to the overall picture by pictorially illustrating the frequency of agenda item topics.

Governor effectiveness would appear to be an important issue, it is mentioned in the minutes six times, but in reality it was deferred twice and only on one occasion was effectiveness discussed by the Governors. A further point of interest is once the Governor who initiated the subject resigned from the Governing Body, there was no further discussion. The Clerk to Governors pointed out that for the first time ever, one recent meeting was not quorate[43] and therefore no business could be undertaken. The Clerk considered this was indicative of the problem of recruiting Governors.
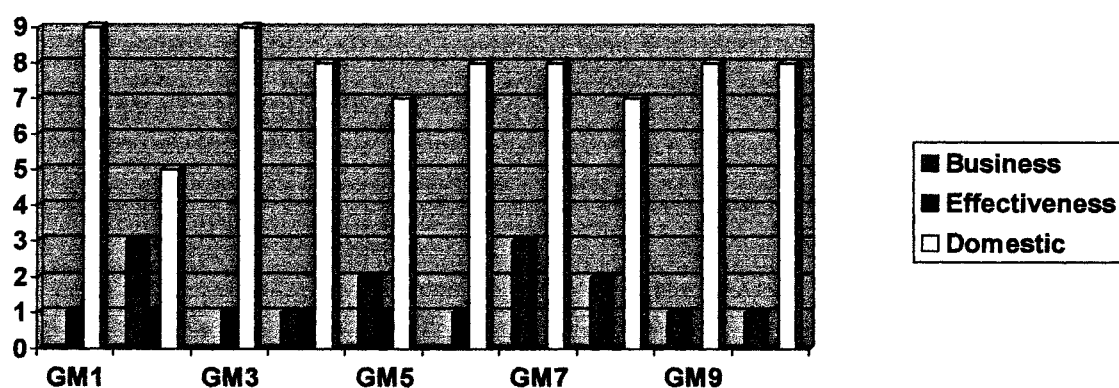
Figure 4.1 Agenda Items Frequency Diagram – School 1

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[43] Quorate: the minimum number of members which constitute a valid meeting is half the total number of listed Governors at the time of the meeting. At the time of this particular meeting there were 14 Governors and only six attended.

Overall, business which is the statutory province of the Governing Body occupies less than 20% of Governor debate and discussion. The Head Teacher makes by far the greatest contribution, this being in excess of 50%. The other contributions emanate from three to four Governors, namely the Chair, Chair of Finance Committee, Vice-Chair and Clerk to Governors.

e) Observation

The culture of the Governing Body with observable behaviour is illustrated in Table 4.17. From observation, there would appear to be a notable power culture, i.e. the Chair and Head Teacher are the central power source and go unchallenged. Control is centralized on the Chair and Head Teacher and indeed is hierarchical and almost patriarchal. Meetings appeared to be mechanical. The Chair would appear to be in school every day and comments passed by staff vary from a concern he does not leave the administrative department, to not really knowing what is actually happening in school and being completely beguiled by the Head Teacher. This was a difficult issue to handle and it is suspected this information was being given to the researcher for it to be fed back to Governors. The Clerk to Governors obviously felt he constantly had someone looking over his shoulder. On the other hand, everything felt friendly with Governors wanting to be there. The symbols of power were obvious namely the hierarchical position, the status with other Governors and school staff and the physical position at meetings. Also the number of visits to the school, the level of involvement in planning and the setting Head Teacher targets, the influence on other Governors and access to knowledge and privileged information.

Climate	Culture	Psychological Factors	Sociological Factors
Morale Appears very good	**Social Patterns** More dominant members sat close together around the top end of the table	**Capabilities** Very obvious variables. Some members appeared overwhelmed by the dominant Governors	**Group Behaviour** Smiles and friendliness but some minor undercurrents 'behind the scenes'
Conflict Some underlying conflicts between Chair and one/two members	**Symbols** Paper, Paper, Paper Lay out of the room almost hierarchical. Education jargon. Smart conference room for meetings.	**Goals** Difficult to assess overall goals	**Interactions** Seemed comfortable, no challenge
Chair Credibility Governors ALL depend on him. Slight question related to Chair/Clerk relationship and power	**Rituals** Seating for every Governor is always the same: *this is my place.* Chair, Head Teacher and Clerk all sit together at 'top' of the table with large reference files Agendas procedural bound – Time limits and Head Teacher report are always item 3 Dominated by Chair	**Priorities** Finish individual items and meeting on time	**Organization** Meetings completed almost to the minute. Timed contributions
Scapegoating Difficult to say given limited observation time	**Power Structure** Table 4.18	**Motives** Variable: retired and this is 'my job' 'I want to be part of the school' 'I love coming into school and being a Governor'	**Socialisation/Socio-economic Issues** Wide span of backgrounds No evidence of any responsibility to the community
Trust Governors show full trust in Chair. No 'niggling' Also, demonstrate tremendous trust in Clerk to Governors	**Stories** The previous administration and good times	**Attitudes/Beliefs/Values** Positive about the school. In awe of Head Teacher and Chair	**Rules** 'This is the way we do it'
Change Management 'Don't ask me to do anything extra' feeling from some members	**Controls** Chair controls most activities. Finance Officer /Clerk to Governor has strict financial controls.		**Political Agendas** None apparent but obviously a problem when both staff representatives resign

(continued)

(continued)

Leadership/ Management Style/ Paradigm	Autocratic Somewhat 'do it my way' Definite divisions – 1. Chair/Head Teacher/Clerk to Governors 2. Chair/Vice-Chair/Chair of Finance 3. Everyone else Non challenging

Table 4.17   Culture and Observable Behaviours - School 1

In Table 4.18, a Power[44] Matrix is proposed which derives directly from the interviews, observation and document analysis. It classifies the stakeholders in relation to the power they wield and the extent to which they showed interest in the governance of the school. The stakeholders in Group A could not always be depended on whilst Group B, although passive, were interested and in different circumstances may possibly make a much greater contribution. A view might be taken it is the role of the Chair of Governors to raise this level of interest and involvement so they can better fulfil their corporate governance role. Group C were influential, in the main because of their involvement in the finances of the school, their personality and their business backgrounds. Without doubt, the power in the School Governing Body lies with Group D. It controls the agendas, the meetings and the culture. There is a definite over-reliance on this group. On the basis of this it is considered individual Governor needs, the school's needs and the basic principles of stakeholder governance are not being met.

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[44] In this work, power is defined as the extent to which individuals or groups are able to persuade, coerce or induce others into following a certain course of action.

INTEREST IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE		
	LOW	HIGH
LOW **POWER**	**A** **Attend basic number of meetings** Variable	**B** **Interested but less influential/able** Parent Governors Staff Governors
HIGH	**C** **Influential** Vice Chair Chair Finance	**D** **Key Players** Head Teacher Chair Clerk to Governors

Table 4.18   Power Matrix – School 1

f) Reflection and Key Observations - School 1

On leaving School 1 the researcher felt a great deal of unease about its future direction and the ability of the Governing Body to guide, support and direct. Whilst Governors consider they are 'critical friend' to the Head Teacher there was little evidence of meaningful challenge and there was little evidence of Governors holding the Head Teacher to account for the standards achieved by the school. There was no evidence of Governors being informed about or asking for information related to the impact of performance management procedures. The Governing Body does not discuss the strategic direction of the school and there is no evidence of continuous monitoring of OFSTED key issues to ensure the problems identified in 2001 no longer exist.

There appeared to be a lack of clarity about the Governor role e.g. Governors did not see the full breadth of their role related to standards. There is no recruitment, selection and training policy. There is no evidence in the Minutes of Governor visits to school or of obtaining the opinions of the community, parents, pupils or LEA.

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There is an overwhelming dependence on the Chair by other Governors. He sees himself as 'part of the fabric' and has an autocratic style of leadership. This raises the question of whether the Governors would be more involved with a different Chair. The Governing Body does not discuss its own effectiveness or undertake self-evaluation. A further issue is the extent to which the Governors rely on other key individuals. When one Governor resigned, the task they were undertaking was 'shelved' (an effectiveness survey and training). It was agreed a SWOT analysis should be undertaken but this has not happened.

The Clerk to Governors is also the school Bursar/Finance Officer. The Head Teacher and Chair appear to rely heavily on him. There is no doubt the Clerk fully understands the school financial situation and it is considered this has become an instrument of power. Only the Finance sub-committee, led by the Bursar, appears to report back to the Governing Body on a regular basis. The school staff considers there is 'a them and us' situation and that Governors do not understand what is happening in the school.

Amongst the Governors there is a great deal of support and energy. It is a concern that this support cannot be channelled into more productive processes and practices which would benefit the pupils. Having spent time in the school and for a short time being part of it, the researcher felt sad to be leaving and could not help wondering if more support could or should have been given in terms of relationships, Governor to Governor and staff to Governing Body.

g) Summary

The key question is: Does this Governing Body make a difference and does it add value to the quality of education in their school, that is to say, is it effective?

Arguably, in order to be effective, a Governing Body needs fully to understand its role. In the case of School 1, this was considered not to be the case. The extent to which the Governors of this school maintain a strategic role is extremely limited. Only one or two Governors are actively involved, rather than the whole body exercising its corporate

responsibilities. This view is supported by Earley *et al* (2002, p.43) who also consider the Governor strategic role to be limited and Creese (2000, p.57) who says a significant number of Governing Bodies are having little impact on their schools. There are clear indications the Governors do not understand the full breadth of their statutory role. The Governing Body did not demonstrate any real aspirations or clear vision for their school. It is bound up in current issues rather than future direction.

The autocratic style of the Chair could perhaps be limiting the input of other Governors. There is a clear need for training and if this was recognized, Governors might develop greater confidence in carrying out the Governor role learning ultimately to make a greater contribution to the business of governance.

Would this Governing Body be more effective if they were more independent? They appear to be 'cosy' and friendly and this raises the question if this culture prohibits challenge and scrutiny. Higgs (2002, p.37) suggests this can be an issue with Non-Executive Directors and found after six to eight years they were not independent since they had effectively become part of the business. Added to this, the majority of current board research emphasizes the vital independent monitoring role of Non-Executive Directors.

Much was said about the amount of paperwork, the time limiting factor and the problems of being a Governor. Whilst it is agreed the workload is increasing, there appears to be no strategies in place for handling this. A culture of Governor training does not exist. The Governing Body is insular and does not compare its practices with other schools either locally or nationally. There are no mechanisms in place for monitoring its own performance. It seems to have settled for what already exists.

Governors are dependent on the Chair, Head Teacher and Clerk to Governors for information and guidance and whist several were badly affected by an earlier poor OFSTED Report, lessons have not been learned from this bad experience. Viewed against

the OFSTED criteria 'Judgements on Governance'[45], the school appears to fall between Unsatisfactory (5) and Poor (6).

In general, the indications are there needs to be a change of the leadership style of the Chair and a raising of the skills and aspiration of the Governors. The most unfortunate aspect is that the Governors do not appear to see their roles as being important and yet, they say they enjoy being in school and they give their time voluntarily.

Following the study in School 1, an approach was made by the Chair who asked if some help and support could be given, since the researcher had an understanding of governance and the school. What resulted is shown in the following scenario and it is included in this study with the permission of the Chair of School 1. The time frame of this scenario was four weeks.

Scenario

Day 1

The Head Teacher of the school has resigned and help is needed with appointing a new Head. There was a hint of conflict with the County Education Chief Executive.
It was agreed help would be given with the short listing and interviewing.

Day 2
Telephone call from the Chair of the Finance Committee. Concerned something *not quite right* in the school and had anything emerged during the research?
Reminded Chair of Finance Committee of the responsibilities of Governors and advised him to ask some direct questions at the Finance Meeting scheduled for that evening.

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[45] A copy of these Judgements can be found in Annex F in the Model Guidelines. This criteria may possibly change given the advent of the SEF

Day 3

Telephone call from the Chair of the Finance Committee saying the school had a serious problem related to pupil behaviour and the LEA had commenced formal intervention. The Head Teacher had not informed Governors about this.

Chair of the Finance Committee advised to ask for a copy of all correspondence and reports and to follow-up with the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors. The seriousness and implications of the situation were explained. Reminded him he had a duty to ask questions if something was wrong.

Day 4

Chair asks what the long term implications of intervention are; undertakes to supply a copy of the initial intervention report and comments would be appreciated.

The Chair of Governors then realized how serious the situation was and this was. This was discussed on several subsequent occasions with the Chair of Governors.

Day 5

Chair of Finance Committee calls to say he is about to withdraw from the Interview Panel and resign from the Governing Body (Some concerns about the impact of publicity on his professional life).

Suggested he should perhaps remain a Governor and bring his knowledge of the school to bear on the Interview Panel.

Day 6

Chair decides to offer Acting Head Teacher position to the 2nd Deputy Head Teacher.

Chair has argument with the County Education Chief Executive related to interim Acting Head Teacher and her wish to have her *own man* in the school.

The Chair refuses to have an LEA Adviser on the interview panel.

Advised such arguments do not benefit the school. Perhaps another Governor could speak with the County Education Chief Executive with a view to improving the situation. Pointed out the school needs LEA support at this time and it would be preferable to have an LEA Adviser on the panel.

Day 7

Chair calls to say 2nd Deputy accepted acting Head Teacher position; 1st Deputy extremely upset; staff delegation to Chair re: appointment of acting Head Teacher.

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Day 8

Acting Head Teacher Designate receives letter from his Teaching Union advising him not to accept position; letter hints at staff concerns and states they [the Union] have been in discussion with the LEA for some months; state they have moved to take action against the Governors through the Grievance Procedure. Chair receives letter from Teaching Union. Chair of Governors receives resignation letter from Chair of Finance Committee, to take place with immediate effect.

Chair advised to speak and obtain help from the County Human Resources Department about Union and staffing issues. Suggested HR department handle the issue and Chair should perhaps take a step back from the situation. Suggested Chair of Finance could be asked to defer resignation until after new Head Teacher appointed.

Day 9

Chair of Governors takes advice from HR department and decides to *'eat humble pie'* with the County Chief Executive and to accept help from the LEA. Agreed the LEA would suggest an acting Head Teacher with appropriate experience. Chair says he will not speak with the Chair of Finance and accepts the resignation.

Day 10

Chair of Governors asks for advice re: the situation related to staff opinion of the current Head Teacher and her involvement in the appointment process. Teaching staff refuse to speak with the Head Teacher.

Chair of Governors reminded it is the sole responsibility of Governors to appoint a new Head Teacher and advises the use of the LEA Adviser. Suggested Chair of Governors should speak with the school staff and give assurances about Governor support and the appointment of the interim Acting Head Teacher. It was further suggested this should be a 'pull staff together' meeting.

Day 11

Chair of Governors meets with full staff. He explains he had not really understood the depth of staff feelings but also felt they were to blame as much as the Head Teacher.

Discussion followed related to the politics, stresses and strains of teaching and staff room politics.

Days 12 and 13
Interview Days.
New Head Teacher unanimously appointed by selection committee.
The panel consisted of the Chair of Governors, Vice-Chair of Governors, a Governor and the researcher.
The Interview Panel was advised throughout by an LEA Adviser.

The Future
Advised Governors, staff and Senior Management Team must work together.
Governors must ensure they understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
Appropriate information and data must be requested and supplied by the Head Teacher.
The Chair of Governors must endeavour to appoint new Governors who have appropriate knowledge and skills and who can support him.
Suggested the Governing Body should look at their processes, practices, culture and leadership style.

(In the Scenario the words in italics are the researcher's responses outlining discussions and advice given to the Chair of Governors by the researcher).

This close, insider involvement with School 1 was another source of data, which from an ethnographic perspective was extremely valuable. Not only did it add to the data already obtained on the school, it gave an explanation of why things were going wrong, e.g. the autocratic style of the Chair and the lack of an holistic understanding of School Governance and staff politics. The personal effect of this on the researcher was both emotional and intellectual. At an emotional level there were feelings of pride at being invited to be involved, which led to concerns about whether more could or should have been done to help. It was a salutary reminder that this was the real world and not just an intellectual exercise and led the researcher to consider her personal limitations and weaknesses. On an intellectual level it gave a concrete focus for reflection, not just about School 1 but other schools and acted as a reminder that the primary aim of the study was the production of knowledge (Hamersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.17).

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4.1.3.2 Fieldwork School 2   **Between 12 February and 24 April 2005**

a) Context

This school is an 11 to 18 Specialist Community College with engineering as the specialist subject. The school is non-selective and committed to comprehensive education. The school prospectus states the Mission of the school as being:

'Capable, Caring, Creative, Confident'

The school sees itself as catering for the needs of the entire community and 1500 pupils attend the school. The catchment area is economically prosperous and middle class with a high level parental support. To date there has been a low number of pupils with learning difficulties but a number of pupils are now being bussed into the school from another county. Many of these pupils have problems both academic and behavioural. The effect of this has not yet become apparent.

The 2001 OFSTED Report says:

> "This is a good college with many good features. It has impressive examination results at GCSE/GNVQ and A Level. Leadership is strong. Teaching is good with an increased use of different strategies. The college provides good value for money".

Relating to Governors, the report states:

> "Governors are well informed and fulfil their statutory duties effectively".

The report is extremely complimentary about examination results, the curriculum is enriched through art, media studies, drama, design and technology. It states international links are very good and the college cares well for pupils with special educational needs. It states improvement could be made to the physical education accommodation, communication with parents, the common approach to some aspects of literacy and procedures and facilities in the dining room (These improvements formed the basis of the Governors' Action Plan).

b) Interviews

The issues considered during the interviews are discussed individually and are illustrated with extracts from conversations.

Issue 1: Governor contribution to the raising of standards

The general view of Governors was they did not have a direct input into raising standards and there is a reliance on the Principal. However there does appear to be a change of style with the new Chair who is endeavouring to run the Governing Body on a more professional basis.

The Chair said:

> "There is a gap between government expectations and Governor responsibilities and reality. Governors are not equipped for the job e.g. to set targets. They do not understand the data or where it is coming from.
>
> Governors find it difficult to discuss standards. At the training day they couldn't identify what type of school we were.
>
> The targets for the Principal should be challenging. But currently the LEA and the Principal discuss school targets and then they are brought to Governors to rubber stamp".

The parent Governor considered Governors did not contribute and a co-opted Governor felt very strongly that unless the Governor was already involved in education it is difficult to understand how a school is performing. He said:

> "It is difficult to come from the outside and understand the running of a school".

The former Chair talked of looking at policies and value added scores, but not actually doing it. She did add Governors have to work much harder today, there is no rubber stamping and the Principal keeps Governors well informed.

The teacher Governor was concerned Governors don't really know how staff feels about

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issues and that the "teacher voice isn't heard"

Issue 2: Governing Body performance and working practices

No-one has a job description other than the Clerk to Governors. Interviews for potential Governors do not take place and parent Governors are elected to the Governing Body by other parents.

Mandatory initial training is provided by the LEA but training for existing Governors is patchy and dependent on the interest of individual Governors

The planning and organization of meetings appears to be very good and many comments were made about the value of sub-committees. Governor meetings are very structured both in content and time allocation. There is no doubt the main Governor work is carried out by the Chair and Principal. The Chair had very strong views on where day-to-day management finishes and governance begins. He said:

> "Even the government is giving us operational roles but say it is strategy. There is a real mix up".

This was confirmed by the Principal who said the Chair will not allow Governors to side track onto management issues.

A co-opted Governor said:

> "I have felt out of my depth. There is more and more paperwork. You really need to concentrate and to know your way through the paperwork. Although part of the community, schools are insular places and I have not had the opportunity to play to my strengths".

The teacher Governor felt it was very hard to bring the teacher perspective to Governor meetings as the Principal is there as a Governor and her two deputies also attend the meetings. He said:

> "It is very hard to express your feelings in this forum".

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Issue 3: How Governors are acting as 'critical friend' to the Principal

The Principal said:

"The Governors have now taken on a much more challenging role".

All Governors said there was friendship with the Principal. Governors are both challenging and supportive. There is no doubt the Principal is trusted and her integrity is admired.

One Governor noted:

"The Governors are rarely critical of the Principal or the school. Ours is a good school and there is little to criticize. We agree with almost everything. However, I do think there is a need to go back to basics. For example, a car has many layers of polish and sometimes it is necessary to strip it all back to see what is happening to the metal underneath".

The Chair commented he detested the phrase 'critical friend', adding:

"People seem to think they should interrogate the Principal and the staff. They should support, not criticize. There should be constructive debate and the Governing Body and the Senior Management Team should be as one".

Issue 4: Governor contribution to the strategic development of the school

There appeared to be a lack of understanding of strategy. The words were mentioned e.g. the Development Plan, OFSTED Action Plan but it was difficult to assess how much input Governors actually had.

Comments included:

"We see the plan with the targets. I know it is there but I wasn't involved.

With one meeting per term Governors don't really get into the rhythm of the role, they don't 'get their teeth into it'

I only looked at the plans when completed as they were passed around".

The Principal however, feels Governors are involved, saying:

"They certainly push the target setting issue; they know what we should be aiming for".

The impression of the researcher is this comes from the Chair who discussed the value of his outside business experience and SMART targets, and who said:

"Governors don't really understand what strategy is, e.g. targets. The Principal brought the plan to Governors with 20 objectives. We asked for fewer measurable targets. We now have eight; we can now discuss it [the plan] against objectives".

Issue 5: Governor links to the school community

Comments made by the Head Teacher reflected the views and opinions of other Governors:

"This is the hardest one. They are representative of the community but I am not sure if they go out into the community. But one [Governor] is a central figure in the community and I know he does 'a very good sell' for us.

Time is an issue for many Governors.

Business links in the community are a problem; other schools have got in there first, so getting Governors from these firms isn't easy".

Issue 6: Governor vacancies, turn-over and length of service

There are two hard to fill vacancies on the Governing Body, one of which is for a co-opted Governor with an engineering background (School 2 is an engineering specialist college). The former Chair discussed the problem of attracting LEA Governors saying there used to be a waiting list but now it is very difficult to find Governors. The Governing Body was reduced to 18 from 22 in an attempt to improve working practices. There does not appear to be a problem of turnover and most Governors fulfil their term of office. One Governor has been there for 19 years and this raises a question as to whether some objectivity has been lost. This Governor seems to be very much part of the school

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management and said the school needed people with skills and that Governors need to add something to the Governing Body and work for the good of the school. The Chair remarked:

> "Yes, a very big problem. Two short at present. I am not sure how to resolve the problem. Parents are difficult, no proper job description, a lack of understanding about the role. I feel nine would be a better number. We need another layer like a School Council so 'voices can be heard' but not as Governors".

In subsequent conversations he stressed this view in various guises and is obviously having difficulties in trying as he says, "to make the Governing Body more professional in outlook and in action".

A parent said:

> "Yes we are short at present, but it so hard to find time to do everything. It is so time consuming when you also have to read so much paperwork before meetings. When people talk about training it is a worry again as it is difficult when you have children, where do you find the time for everything?"

Issue 7: Attendance at meetings

Attendance at regular Governor meeting is not an issue, with almost full attendance.

Issue 8: Governing Body self-assessment related to effectiveness

There was little evidence of Governors looking at their own effectiveness. The Chair is working towards this and is hoping purposeful training will help. He talked of finding some effectiveness measures, adding something must be done and a greater professionalism is needed. Self evaluation was mentioned by three Governors but has not yet begun. It would appear the one training session so far, was poorly attended. The teacher Governor was concerned there was a move to measuring things because they were measurable and really it should be a case of defining what is of value to the school and then measuring it e.g. a happy contented staff. One final, telling comment was:

> "We have never said 'How well are we doing,' the Governing Body is critical of the school, not itself".

This is certainly an issue with other staff. As the researcher walked through the school comments were made about Governors not understanding "what they had to put up with".

Issue 9: When asked if they thought there is a better way of governing a school, comments included:

"Governors need to be more professional. More training is essential"

"There needs to be commitment"

"No more than nine members"

"No, it is fine as it is; we don't need to change as long as we have working sub-committees"

"Probably, but not sure what. There are far too many of us, people are not qualified to carry out the role and it is difficult for many people to find the time"

"I don't think a Governing Body is needed. The Principal runs the school and is the professional"

"It is not perfect but the principle of having an external, independent Governing Body is good. But, their workload is too high, it cannot be done in the time available"

A number of overwhelming feelings were expressed e.g. there was too much work, there are too many Governors, an understanding of school business has become necessary and specific skills are needed to carry out the role of being a Governor effectively.

Issue 10: Main features of their Governing Body

Respondents were asked to describe the main issues, problems and features of their Governing Body. These are listed in Table 4.19 together with the response frequency.

Main Features Identified by Respondents	Response Frequency
The Present	
Recruitment difficulties	6
The role is [too] time consuming	4
Enjoy the involvement and making a contribution	4
Don't measure own effectiveness	6
Some Governors don't really know the school and what is happening there	3
School too insular and self-contained. Don't really link to the community	3
There should be a job description. There is a lack of understanding about the role	5
Too much paperwork	2
Governors ask questions, but domestic. Not really *critical*	3
Opportunities are there for training but a poor take-up. Time is a problem	3
Governor role is daunting and complex	3
Only one or two active Governors	3
The government is setting very high expectations of Governors. In reality no influence	2
There is a problem where Governors do not have an education background	1
The Future	
The Governing Body is too big (6-9 a good number)	4
The role and required commitment should be made clear	2
Governors now need professional skills and a greater professionalism	7
One meeting per term is insufficient	3
The Governing Body and Senior Management Team should be as one	1
The Governing Body is not needed. The Principal runs the school	1

Table 4.19   Perceived Main Features of Governor Role - School 2

Issue 11: Statutory Responsibilities

Each Governor was finally asked to give their opinion on ten statements. These opinions are tabulated with the response frequency in Table 4.20, Governor Perceptions of Statutory Responsibilities.

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The Governing Body:	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
1. Fulfils its statutory responsibilities	6	1	0
2. Is fully involved in strategic planning	2	3	2
3. Understands the role of *critical friend*	5	2	0
4. Contributes to improving standards	3	3	1
5. Has strong links with the community	1	2	4
6. Is well informed about the working of the school	3	4	0
7. Is clear about the role of the Governing Body	0	6	1
8. Is clear about the role and responsibilities of the Principal	5	2	0
9.Has a clear policy on recruitment, retention and training of Governors	1	1	5
10.Collectively has appropriate skills and knowledge to govern effectively and efficiently	3	1	3

Table 4.20   Governor Perceptions of Statutory Responsibilities – School 2

c) *Emergent issues*

Issues concerning the change of county boundaries, bussing and the effect on school standards are an obvious concern to Governors and the Principal. However, it is obviously being discussed by the Governing Body as a governance issue. No one raised the question of whether a Governor from the area the children are being bussed from should be appointed. It could perhaps be argued these children are not being represented on the Governing Body.

Although this is a high achieving school in a middle class area it still has problems related to recruitment, training and the time Governors are able to or prepared to give.

d) *Document Analysis*

Although many documents were seen, the main documents considered were the prospectus, Governor Report to Parents, Minutes of Governor Meetings, the OFSTED Report of 2001 and the school web site.

Minutes of Governor Meetings

Governor meetings last approximately two hours and always have six items plus Urgent Matters and Any Other Business. Agendas are produced by the Chair of Governors and the Principal. They are formal and items are allocated the same amount of time at each meeting. The minutes were analysed with a view to assessing how much time was spent on issues related to the statutory duties of Governors. It is accepted this may not be absolutely time accurate as only by attending all meetings could other issues, e.g. informal discussion be considered. Twenty four items were raised over this period. Domestic and congratulatory issues take up a high proportion of time. The only issue raised under 'any other business' was a leaking toilet roof. (see Table 4.21 Governor Meetings Agenda Items)

Topic of Discussion	Frequency	Comment
Chair's Report	Every meeting for 30 minutes	Includes some domestic issues and Governor effectiveness
Principal's Report	Every meeting for 30 minutes	Some congratulatory Little evidence of questions or discussion Governors have this in advance and the Principal talks to it at the meeting..
Governor Effectiveness	For last year, 10 minutes at every meeting, led by the Chair	This instigated by the new Chair in 2004 and included in the Chair's Report
Committee Reports	Curriculum Personnel Resources Report from each every meeting lasting 10 minutes	Little evidence of discussion, contribution or challenge. Includes some domestic issues
SEN Report	Every meeting	
Link Governor Report	Every meeting	5 minutes Governor effectiveness 5 minutes domestic
AOB	Variable topics but generally not significant	Little discussion

Table 4.21   Governor Meetings Agenda Items – School 2

Whilst Table 4.21, Governor Meeting Agenda Items gives an itemized analysis, the graphical frequency representation shown in Figure 4.2 adds to the overall picture. These

figures are intended to give a flavour of the content of meetings and are not intended to be seen as a mathematical analysis. Governor effectiveness would appear to be an important issue, it is on the Agenda each meeting, which confirms the Chair's opinion that this is an issue in need of serious consideration.
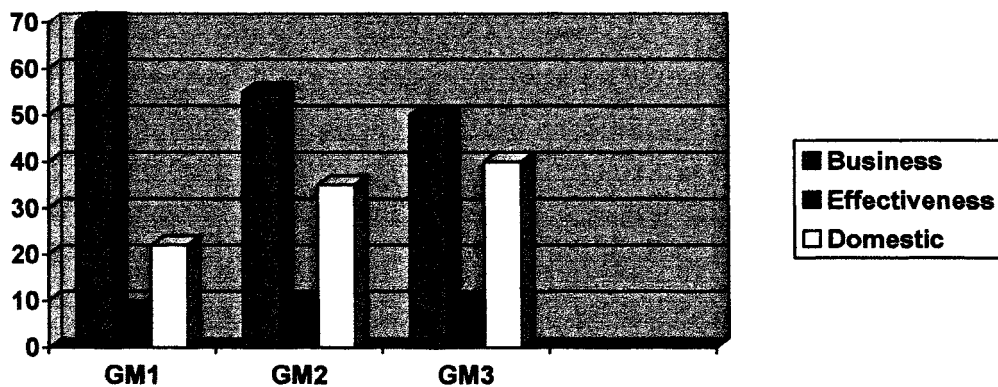
Figure 4.2 Agenda Items Frequency Diagram – School 2

Overall, Governor business occupies 60% of Governor debate and discussion. The Chair and Principal make by far the greatest contribution. Contributions from Governors centre on the Chairs of sub-committees and link Governors for SEN and governance.

e) Observation

From observation there would appear to be a notable power culture, i.e. the Chair, Principal and former Chair are the central power source and go almost unchallenged. Table 4.22 illustrates the culture of the Governing Body together with observable behaviours. Control is centralized upon the Chair and Principal and former Chair. Meetings would appear to be mechanical. On the other hand, everything felt friendly and Governors wanted to be there. The symbols of power were obvious namely the hierarchical position, status with other Governors and school staff, the physical position at meetings, the number of visits to the school, the involvement in planning and setting the Principal's targets, influence on other Governors knowledge and access to privileged information.

Climate	Culture	Psychological Factors	Sociological Factors
Morale Appears variable	**Social Patterns** More dominant members sit together around the top end of the table. Chair spends a great deal of time in school. Former Chair remains influential (perhaps related to time served and being a County Councillor)	**Capabilities** Very obvious variables. Some members appeared overwhelmed by the dominant Governors. A hint of awe related to the profession of some Governors e.g. doctor.	**Group Behaviour** Smiles and friendliness
Conflict Some perceived underlying conflicts between Chair and former Chair.	**Symbols** Paper Lay-out of the room	**Goals** In Governors report stated as: 1.Ensure the school is managed effectively 2.Ensure the school runs within the statutory guidelines 3.Assist with the formulation and progress of the school Development Plan 4. Ensure the implementation of the National Curriculum 5. Formulate policy e.g. discipline	**Interactions** Seemed comfortable, some challenge but seemed to be more on day-to-day issues
Chair Credibility Chair spends a great deal of time in school. Seems to be hinted at but unspoken conflict about the direction of the Chair who is trying to put the Governing Body onto a more business -like footing	**Rituals** Seating always the same 'this is my place' Agendas – Time limit to items.	**Priorities** Somewhat variable and difficult to define in the time available.	**Organization** Complete almost to the minute
Scapegoating Difficult to say given limited group observation time	**Power** See Table 4.23	**Motives** Variable: 'Retired and have time to come into school' 'I want to be part of the school' 'I love coming into school and being a Governor' 'Not sure why I am still here as not really part of things' 'I feel it is my duty to put something back into the community'	**Socialisation/Socio-economic Issues** Wide span of backgrounds. Some non-attendance because of work commitments No evidence of commitment to or being part of the community

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Trust	Stories	Attitudes/Beliefs/Values	Rules
Governors appear to show full trust in the former Chair, the Principal and Chair.	We all contribute here. We know everything about the school. Everything is very good here.	Positive about the school. Strong support and admiration of the Principal	'We are going to have to change our working practices to keep up with legislation'. and 'More training is needed'
Change Management *Don't ask me to do anything extra* feeling from some members	**Controls** Strong financial control by Principal.		**Political Agendas** None obvious other than Chair-v- former Chair but it is a noticeable undercurrent
Leadership/ Management Style/ Paradigm	Democratic but with an element of 'do it my way' Some divisions amongst Governors related to some people knowing *more than me.* Professionally led by a Chair who is trying to make changes.		

Table 4.22   Culture and Observable Behaviours - School 2

As in Table 4.18, School 1, Table 4.23 proposes a Power Matrix which derives directly from the interviews, observation and documents. It classifies the stakeholders in relation to the power they wield and the extent to which they showed interest in the governance of the school. The stakeholders in Groups A attend meetings but are passive rather than active. Group B, although passive were interested and in different circumstances may possibly make a much greater contribution. The Chair is trying to raise the level of interest through training, both individual and collective, but there remains considerable resistance to training. Group C is influential because of the involvement in the finances of the school. Without doubt, the power in the school Governing Body lies with Group D. They control the agendas, the meetings and the culture. There is a definite over-reliance on this group. On the basis of this, a view might also be taken that individual needs, the schools needs and the basic principles of stakeholder governance are not being met. However, when a whole school issue was raised by the Principal related to changing modern foreign languages curriculum, the entire Governing Body challenged the decision and the suggestion was withdrawn.

	INTEREST IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE	
	LOW	HIGH
POWER LOW	A Attend basic number of meetings Co-opted and Community Governor	B Interested but less influential/able Parent Governors Staff Governors
HIGH	C Influential Chair Finance	D Key Players Principal Chair Former Chair

Table 4.23   Power Matrix – School 2

f) Reflection and Key Observations - School 2

There are some contradictions as to the performance of the Governing Body e.g. between the Chair, the former Chair and the Principal and whilst Governors consider they are 'critical friend' to the Principal there was little evidence of meaningful challenge (except on one occasion). It appears Governors do not want to challenge as they respect the Principal and do not wish to upset her. Indeed the Chair states his dislike of the phrase 'critical friend' and in his view there should not be challenge.

Governors do not see the full breadth of their role related to standards and there is very little evidence of the Governing Body discussing the strategic direction of the school either formally or informally. Governors are not informed about nor ask for information related to the impact of performance management procedures.

There is no evidence in the Minutes of Governor visits to the school being recorded and reported back to Governing Body. Nor is there a recruitment, selection and on-going training policy and Governors appear unwilling to undertake any training suggested by the Chair or LEA.

There is no evidence of community involvement although many Governors spoke of the 'close community' It would appear the school does not see itself as part of the greater community. As a result there is no evidence of undertaking stakeholder surveys or obtaining LEA opinions. Governors do not discuss their own effectiveness or undertake self-evaluation and there is dependence by other Governors on the Chair and former Chair. This raises the question of whether Governors would be more involved if the former Chair were to leave the Governing Body.

Having already spent time in School 1 the researcher was more prepared for many of the responses and observations. However, there were still surprises, e.g. the welcome, the openness and the sharing of concerns. As in School 1, the Governors, although enthusiastic and committed to the school, appear unsure about where they are going. However the Chair believes he does and since this is a time of change in education it is hoped other Governors will follow his lead.

g) Summary

The key question is: Does this Governing Body make a difference and add value to the quality of education in their school, is it effective? It could be argued in order to be effective, a Governing Body needs to fully understand their role. In the case of School 2, it is considered to be partially the case.

The extent to which the Governors of this school have a strategic role is questionable. Only one or two Governors are actively involved, rather than the whole body exercising corporate responsibility. This view is supported by Earley *et al* (2002, p.43) who also considers the Governor strategic role to be limited and Creese (2000, p.57) who says a

significant number of Governing Bodies have little impact on their schools. There are indications some Governors do not understand the full breadth of their statutory role.

The democratic style of the Chair in conjunction with the personality and long tenure of the former Chair could perhaps become an issue and limit the input of other Governors. Would this Governing Body be more effective if the former Chair were not so central to the Governing Body? It could be argued this is prohibiting challenge and scrutiny. Higgs (2002, p.35) suggests this can be an issue with Non-Executive Directors and found after six to eight years they were not independent since they had become part of the business. Added to this, the majority of the current board research emphasizes the vital independent monitoring role of Non-Executive Directors.

There is a clear need for training, particularly related to strategy and standards. Paperwork, the time factor and lack of training are seen to be problems. There appear, however, to be no strategies in place for handling these. A culture of Governor training does not exist. During informal conversations with Governors and the Principal, related to training, it would seem there is always a reason 'why not'. The Governing Body is insular and does not compare its practices with other schools either locally or nationally. There are no mechanisms in place for monitoring the performance of the Governing Body. Whilst the Chair is hoping to change this, there would seem to be some resistance related to time. It is dependent on the Chair, Principal and former Chair for information. The strength of this Governing Body is the new Chair who appears to understand governance issues, has clear views on the direction in which the school should be heading and has the personality and style to implement change as and when it is required. Viewed against the OFSTED criteria 'Judgments on Governance' the Governing Body would seem to fall between Unsatisfactory (5) and Satisfactory (4). This was interesting as the OFSTED Report considered the Governing Body to be good.

This is a successful, high achieving school. The Governors are generally happy with the performance of the school and take the lead from the Principal. The Governing Body as a

whole did not demonstrate any real aspirations or clear vision of future direction for their school.

Following interviews with the Chair and based on responses and the literature, the researcher designed a simple evaluation format to help the Governing Body start to assess its own effectiveness. The result of this is shown as Annex A in the Model Guidelines. As with School 1, this further close involvement was another source of data and from an ethnographic perspective was extremely valuable.

4.1.3.3 Cross School Data: Reflection

Based on the findings from both schools, it is concluded neither Governing Bodies have a real impact on their school. They enjoy being part of the school, the Principal/Head Teacher of each say the Governing Body are supportive but the question remains, are they effective and making a difference to the standards of the school?

Earley (1994, p.105) says 'bottom line' factors for achieving minimal effectiveness should include conduct of meetings, chairing, clarity of purpose of sub-committees, attendance and commitment of members. His research shows that without these, the chances of Governing Bodies making a difference are significantly reduced. He goes on to say to achieve effectiveness, there is a need for Governing Bodies to have a clear understanding of the nature of their roles and responsibilities and how these coalesce and complement those of the Head Teacher or Principal. Although a decade has passed and many statutory additions have been made to the Governor role since this Earley's 1994 research, the indications are many of the issues in existence in 1994 are still here in 2005/6.

Workload, paperwork and time factors were clearly important issues in both schools. Most respondents mentioned these in addition to the wide ranging responsibilities although many had no understanding of these and in some cases no interest. Frequent and regular comments made during and after the interviews were typically:

- But how can we do it?

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- What do other Governing Bodies do?
- But we are only volunteers with limited time!
- We don't measure or assess our effectiveness but really we should, where do we start?

The conclusion reached by the researcher was respondents were anxious to improve their effectiveness but were uncertain as to how.

On the face of it, there appeared to be good relationships between the Senior Management Team and Governors. However, whether being too close inhibits objectivity, cannot go without question. Higgs (2003, p.37) suggests length of tenure and independence need to be considered to prevent Non-Executive Directors becoming part of the organization. It would appear Governors are somewhat restrained in airing their views. There was a 'cosiness' and a feeling that 'we mustn't upset the Head Teacher'.

A planned programme of recruitment and retirement amongst board members can be of significant benefit. It is an important part of the board's work to ensure there is adequate management development and succession planning (Higgs, ibid., p.41). In both schools recruitment is without doubt a problem. A number of respondents suggested having fewer Governors on the Governing Body could solve recruitment problems. Indeed many considered this was desirable and the way forward. It was suggested the number of Governors has no bearing on effectiveness and a smaller Governing Body with knowledgeable Governors was desirable. No evidence of retirement planning was found. There was no selection or recruitment policy in either school.

The Chairs should address the developmental needs of their Governing Bodies as a whole with a view to enhancing their effectiveness as a team. There should be a step change in training and development provision so that it is suited to the Governing Body. Non-Executive Directors should regularly appraise their individual skills, knowledge and expertise and determine whether further professional development would help them develop their expertise and fulfil their obligations as members of the existing board (Higgs, 2003). The research suggests, other than for initial training provided by LEAs, no

on-going professional development was being undertaken in any meaningful way. There is also an indication of insularity in both schools and a disregard of the need for training. Undertaking external training would seem appropriate, as this would allow for an interchange of ideas with Governors from other schools.

> "Boards can benefit significantly from formally reviewing both individual and collective board performance, including sub-committees. Such evaluation can assist the Chair in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the board"
> (Higgs, ibid., p.49).

There was no evidence of Governor performance evaluation. However both Chairs said this was something they should be undertaking but indicated some resistance and an uncertainty as to which SMART[46] targets would be appropriate. The new OFSTED criteria for Governors indicate Governing Bodies need to assess their performance much more closely. Neither school had a formal mechanism for capturing stakeholder concerns (or praise) thus providing them with feedback.

In both schools the attendance at the formal Governor-Parent Annual Meeting is very low and in some instances in single figures.[47] It would appear neither school had considered the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility as a potential for enhancing the reputation of the school or as a means to increasing their competitiveness. Risk Management, other than Health and Safety, is not considered.

The need for appropriate skills, knowledge and expertise related to business e.g. finance, personnel, health and safety and the curriculum was highlighted by most respondents. Several Governors considered they were not equipped to take part in discussions because of this lack of knowledge. There was also a slight hint of less knowledgeable Governors feeling somewhat intimidated by those with professional qualification.

The 'critical friend' issue appears to mean different thing to different Governors. Many Governors do not see their role as being critical of the Head and although questions are

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[46] SMART targets = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-specific.

asked they are often on day-to-day issues. One Chair said he considered Governors were more comfortable in this mode.

In relation to stakeholder governance it would seem recruiting Governors is such an issue, that almost anyone who wishes to be a Governor is welcomed whether or not they represent an aspect of the community. There are for example, no Governors under 21 years old in either school, this is perhaps one avenue to be explored.

A major concern of the researcher was the apparent lack of consideration and discussion of future education imperatives which may well impact on the Governor role, e.g. New Relationships with Schools (NRwS) and the implications of extended use of schools.

Could the researcher have dealt better with the fieldwork? Probably not, but it is acknowledged that at times there was a feeling of wanting to be more involved, offer help and point out weak areas. Undoubtedly the fieldwork has had an effect on the understanding of the researcher, not just about governance but about culture, people and research. It has highlighted the need to be open minded, not to have expectations of what may arise, that one aspect of research leads to another and there always needs to be a cut-off point.

4.2   Relationship between Analysis and Literature

The data obtained in the research are largely consistent with the literature and supports the work of Deem *et al,* (1995), Earley (2000), and Higgs (2003).   The main issues highlighted are:

- there is a relatively low level of knowledge of School Governance amongst the general public. There is a need for widespread promotional campaigns to address this issue

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[47] This is in line with schools throughout the country

- there is a lack of clarity about the role and responsibilities of School Governors

- a different structure would lead to greater effectiveness of the Governing Body

- Governors are often more concerned with management than with governance and there is very little meaningful self-evaluation

- given the volunteer nature of the role, appropriate support structures are needed, e.g. training and mentoring should be encouraged and be seen as part of the role

- recruitment of Governors takes place on a number of levels but there is little evidence on which to judge the effectiveness of any of the methods. Much recruitment is by word of mouth and there is a suggestion this is perpetuates existing cultures and diversity problems. Recruitment materials are inadequate, roles and responsibilities, legal issues, required skills and time commitment are not made clear at the time of recruitment. Existing recruitment methods fail to recruit groups of Governors who are representative of the community they serve

- there is a need to recruit and match individuals to specific tasks and roles. Some knowledge, skills and competence are required

- the literature suggests in many schools there remains a power struggle between the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors. This has a knock on effect on the functioning of the Governing Body. However in the two fieldwork schools of this research this was not the situation

- time commitment and excessive paperwork are problems

- some research indicates things are improving e.g. financial planning

- there remains a problem related to the recruitment and appointment of Head Teachers

- knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school for example, 'where are we going', is somewhat limited

- there needs to be improved understanding of Governor working practices related to staff/Governor relationships, training and the impact on the school of for example, standards, strategy, financial management, performance review, and being a 'critical friend' of the Head Teacher

4.3 Reflections on the Findings

The research indicates there is a recognizable link between the roles of Non-Executive Directors and School Governors. This appears to be becoming stronger as the responsibilities and accountabilities of Governors develop. It is considered the Stakeholder Governance model should be supplemented with aspects of Policy Governance facilitating differentiation between the Governor and Head Teacher roles. It appears School Governance today, in many instances, is involved with micromanagement and 'rubber stamping'. Policy Governance would help Governors focus on the strategic aspect and less on day-to-day issues. Governors and Governing Bodies generally work hard and although the theory of School Governance is updated periodically with new legislation, practice remains primitive and is often more about rhetoric than reality.

Although part-time volunteers, Governors are under government pressure to improve standards, oversee multimillion pound budgets and take responsibility for staff and buildings. Governing Bodies should consider where independence ends and integration as a member of staff begins. Communications between the Chair, Head Teacher, Governors, staff and the community should be clear. Reality and clarity related to Governor performance and practice is essential and the current School Governance structure needs to be streamlined and less complex. Workload and time requirement should be reduced. This reduction of complexity and streamlining will also combat some of the accountability issues since "institutional complexity obscures who is accountable to whom for what" (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003, p.133).

The Governance processes and practices need to be redefined and redesigned to help Governors fulfil this role and there should be transparency, effective communications, with participation and accountability as the underlying values. The research indicates many Governors are sometimes overwhelmed by the 'job' but indications are that the existing statutory role and responsibilities are viable. Many individual Governors would be both more comfortable and effective if their roles were aligned to their individual strengths and experiences. Having the full breadth of Governor responsibilities is considered by many to be too time consuming and daunting. Competencies, skills and expertise are required and the quality of governance will be improved with on-going monitoring and evaluation. Unfortunately, Governors as yet do not see themselves as leaders delivering a vital public service. The research indicates the voluntary and non-salaried nature of the Governor should be maintained.

Governing Bodies are hierarchical and systems are only as good as the people who operate them. In the school situation the lead has initially to be taken by the Chair of Governors and the Head Teacher. Chairs should consider their roles and power in relation to motivation, recruitment and retention of Governors and with sound processes for selection, retention and rotation. Governors need to understand the implications and practical application of their leadership and accountability role in the school environment and there should be Risk Management across all areas of school life, not just for example, financial and legal situations.

The research has highlighted the value of a Governing Body. It is there to support the Senior Management Team, have a strategic focus and provide strategic advice, provide an objective and independent overview of the school, scrutinise and challenge, bring an outside perspective to the leadership of the school, bring experience, knowledge and skills to the school, monitor performance and ensure implementation of the development plan, ensure effective governance and link with the community the school serves. Governors are told they need to "interpret data to assess progress and determine appropriate action" (Appendix I, DfES, School Governor Recruitment Toolkit). Yet in the same paper they are told "School Governors do not need any formal qualifications – just the will to make a

difference to our children's education". Given the existing structure, history and cultures of Governing Bodies, this would seem to be both daunting and contradictory.

Furthermore many forces shape the Governor role. These are internal, external, individual and group factors and all need to be considered if change is to take place. Figure 4.3 is proposed as an illustration of these forces and the contributing factors. This is a daunting list for many people.

Sociological Factors

Group behaviour
Interactions
Organization
Process of socialisation
Creation of norms, rules
Culture

Psychological Factors

Capabilities
Goals, priorities
Motives
Personality
Attitudes, values, beliefs

Dependencies

Clerk to Governors
Head Teacher
DfES
LEA
Environment
Each other

School Governing Body

Ethical Factors

Honesty, integrity
Probity, values
Esteem
Respect
Standards, moral
principles
'Principles of Public Life'
'Best Value Principles'

Environmental Factors

Political agendas
Socio-economic issues
Uncertainties
Past performance
Strengths and weaknesses
Skills and knowledge
Leadership styles
Motivations
Processes

Figure 4.3   Summary of the Forces that Shape Governing Bodies

However Governors cannot be 'all things to all people' and their skills and strengths should be used appropriately. What has become apparent from the research is together with its statutory role, a Governing Body needs to ensure there is a capacity to develop school policies, an ability to anticipate and react to future trends, build relationships with the stakeholders, be able to challenge and to be self-critical. However, it is considered the

job of the School Governor is 'doable' and the problems are related to flawed practices not flawed theory.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter the data have been analysed, theorized and reflected upon. A possible question remains which is, are Governors needed by schools? Whilst initially there may have been some doubts as to their value, the results of the research suggest they have an important role to play provided the role, processes and practices are correctly conceptualized. This opinion is based on the research data, literature and the fact that LEAs are playing a reduced monitoring role in schools, that OFSTED inspections are fewer and with a 'lighter touch' and that schools have now to organize their own self evaluation process[48] [49]

However, the research and the literature highlighted some encouraging indicators that Governors want to be involved in their schools, want to support the education of children and want to improve their understanding and effectiveness. Many were asking for an indication of how to move forward.

An early consideration was whether the Governor role was an act of political faith rather than a realistic and productive objective. The answer would seem to be 'Yes' but it is an act that can and should become a reality, especially when the issues highlighted in the last paragraph are considered. There have been no suggestions as to a better way of overseeing a school.

If there were no Governing Body, the question which comes to mind is the one posed by Plato, "Who shall guard the guardians?"[50]

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[48] The Act (2005) addresses School evaluation but not Governing Body self evaluation

[49] The former Chief Inspector of Schools interviewed as part of the research made the comment 'Predictably, the teaching unions think it is wonderful' Sunday Times, April 17, 2005

[50] The DfES has obviously considered this issue and the 2005 Education Act includes a School Improvement Partnership aspect. Each school is to have a former Head Teacher or practicing Head Teacher linked to the school. This is not a governance role but will involve target setting and the Performance

CHAPTER FIVE: KEY FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS
WHERE NOW?

"A truly effective, diverse organization is one in which the differences individuals bring are valued and are used".

Modernising Governance. White Paper, March 1999

"Who shall guard the guardians?"

The Republic by Plato (427-347BC)

5.1   Introduction

Chapter Four concluded with reflections on the research data and the literature forming the general conclusion that School Governors have an important role to play, provided their role and practices are correctly conceptualized. Moreover, Plato's words would seem to resonate with many of the research findings in a common opinion that a Governing Body 'overseeing role' is essential.

This chapter continues this theme by presenting the research recommendations and discussing some of the philosophical and practical issues highlighted by the research. It also considers problems which may occur if changes are not made to School Governance. The findings, key themes and issues for each aspect of data collection were identified in Chapter Four and a number of broad conclusions were presented. In this chapter the main recommendations emerging from the research are presented.

A great number of far-reaching changes in the way schools are now governed and the reconstitution of Governing Bodies have already been described. Most of the changes have been brought about by new legislation, usually stating it gives Governors increased autonomy. Earley *et al* (2002, p.145) in their policy recommendations suggest there should be further exploration about ways of articulating and disseminating greater realism and clarity about the role of the Governing Body. Hidden in this statement is an indication

Management of the Head Teacher. Whilst this would appear to be of value, it is understood finding such people of the right calibre is proving difficult.

that the role of Governors is somewhat exaggerated and perhaps unreal. They continue by suggesting the leadership capacity of the Governing Body, although welcomed by most Head Teachers, is circumscribed by the extent to which it depends on the Head Teacher and Senior Management Team for information, the restricted time Governors can spend in school coupled to their lack of professional knowledge.

5.2 Key Findings

Whilst the findings of the research are described in Chapter Four, Table 5.1 illustrates the overall comparative key findings in tabulated form, which link into the researcher's recommendations.

Significant Issues	Questionnaire	Elite Interviews	Fieldwork Observations	Fieldwork Interviews
Lack of time	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lack of knowledge, skills and understanding before and after taking up the role. Inadequate appreciation of the demands and responsibilities of the Governor role	✓	✓	✓	✓
Too much school paperwork	✓	-	✓	-
Lack of clarity about the Governor role Poor perception of the role	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lack of involvement, only attend minimum number of meetings	-	-	-	✓
Lack of confidence, ability and sometimes a feeling of inadequacy	-	✓	✓	-
Lack of meaningful training	✓	✓	-	✓
Too involved in day-to-day issues	-	-	✓	✓
Poor recruitment strategies	✓	✓	-	✓
High dependency on Head Teacher	-	✓	✓	✓
Chair leadership issues/ poor teamwork	-	-	✓	✓
Role too diverse/complex	✓	✓	-	✓
Lack of meaningful challenge of Senior Management Team	-	✓	✓	-
Too many members	✓	✓	✓	✓
No self evaluation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lack of contribution by many members	-	-	✓	-
Much paperwork related to requirements of role, policies, legal issues and financial paperwork. No evidence of Practice Documents (other than multi-page tick sheets in one school)	-	-	✓	-
Governors not seen to be sources of ideas and inspiration	-	✓	✓	✓

Table 5.1   Comparative Key Findings
(✓ indicates issues highlighted by each data category)

5.3 Recommendations

The research findings highlight the need for greater clarity and a better understanding of the School Governor role, greater transparency and accountability related to Governor practices and guidance related to effective working practices. Based on these issues and the research findings, it is recommended School Governors should work to Model Guidelines which consider current and future educational imperatives, the school and its management whilst recognizing tensions which may arise with any change. It is considered the Model Guidelines will help Governing Bodies become more professional and increase their effectiveness.

As a result of the research, thirty two recommendations are made which are translated into five Key Issues, namely Governance and Structure, Guiding Principles, People, Processes and Conduct and Development Criteria. The Key Issues constitute the parameters for the development of the Model Guidelines.

Key Issue I: Governance and Structure

	Recommendations
i	Each Governing Body should develop a Code of Conduct which is regularly reviewed and available to all stakeholders. This will link to the School Profile
ii	There should be a combination of Stakeholder and Policy Governance
iii	Governors should be clear about the breadth of their powers and responsibilities
iv	Governance should be: • purposeful • strategically driven • continuously reviewed and evaluated
v	There should be a clearly defined overall structure and committee structure
vi	The Governing Body should be of a size and structure which will: • allow Governors to contribute and use their expertise in a meaningful way. • enable the 'load to be spread' • ensure everyone feels involved and able to contribute
vii	10 years should be considered to be the maximum length of service of individual Governors. After this issues arise related to impartiality and independence. The benefit of 'new blood' on the Governing Body must be recognised
viii	There should be a culture of high expectation and the role should be challenging and satisfying
ix	There should be a supportive culture which recognizes individual skills and talent
x	There should be clear lines of accountability to the Senior Management Team, pupils and parents, the community and funders

Table 5.2 Key Issue 1: Governance and Structure

Key Issue II: Guiding Principles

	Recommendations
xi	School Governors must think strategically.
xii	The Governing Body should support the Senior Management Team but at the same time be sufficiently detached to challenge their views
xiii	School Governance must be inclusive in terms of sharing experiences and best practice
xiv	Risk Management should be in-built into Governor practices School Governors should have a strategy for managing risk. Risks may be financial, staffing, pupil health and safety associated. Governors should ensure there is a system for identifying, measuring and handling risk.
xv	The Governing Body should link closely with and obtain feedback from its stakeholders e.g. the pupils, parents, community and funders
xvi	Best Value Principles should be practiced: Compare, Challenge, Consult, Compete

Table 5.3   Key Issue II: Guiding Principle

Key Issue III: People

	Recommendations
xvii	There should be a clarity and realism of the Governor role related to: • time commitment • strategy • standards
xviii	There should be a balance of knowledge, skills and experience related to the needs of the school
xiv	There should be a strategy for recruiting new Governors which should be transparent and based on the needs of the school and the Governing Body
xx	There should be a base line of necessary competencies, skills and abilities which will enable Governors to make positive contributions.
xxi	All Governors should have a job description and person specification before appointment which should include the time commitment Roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined
xxii	There should be well defined procedures for induction and training. On-going professional training should be part of the role. There should be equity of access to training and development
xxiii	There should be regular collective and individual review and evaluation
xxiv	Consideration should be given to length of service as a Governor ensuring continuing impartiality and independence

Table 5.4   Key Issue III: People

Key Issue IV: Processes and Conduct

	Recommendations
xxv	There should be greater professionalism related to carrying out Governor business e.g. although volunteers Governors have statutory responsibilities and are accountable for their school. Governors should recognize their public service role
xxvi	The Governing Body should hold the Senior Management Team to account for standards within the school
xxvii	Governors should ensure they have regular, full and complete information from the Head Teacher. This should be sufficient for Governors to detect problems, unethical behaviour, incompetence and risks.
xxviii	There should be no 'rubber stamping' As part of the 'critical friend' role, Governors should monitor and evaluate the work of the school and be a sounding board. Where needed, the role includes asking challenging, pertinent questions of the Head Teacher.
xxix	There should be less but more meaningful paperwork
xxx	Monitoring of school performance must be related to standards and statutory requirements

Table 5.5   Key Issue IV: Processes and Conduct

Key Issue V: Development Criteria

	Recommendations
xxxi	The Model Guidelines should be sufficiently flexible to allow local interpretation
xxxii	The Model Guidelines should: • clarify roles and responsibilities • define lines of communication and accountability • provide a structure for effective governance by identifying *how* improvements can be made • ensure a degree of continuity over time • establish direction and reduction of risks • articulate the importance of School Governance • increase Governor satisfaction • link the statutory role of Governors with, best Value Principles, Principles of Public Service, New Combined Code/Higgs Recommendations (2003) and the New Relationship with Schools Agenda (2005)

Table 5.6   Key Issue V: Model Guidelines Development Criteria

5.4   The Argument for Model Guidelines: Sustainability of Present Practices

This work was predicated on the view that the prescribed role of School Governors has been wrongly conceptualised and is not working. It was considered there was a distinct gap between what was planned and incorporated in statute and what is actually happening.

Having investigated School Governance for over four years, the researcher now has stronger concerns than at the outset. The data confirms a gap exists. However, these concerns are related to Governing Body practices rather than the statutory role. The researcher has further concerns. Firstly, the insularity of Governing Bodies, they are committed to their school but they do not appear to see or understand their interrelation with the broader picture of governance at either local or national levels. Secondly, Governor responsibilities are increasing and without a reference point provided by theory, it could be easy to ignore management practices and evaluation and to assume 'all is well'. Finally, a sector specific framework is required if there is to be structured, measurable improvement.

An early question asked was, Are Governors needed by schools? Whilst initially there may have been some doubts as to their value, the researcher is now convinced they have an important role to play, if that role and practice is correctly conceptualized. The study indicates the job is achievable but there needs to be a new structure, clearly defined practices and a change of culture reflecting professionalism and the statutory and public service nature of the role.

The objective of the research was to develop Model Guidelines if they were considered to be necessary, which recognized the reality of the present situation but retain the spirit of stakeholder governance within the context of recent Education Acts. The research data indicate a clear need for such guidelines which will cover all substantive elements of the role, namely issues related to people, structure, guiding principles and processes and practices of governance, all within a culture of review and self evaluation. Indeed after testing and further development, this might be considered to be a Practice Standard for School Governors similar to the new Code of Practice described in Chapter Two. The Model Guidelines are based on theory, rigorous empirical research and address the Governor and stakeholder concerns and needs

5.5 Rationale

Johnson and Scholes suggest three criteria against which a strategy can be assessed, namely suitability, acceptability and feasibility (1999, Chapter 8). These are now applied in the context of Model Guidelines for Governors:

- **Suitability**

  Four factors were considered which are:

i. Table 1.1 which compares and contrasts [51] the roles of School Governors and Non-Executive Directors. The contrast and transferable lessons (Table 5.7) have been highlighted as the research progressed. It is now considered there are transferable lessons in the New Combined Code and aspects of them are built into the Model Guidelines for Governors

ii. the qualitative assessment of the researcher based on preunderstanding, the views of practicing Governors and acknowledged experts in the education sector

iii. comparing the relative merits of other models

iv. based on the literature and research findings and keeping within legislation,[52] whilst retaining the existing structure, three other notional structures of School Governance were considered. These are illustrated in Figure 5.1.

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[51] As opposed to the similarities alone as illustrated in Table 1.1
[52] Current legislation allows a minimum of nine Governors on a Governing Body

Chapter One: Research Findings Analogy: Table 1.1 ↓	
School Governors: Public Sector ↓	**Non-Executive Directors: Private Sector** ↓
Stakeholder Governance	Shareholder Governance
Volunteers	Paid/salaried
Shortage of Governors	No current shortage
Increase in number of failing schools	Corporate collapses e.g. Enron/Equitable Life
Flawed practice of School Governance	Higgs Review and Penrose Report – problems highlighted

←Litigation→

←Effectiveness of Organizations Questioned→	
No national performance standard other than OFSTED criteria. Some LEA frameworks, varying in content, context and length	New Combined Code of Practice(Higgs) (National)
	Possible Transferable lessons: Model Guidelines to include: • Structure/composition • Recruitment • Selection • Training • Roles and responsibilities • Processes • Relationship with Chief Executive
Research Data: • Literature Review • Pilot enquiries • Questionnaire • Elite interviews • Two field studies Conclusion and Recommendation: **Guidance and Clarity needed**	↓
New Model Guidelines should: • Retain Stakeholder Governance and integrate with Policy Governance • Address issues related to: Governance and Structure Guiding Principles People Processes and Conduct Self Evaluation	←

Table 5.7   School Governor–Non-Executive Director Contrast and Transferable Lessons

```
                        Extensive Delegation

                                    |
        1. Retain Existing Practices | 2. Two tier structure
                                    |
                                    |
Stakeholder                         |                    Stakeholder/ Policy
Governance ─────────────────────────┼──────────────────── Governance
                                    |                    Marriage
(existing)                          |                    (recommended)
                                    |
        3. Less members, e.g. 15    | 4. New Structure of 9, with
           One meeting per month    |    satellite sub-committees
           Everyone involved in     |    and Model Guidelines
           everything               |
                                    |
                        Controlled Delegation
```
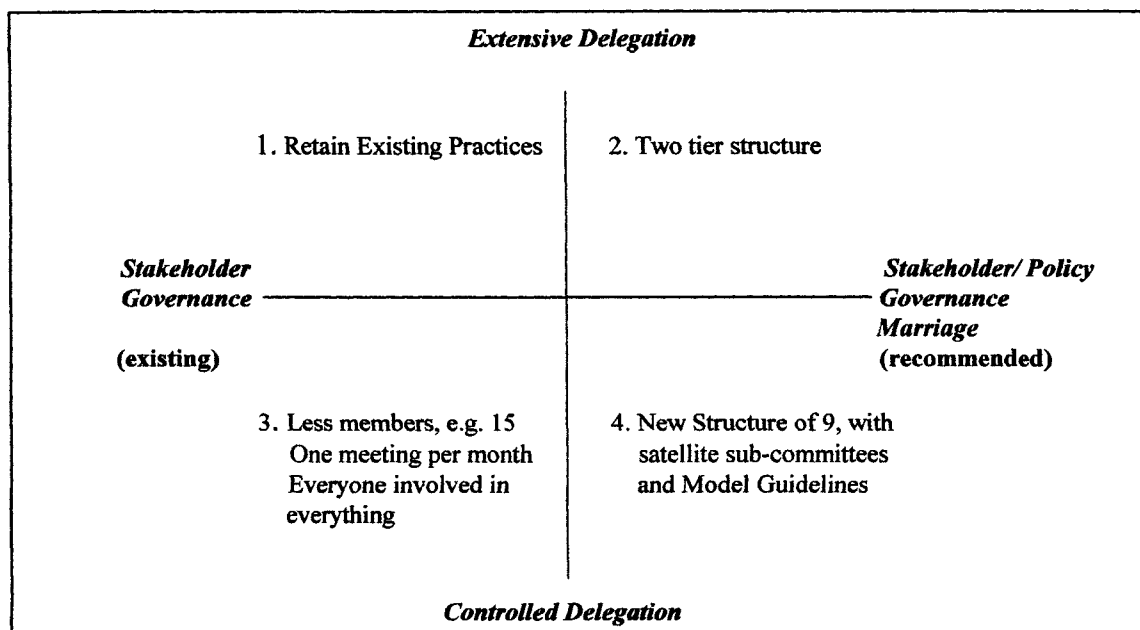
Figure 5.1   Notional Governance Structures

- **Acceptability**

The intention of this research was to produce findings to identify if there was a gap between what is prescribed in statute and what is happening in reality in schools. If such a gap existed, then the result would form a firm foundation to produce recommendations to fill it. The research indicates many Governors want a job description and advice on how they can become more knowledgeable. Acceptability can also refer to risk. The Model Guidelines will be a risk free support mechanism for Governors and the data indicates they will welcome the clarity.

- **Feasibility**

This is concerned with whether Governing Bodies will have the resources and competencies to use the Model Guidelines. The financial cost will be minimal and should save valuable Governor time. It is contended the Model Guidelines will cost nothing but add significant value.

This research commenced with a view Governors were working to a flawed theory based on the premises that:

- the concepts and practices in existence had been derived from a series of accidents rather than by design,

- it is impossible for a Governing Body to carry out effectively all of the duties prescribed in statute, within the existing structure, in the available time.

After four years research, it is concluded the theory is not flawed but the practice is.

5.6 Summary

Many definitions of governance are to be found but the researcher now considers a simple, appropriate and understandable definition applicable to School Governance is:

'School Governance is the framework through which Governors are collectively accountable for quality and high standards in their school. They need to create an environment in which excellence can flourish'.

This chapter has discussed and summarized the research findings, some of which have been combined for the purpose of discussion.

A critical theme throughout the Literature Review in Chapter Two was the need for greater clarity of the voluntary Governor role and the need for a strategy to help Governors carry out this role within a limited time scale. At an institutional level Governing Bodies can be unduly influenced by the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors. The research findings are in agreement with this view.

In Chapter Five, the perception of the Governor role was shown to bear little resemblance to actual Governor effectiveness and the research data highlighted seven main barriers to the personal effectiveness of Governors. They are:

    i.   a lack of skills, understanding and knowledge related to leadership and education

    ii.   a lack of meaningful induction and training

    iii. a poor perception of the value of their role as a Governor

    iv. not seeing the role as one of leadership and scrutiny

    v.   Governors can be overwhelmed by the amount of paperwork, reading time and the required commitment.

    vi   lack of time and commitment of some Governors

    vii. inappropriate information given by Head Teacher

Many Governors say their reason for being a Governor is 'they want to put something back into society'. When asked what they mean by this, they are often unsure.

The purpose of this research was to examine the effectiveness of Secondary School Governors. However, the elements of the Governor role need to be streamlined, operationally relevant and embodied in a series of easy to understand Guidelines to meet the needs of Governors and school. The key areas identified by the research and shown to be linked to effectiveness are Governance and Structure, Guiding Principles, People and Processes and Conduct; all within a culture of on-going review and self evaluation (Figure 5.2). The fifth key area identifies issues related to the development and design of the Guidelines.

In conclusion, it is evident from the data, that in order to function effectively a School Governing Body should have a workable structure, be made up of members with a full understanding and the right competencies to fulfil the role, who are able to work together and make correct decisions through correct procedures and processes. There is no doubt

some of the broad factors highlighted in the literature review, have influenced the interpretation of the research data.

Chapter Six, the Model Guidelines, suggests a way of pursuing these elements within the context of secondary School Governance.
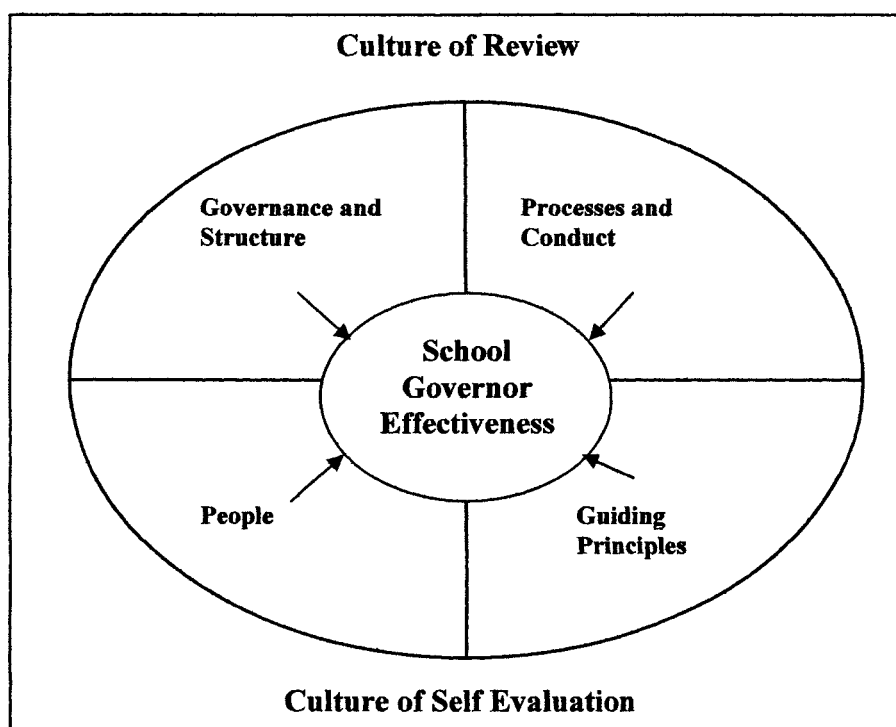

Figure 5.2 Key Issues Identified which promote Effectiveness

CHAPTER SIX: MODEL GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS

"Here is Edward Bear coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he thinks that there is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it"

A.A.Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh, (1926)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter makes use of data from the literature, the questionnaire, interviews, the field work research data and the pre-understanding of the researcher. Many of the elements highlighted by study are abstract and conceptual in nature. To make them operationally relevant they needed to be translated into specific action areas which may be used by new and existing School Governors. The complete Model Guidelines, found in the Annex (p. 250), recommend a way in which these could be pursued in the context of School Governance.

The Model Guidelines have been developed to enable Governing Bodies to improve their understanding of the Governor role and their effectiveness, through a participative, enlightening and unifying process to provide a basis for Governor accountability and development. It is based on the premise that no team can operate effectively unless each member understands the organization, knows exactly what their job is, has the skills to carry it out, and shares a common expectation of how the team should work together.

In developing the Model Guidelines full account has been taken of the existing statutory *raison d'etre* of School Governors which is to support the Head Teacher and Senior Management Team, to have an overview of the workings of the school, to scrutinise and challenge by being 'critical friend' to the Senior Management Team and to ensure the Senior Management Team and teachers achieve the highest standards possible for their pupils. Governors should also be objective and independent, bring an outside perspective to the school, have a strategic focus and bring experience, knowledge and skills to the

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school and Governing Body. Governors must represent the community they serve. The 'Model Guidelines for Governors' are intended to be understandable and holistic being based on the four priority areas identified in Chapter Five of Governance and Structure, Guiding Principles, People and Processes and Conduct. These four interrelated areas create a specific structure or context in which a School Governing Body can set a strategic direction, analyse performance and become more effective in their governance leadership role. The development and design is based on the fifth identified key area.

The 'Model Guidelines for Governors' are intended to be a working tool for School Governors, enabling them to develop an action plan for improving their effectiveness and be complementary to The School Standards and Framework Acts and A Guide to the Law for School Governors (DfES). They are intended to demonstrate and explain how School Governance is to be practiced.

6.2   Model Guidelines – Fundamental Concepts

In the light of the research data and literature, consideration was given to various options related to developing the research recommendations into a working document. The Model Guidelines must address the needs and circumstances of School Governors. During the research many informal comments were made about the need for detailed guidelines related to Governor practices but no precise details of what should was required was given. However since many Governors did not really understand their role it could be argued they did not know what they needed. The research indicates Governors need a guide to help them to understand and to carry out their role. Governors do not require a set of standard Performance Indicators which are considered to be fraught with problems related to value judgements.

Together with Key Issue V, Model Guidelines Development Criteria (Table 5.6), the overall process adopted for developing the Model Guidelines was to:

- describe the current state of School Governance accurately

- collect and analyse the data

- develop theoretical conjectures and hypotheses about the nature of the observed relationships and the variables

- review existing models and their strengths and weaknesses, (Table 2.1, Comparative Quality Models and their Dimensions) and apply to the Model Guidelines

- develop abstract concepts and categories by identifying, defining and specifying relationships and variables

- make theoretical conjectures and empirical generalizations from the theory

- capture the social , cultural and psychological context

- explain operational routines

- show the 'what' and the 'why'

- take account of varied backgrounds of School Governors

- consider dependencies and alienations

- develop the criteria for effective guidelines based on the literature, survey, interviews and existing models

- develop a grounded framework of organizational processes

- illustrate the guidelines with data from the survey, interviews and literature

- use imagination and creative abilities to develop the Model Guidelines; in other words, "regard as an Art" (Remenyi *et al,* 1998, p.144).

6.3 Model Guidelines – Theory into Practice

It was considered important to relate the proposed guidelines to other models. The first step was to return to Comparative Models and Their Dimensions, Chapter Two, Table 2.1 which describes their significance to School Governance. Secondly, to consider these with the research data and literature, to develop new dimensions and apply to School Governance (Table 6.1, Philosophy and Quality Concepts of School Governance).

Guidelines Dimensions	Application
Vision	To be successful, strategy should be formulated based on relevant, comprehensive and up to date information. There should be clearly demonstrated visionary leadership which is transparent and open. There should be a clarity and unity of purpose in which the school can flourish.
People	There should be: • Appropriate training and development involving all Governors, enabling maximisation of their contribution; this should be equally available to all Governors • Shared values and a governance culture of openness, objectivity and accountability • Quality recruitment and retention processes
Responsibility	Corporate: The Governing Body is a corporate entity and should act as a group. No one Governor has the right to act individually (unless delegated responsibility) Social: Understanding and considering ways in which the school impacts and interacts with stakeholders and community it serves is vital
Efficiency and Effectiveness	The Governors must: • Understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. • Establish goals and ensure the school fulfils its statutory duties with integrity • Have understanding, skills, knowledge and time. Therefore the role should be competency based. • Understand the division between day-to-day management and the Governor role • Have quality processes and practices • Have a streamlined structure Ensure no individual dominates decisions
Culture	There should be a productive, supportive governance culture. This is best met through a climate of trust and empowerment of individual Governors. There should be both challenge and support of senior management. There should be a productive culture based on best practice
Accountability	Governors are accountable to the school, parents, community and other stakeholders, The interests of schools and their communities are best met by adopting an ethical approach to Governor roles and responsibilities There should be supportive accountability through robust and transparent systems and processes and behaviours
Review	There should be a high performance expectation with formal and rigorous self-review and evaluation of the Executive and committees

Table 6.1   Philosophy and Quality Concepts of School Governance

Thirdly, the Key Issues identified by the research, Governance and Structure, Guiding Principles, People and Processes and Conduct, all within a culture of Review and Evaluation were developed using:

- Key Issue V, Model Guidelines Development Criteria (Table 5.6)

- The Philosophy and Quality Concepts of School Governance (Table 6.1)

- Summary of the Forces that Shape a Governing Body (Figure 4.3)

Next, there was a need to look at the Stakeholder Model of governance and the degree of desirable representation in the context of statutory requirements. The aim was to recommend a number of Governors which would allow the voice of stakeholders to be heard. Since current legislation requires there to be a minimum of nine Governors this is the number being recommended. The Guidelines must conform to current legislation and so the degree of allowable delegation was considered. A final consideration was the capacity of Governing Bodies to turn policy into practice.

Finally, consideration was given to the broad scope and content of the Model Guidelines. It was decided they should include a statement of purpose, value and relationship to the statutory Governor role, a broad outline of the range of uses, an indication of the conditions that will promote successful use and a recommendation for implementation.

6.4 Model Guidelines - Design Process

The aim in developing the Model Guidelines was to provide an holistic, effective and viable method of meeting the needs of the School Governance processes and practices. This required the devising of a theory and a design.

The process undertaken was to review existing models and identify their strengths and weaknesses, to make recommendations and develop new Model Guidelines criteria. These criteria were based on the literature survey, interviews, field work and the existing models. Finally the Guidelines were illustrated with data from the survey and interviews.

The content has taken into consideration the:

- Social and psychological and ethical context
- Cultural context
- Constitution and operational routines
- 'what' and the 'why'
- Varied backgrounds of Governors
- Recent legislative changes
- Power issues, dependencies, alienations and time constraints of volunteers
- Congruence with the statutory requirements and the Governing Body culture and an acceptance that unless this congruence is retained, anything developed is liable to be rejected by Governors

(These issues are illustrated in Figure 6.2)

Presentation was considered to be vital and took into consideration the visual utility, completeness, the need for it to be 'user friendly' and the need for it to be self explanatory

By the application of the literature on organizational theory, behaviour and management theory, analysis of the data, drawing on available concepts, theories and research and organized within a framework, the contemporary conception of School Governance may be extended from 'what is' to 'what should be'.

Table 6.2, Design Process, illustrates a linear design process. However, it is acknowledged in practice this was at times an iterative process.

Design Stage	Issues Addressed	Outputs
Inception	Identification of needs of Governors and stakeholders, Identify benefits Consideration of benefits of Model Guidelines Consider strategy, climate and environment	Verification of need for effectiveness/leadership Model Guidelines
Concept Development	Confirmation of strategic/functional role of Governors Development of theoretical models to 'requirement' of Governors level Review and refine options Review links between function and design Congruence between statutory requirements and Governing Body culture	Information on which to develop a design brief
Design Construction	Alternative design solutions Address qualitative indicators: - time constraints of Governors - varying levels of knowledge, skills, expertise Be 'User friendly'	Identify strengths, weaknesses and omissions Modifications and additions Improve detailed design brief
Validation: Face Content Concurrent	Will the model fulfil the purpose for which it is intended? Is it the right model?	Governors have a better understanding of their statutory role and will be better able to carry out their role A wider spread of knowledge and skills

Table 6.2   Design Process

Figure 6.1 is a conceptual presentation of the actual process, illustrating the view that the Model Guidelines distinguishes between and takes account of real world Governor requirements and real world Governor implementation. It considers the design process, the content and the validation of the Model Guidelines.
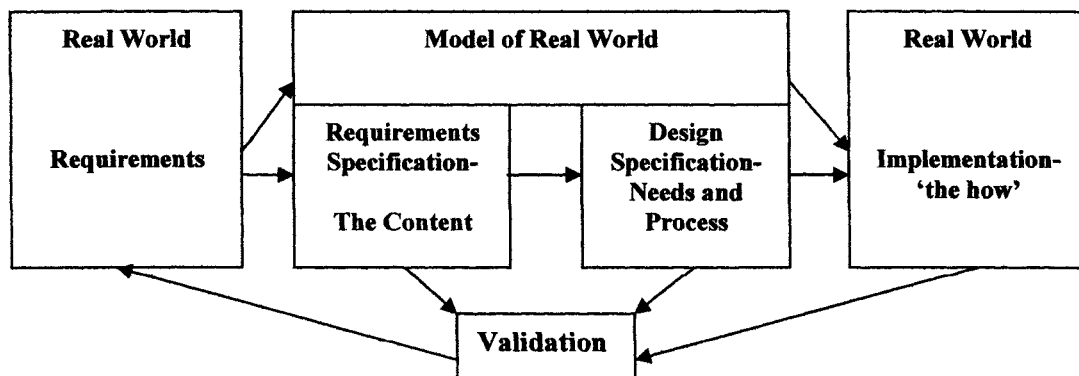
Figure 6.1   Design Process Concept

The real world requirements were obtained by analysing the School Governor role and the requirements based on the recommendations made following the analysis. The design specification was based on the view it had to satisfy a wide variety of Governors from diverse backgrounds and with varying levels of knowledge, skills and expertise. The implementation is linked directly to the requirements.

Validation has been discussed earlier but the over-riding consideration was, is it accurate and fit for purpose? Validity and 'usability' were a concern during the design process but were achieved by:

- Construct Validity

  A Devil's Advocate was felt essential. Supervisor and associates asked question about content and reasoning which resulted in modifications and checking of facts.

- Face Validity

  Five serving Governors were asked if the the Model Guidelines were appropriate and usable. Whilst this may be considered the weakest form of validity, it was considered necessary and acceptable as part of the overall validity process. The sample of Governors considered the Model Guidelines were subsequently to be highly useable

- Content Validity

  The opinions of three experts who are aware of the finer points of School Governance were sought related to the accuracy of the Model Guidelines. This type of validity assumed the Model Guidelines were complete both as individual items and as a whole (see letter Appendix P, Example of letter of support)

- Concurrent Validity

  The question was: Do the Model Guidelines agree with models from similar domains e.g. The New Combined Code. The researcher is confident they agree with and take further other model guidelines since they are School Governor specific and not only guide but give examples of 'the how'

By combining these validity measures the individual and comparative validity of the Model Guidelines has been determined.

6.5 Summary

This chapter combined the data, conclusions and recommendations drawn from the research. Rather than other conventional forms of data collection, the ethnographic approach has identified needs, has been close to reality and has already been a change agent. Governors have asked for guidance. Given the rich data obtained and the changing circumstances of School Governors an obvious need to reconceptualize the underlying basis of the role has been identified. The Model Guidelines endeavour to clarify and make sense of the Governor role. They are an holistic framework which to date, has been missing in the education sector. They are as focussed on process as they are on outcomes. They link the statutory role, the OFSTED Evaluation Criteria, including the New Relationship with Schools Agenda (NRwS), the Best Value Principles and The Principles of Public Life. In designing the Model Guidelines the researcher, on the basis of the research conclusions and recommendations, was forced to consider how the performance of Governors could be improved. This was a challenge and it needed mind, knowledge,

imagination and heart to develop the Model Guidelines. There was an obvious need to obtain 'best fit' and an on-going consideration of the diverse backgrounds, skills and knowledge of School Governors was essential.

The result is unique. The Model Guidelines have goals, specific Governor inputs and outputs and make use of existing resources, have a number of actions and have been tailored to meet the needs of the education sector. Literature indicates other public sector areas experience many similar problems to School Governors and it is considered the Model Guidelines will not only create improved performance and value for Governing Bodies and their schools but could be transferable to other public sectors. The purpose of the Model Guidelines is to help Governors carry out their role effectively and efficiently and provide a basis for Governor accountability and Governor development. They are based on the premise that no team can operate effectively unless each member understands the organization, knows exactly what their job is, has the skills to carry it out, and shares a common expectation of how the team should work together. They recommend that the Governing Body be restructured and reduced in size. This will make it easier to appoint individuals to specific committees, using their strengths and time to better effect. The structure will allow for personal development and increase confidence. It will be more effective and efficient as small groups will be better able to contribute and work as a team. It will focus on skills, be more structured and transparent and it will be easier to evaluate and review performance.

The Model Guidelines have been developed to enable Governing Bodies to improve their understanding of the Governor role and thus their effectiveness. Governing Body responsibilities are increasing and unless the role and responsibilities are streamlined and transparent it is predicted it will become even harder for schools to attract volunteers. These Model Guidelines will make the Governor role less daunting to existing and potential Governors. Furthermore, they may be an answer to the problem raised by Gyte (2.3.3) who suggested a learning tool was needed by School Governors. The challenge was to design Model Guidelines which would help achieve a balance between democratic

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stakeholder governance and accountability whilst demonstrating a clear separation of tasks and the retention of the holistic nature of the Governor role.

Existing School Governance is based on the stakeholder model. The Model Guidelines recommend a *marriage* between Stakeholder and Policy Governance. This *marriage* will help Governors and the Senior Management Team to know and understand their responsibilities and the parameters of their role.

The Model Guidelines will provide for debate and strategic decision making and emphasise developing the full potential of Governors. On-going self-evaluation should ensure compliance with current legislation, the Principles of Public Life and Best Value Principles.

The question may be asked: Do the Model Guidelines recommendations conform to statutory requirements? The Regulations under the Education Act 2002 gave Governing Bodies more freedom to decide their own procedures and the opportunity to reappraise the size and membership. The Model Guidelines will meet the statutory requirements. Since September 2003 Governing Bodies may hold joint meetings with other school and take action on their own working practices. In practical terms this means the Governing Body may determine the length of office for the Chair and Vice-Chair, delegate functions to a committee (with the Governing Body remaining accountable for decisions taken), reduce the size to a minimum of nine members and appoint a Clerk for the Governing Body and each committee. These issues were taken into account in the development of the Model Guidelines.

Having completed the research, presented the data and conclusions, progressed through the design and the validation process, it is considered the Model Guidelines are fit for purpose, will be of value to School Governors and will lead to an improvement in the effectiveness and accountability of Governing Bodies.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This final chapter reflects on the four years of research and the fulfilment of the aims. It reviews the limitations and strengths, the contribution to existing knowledge and the quality of the research. It considers the implications for future research and concludes with some final reflections.

The study has been about volunteer secondary School Governors in the state education sector of England. In the introduction it was stated the aim was to provide a link between the theory and practices of School Governors, to compare Governor performance to that of Non-Executive Directors, to remove barriers to effectiveness and if appropriate, a 'tool' would be developed which would add clarity to the role enabling Governors to become more effective. All of the topics covered by the study are relevant to the functioning of School Governing Bodies. The conclusion reached is that Model Guidelines are needed if School Governors are to be accountable and endure in an ever changing education world. The study has aimed to include all activities considered purposeful in steering, leading and supporting the processes and practices of a Governing Body.

Table 7.1, The Journey, places the study in context. It illustrates the route taken and demonstrates how the different aspects have combined.

	Governors thought to be working to *flawed theory.* *Gap* between rhetoric and reality.	
	↓	
Chapter Two *and* *Chapter Three*	Review of the Literature	Data Collection *Elite Interviews* *Questionnaire Survey* *Fieldwork*
	↓	
Chapter Five *5.5*	*Gap* confirmed, but *flawed practice* not *flawed theory*	
	↓	
Chapter Two *Table 2.1*	Comparative Models and their Dimensions: ↓	
	Translated into new dimensions and applied to School Governance ↓	
Chapter Five *Table 6.1*	Philosophy and Quality Concepts of School Governance	
	↓	
Chapter Five *5.4.*	Quality Concepts applied to Research Conclusions and Recommendations	
	↓	
Chapter Six	**Model Guidelines for School Governors**	

Table 7.1   The Journey

The aims of the research were to:

- Examine empirically the performance of state secondary School Governors and in doing so address the fundamental question of how to improve Governor effectiveness and performance.

- Investigate the nature of volunteering.

- Explore the distinctions between School Governor practices and those of Non-Executive Directors in the business sectors.

- Identify through an examination of representative schools, not only the barriers to effectiveness but individual and organizational factors which enable a Governing Body to become more effective.

- Develop Model Guidelines for use by Governing Bodies which will help them to carry out their role more effectively.

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In order to fulfil the aims of the research the following questions have been answered:

- Is the present system and structure of School Governance working?
- Are Governors working to a 'flawed theory'?
- Are Governing Bodies effective?
- How prepared are Governors for their leadership position?
- What are Governor perceptions of how they are involved in the governance of their school?
- Does the voluntary nature of the School Governor role influence recruitment and performance?
- Are there lessons to be learned from the Non-Executive Director role in the private sector?
- Would Model Guidelines help Governors carry out their role more effectively?

The research has provided an understanding of the roles of Governors and Non-Executive Directors, their contributions, strengths and weaknesses. The research has not produced a reliable indication of the influences Governors have on their schools. It is however, fair to say Governors find it easier to be involved in day-to-day management than in Governance and they are asking for help. At the outset it was considered Governors were working to a 'flawed theory', but as the research progressed the Governor processes and practices were considered to be 'flawed'.

There is a shortage of School Governors and the level of extra responsibilities and time commitment required to do the job effectively, contribute to this problem. Overall, Governors are not prepared for their leadership position and comment on their lack of knowledge, skills and understanding of strategy and future direction of education. It appears Governors do not see themselves as leaders but they enjoy being part of the school.

The research has not produced any evidence to suggest the voluntary nature of the role influences recruitment and performance. A repeated statement is however, 'we are only volunteers'. It would seem many Non-Executive Directors and School Governors are experiencing similar problems. Given the on-going and recent research into the Non-Executive Director role, it is concluded there are lessons to be learned and many of these have been incorporated into the Model Guidelines.

Good School Governance is based on the establishment of an accountable and representative Governing Body which has appropriate skills, knowledge and expertise and with sufficient independence to allow freedom of opinion and expression. There is little evidence of the existence of an integrated, well structured system for helping School Governors improve their effectiveness, or reasons why such guidelines do not exist, other than the legalist Guide to the Law (2000) which Governors in general say, they do not use. Existing codes and guidelines, produced at LEA level, are basic and somewhat patronising to Governors (See Appendix Q for example).

A National Standard has been talked of for many years but as yet is not forthcoming. It is of interest to note that since 1997, other organizations in the voluntary sector have utilized the PQASSO Quality Standard which is considered to be not just a self-assessment tool but a 'growing tool' to support the on-going development of an organization. Trustees in the National Health Service have 'Governing the NHS, A Guide for NHS Boards' (2003) which focuses on governance and "is intended to reinforce the essential role of good governance by bringing together the main strands in a single high level guide". Likewise, local government elected members have a Code of Conduct prescribed by The Secretary of State on 5 November 2001 which is adopted and adapted to local needs. School Governors do not have access to such supportive literature.

A key implicit and over arching question of the research was, Are School Governors needed? It is concluded there is a growing and vital role for Governing Bodies. The Model Guidelines will help them carry out their role more effectively, fulfil many of their

stated needs, answers their questions, conform to legislation and contribute to the overall fulfilment of the research aims.

7.2   Limitations and Strengths

The limitations and potential shortcomings of this study fall into three categories; personal limitations, limitations of the methodology and analysis and limitations of the validity of the analysis.

1. Personal Limitations

The personal limitations are related to the researcher's pre-understanding and the close involvement with the fieldwork schools. There was always the possibility of particular incidents being highlighted or emphasis being placed on areas of particular personal concern. There was also the possibility of being selective and overconfident with some of the data. Linked to this was an awareness that the personal enthusiasm of the researcher, a high degree of intuition and knowledge of social interactions within a school setting could lead to invalid assumptions being made. Gummesson (2000, p. 22) describes research as a journey with temporary stops with each aspect being a departure for further inquiry. He also describes the researcher as being in a box and each time the researcher leaves that box they find themself in a larger one as the subject keeps expanding. This research has been just that. So many avenues could have been investigated and it was necessary to avoid some areas which would have been of particular personal interest to the researcher but would not have added value to the original research question.

To try to address these potential shortcomings there has been on going reflection related to both the data and the personal situation of the researcher. Multiple sources of data have been used in the hope of achieving agreement of one source with the other. Care and effort have been taken to double check issues of concern and in assembling all data in a structured manner. Supervisors acted as 'Devil's Advocates' throughout the study, assisting by pointing out any inconsistencies with prompts and questions related to any biased thinking.

Financial, time and personal issues did not present problems and access and acquisition of empirical data and information, although highlighted by the literature as possible areas of concern, were not a problem.

2. Limitations of the Methodology and Analysis

The potential limitations of the methodology and analysis were considered from the outset and actions taken wherever possible to address them.

Heavy reliance was placed on qualitative data, interviews and observations. The qualitative, grounded research provided rich descriptive information but obviously depended a great deal on subjective judgement. Triangulation was applied at two levels, overall with elite interviews, questionnaire and fieldwork and during the field with interviews, observation and documents. An acute awareness of the need for robust and honest analysis has mitigated any potential problems and increased the validity of the study.

Initially the fairly low response rate of 53% from the questionnaire was a concern. Sending out a further 20 questionnaires was considered. However responses in general mirrored each other and survey research suggests no single response rate is considered to be a standard. The respondents were considered to be representative of School Governors and saturation point was reached as the same answers were repeated and nothing new added.

The two selected schools may also have been considered a limitation but, it is maintained they were typical and represented a 'best and worst' picture.

As the research progressed and particularly towards the conclusion of the study, there were many personal worries and concerns, e.g. has the methodology allowed investigation into all areas of School Governance? Would a longitudinal study been more appropriate? At the start of the research this was considered and subsequently abandoned given the financial, time and personal requirements. There were also concerns about changes to

legislation and the publishing of the Higgs (2003) and Earley (2002) reviews. However, none of these affected the research other than being supportive, informative and relevant

3.   Limitations of the Validity of the Research

A primary limitation is the findings may not be generalized to all settings since they are based on a limited number of respondents and a limited sample of schools. There are some 350000 School Governors who are all volunteers, all different and grouped together in different locations, with different of backgrounds and different cultural settings. There would be some difficulty in completing a study that would be generally conclusive and above reproach. However, given the experience of the researcher, it is felt they are applicable to a great many schools. It is possible the influence of Governors is masked by other factors and considering these factors may alter the results somewhat. These factors could be areas of rural and social deprivation, other aspects of school achievement, e.g. catchment area, home environment, parental influence, the Head Teacher's drive, aspirations of pupils and teachers for the pupils and socio-economic influences. All such factors will have an influence on a school.

The research was carried out as an extended period of action research study and it provides a picture and story of the 21st century. It is of course possible had this been a longitudinal study, the findings and recommendations may have been different. However in the opinion of the researcher this is unlikely since there has been very little real change in last 10 years.

Ensuring the validity of the Model Guidelines was an initial concern. This was overcome by asking experts in the education sector and practicing Governors to consider them and give feedback. There has been overwhelming support and acceptance. Governors and consultants have requested permission to use the Model Guidelines and suggestions have been made that they should be presented to the DfES (Appendix P, Example of letter of support).

Strengths

Being aware of and recognizing the limitations of the study are strengths as they have highlighted where improvements could be made. The researcher has constantly reflected on the limitations and issues, which may have become problems, have been resolved at an early stage. This reflection has enabled self-criticism and change which helped to keep the holistic nature of the study in mind.

Reflection

This research has led to a greater understanding of how School Governance is working. However, because of the human nature of the research and the many and variable behaviours, individual, collective and social, there has been no attempt to predict future patterns The research offers only an understanding of what is happening now and makes recommendations about how things can be improved.

As the research progressed the researcher developed a greater understanding of the nature of School Governance which in turn led to a degree of self-questioning and at times, a small degree of doubt. There is however a confidence the study has been carried out ethically and sensitively. It is meaningful, appropriate to the needs of School Governors and at the present time, is considered unique.

Finally, the study has given the researcher a great deal of satisfaction and personal fulfilment.

7.3 Demonstrating the Contribution to Knowledge

The main contribution of this research is the enrichment, re-description and re-modelling of the existing practices of School Governors in Model Guidelines. To date no such national or official document exists and those produced by some LEAs[53] are descriptive and generalized, and are not working documents, The Model Guidelines provide an understandable, practical, systemic and holistic framework which highlights the substantial, complex roles and responsibilities of School Governors. The Model Guidelines identify the high priority elements of School Governance, which in the real life of a school are inherently interconnected.

Overall the research demonstrates the link between the roles of Non-Executive Directors and School Governor, highlights the need to give clarity to the Governor role and responsibilities, demonstrates an alternative structure of governance, streamlined to allow greater effectiveness, whilst retaining the principle of stakeholder governance within the prescribed statutory role and provides a wide-ranging conceptualisation of School Governance

This research will make a valuable contribution to both theory and practice.

In theoretical terms it will add to and take forward the existing knowledge by providing a current description of the workings of Governing Bodies and an analysis of their practices. It describes, explains and extends the current understanding of the role and problems related to the effectiveness of Governing Bodies. The findings contribute by being a balance to other research since they not only agree with the research but take a further major step by turning the findings into a practical application. The research makes a small contribution to the cohesive body of knowledge and may therefore be a reference

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[53] Examples of these Appendix Q

point to others either academic or practical, who need an overall understanding of state secondary School Governance. It is also considered the research will be of relevance to researchers in adjacent, allied or associated areas. This however, may depend on its transferability as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.316) who say transferability cannot be demonstrated by the researcher who can only provide the necessary data. Others must judge the transferability of the work. However, as part of the validation process of the Model Guidelines, respondents confirmed they were understandable which could imply an initial transferability.

In practical terms the Model Guidelines are intended to be a tool for new and existing School Governors. Based on the literature and research data they have been developed and contextualized and are grounded in current 'state of the day' practice. The purpose of the Model Guidelines is to help Governors carry out their role effectively and efficiently and provide a basis for Governor accountability and Governor development. By using them a Governing Body will be more able to feel confident in evaluating itself and its school. They are based on the premise that no team can operate effectively unless each member understands the organization, knows exactly what their job is, has the skills to carry it out and shares a common expectation of how the team should work together.

7.4 Quality of the Research

It is contended this study represents quality research for five reasons.

1. Ethical issues. Problems related to preunderstanding, the closeness of the researcher to the subject, relationships, the nature of anonymity, confidentiality and the use of the data were considered from the outset. This has kept ethics in the foreground and was vital when unplanned, sensitive issues were raised during the fieldwork. The preunderstanding of issues is considered to be a strength in that it was possible to weight some responses and decide on their relative importance, it allowed emphasis to be placed on powerful empirical evidence and it enabled the researcher to identify respondent misconceptions.

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2) Research design. This was sufficiently flexible to allow issues to emerge in their natural setting. Respondents were open, honest and comfortable in their school or office or home.

3. Triangulation. This allowed for prolonged observation and having a structured analysis trail which kept the focus of the research clearly in view.

4. Problems. By accepting problems may arise many potential limitations were eliminated as the research progressed.

5. The results. The study has highlighted the need for change and justifies the research as a useful contribution to existing knowledge.

7.5 Implications for Future Research

This research and subsequent recommendations highlight a number of areas considered to warrant further research and which fall into three strands.

First, evaluation of the :

- value of the Model Guidelines by using it in a longitudinal study with a group of schools, with pre and post surveys.
- working relationships between School Governors and School Improvement Partners
- effectiveness of School Governors in areas of social and rural deprivation.

Second, the use of the Model Guidelines for exploratory purposes.
This could include consideration of:

- the factors which inhibit members of the public applying to be School Governors.
- making the Governor role more attractive?

- the real extent as opposed to the perceived extent, of the strategic role of School Governor.

- the ways Head Teachers and School Governors could productively work together

- the system of appointing and appraising and training School Governors

- stakeholder perceptions of School Governors.

- the cultures of Governing Bodies and how they could be changed to benefit the pupils of school?

- salaried, professional School Governors and if this would lead to greater effectiveness.

Finally, general questions arising from the research:

- what are the long-term implications of fewer volunteers?

- what are the long-term implications of ineffective governance?

- how can genuine power be given to School Governors?

- would they want this power?

- how will School Governors respond to increased public scrutiny?

7.6   Conclusion: Final Reflections

The researcher's PhD. journey has been both an intensely personal process and a profound learning experience. In many ways the stimulus to undertake this study arose not only out of an intense interest in education and School Governance, but a memory of at times, feeling inadequate as a Governor of a secondary school. The wearing of 'two hats' was particularly uncomfortable, having information and not feeling able to discuss it and knowing there must be a better way of carrying out business, remains fresh in the mind of the researcher. This study goes some way to addressing personal concerns and many of the concerns highlighted by the research. This research supports the view that Governors really could make a difference to their school. The research has been systematic and holistic and highlights the connection between all high priority aspects of Governor

practices and processes. Moreover, the added value is it lends itself to individual Governing Body interpretation and reflection.

It is contended the Model Guidelines provide a 'conceptual lens' through which Governors can investigate their practices and processes. It offers a generic framework of high priority areas and it is simplistic in presentation. It is argued the Model Guidelines and the related recommendations are of value because they allow for interpretation, practice and reflection.

Good School Governance is not easy to define, measure or recognize. Over the past fifteen years there has been a continuous growth in Governing Body statutory responsibilities but little evidence to suggest greater effectiveness. Indeed issues and problems of fifteen years ago are in general terms, still there. Current legislation provides many potential pitfalls as roles become blurred and accountabilities vague. In effect, the paradox of School Governance over the decades is that much has changed and nothing has changed. On the one hand nothing has changed since there remains a long-standing lack of clarity about the role of Governor and the situation of responsibility without real power. On the other hand, stakeholders are now actively encouraged to be involved with their school and with many reform initiatives. Governors are told they are a vitally important part of the school leadership and they are accountable in law.

"Real democracy lies in making government [governance] accountable and responsive" (Massey and Pyper, 2005, p.18). If School Governing Bodies are to be democratic, effective and fulfil their accountability role they must have clarity and understanding of the role, good information, professional working practices and good working relationships with the executive Head Teacher. The relationships must be open, honest and constructive and not be adversarial. There should be a positive working culture so all members feel able to contribute.

Given the broad backgrounds of School Governors and the voluntary nature of the role, it is considered the findings of this research will be of interest and help to a diverse

audience. It is maintained the Model Guidelines offer an equitable and balanced approach which will help Governors to become responsible for their personal effectiveness as a Governor and the effectiveness of their Governing Body. They will help a Governing Body to be a corporate body, that is carry out their corporate governance role effectively and a co-operative body, meaning co-operative with the Head Teacher, staff and each other.

School Governors are an important element of the school leadership. They have far more responsibilities and the role is more demanding now than at any other time in their long history. It is anticipated this research will inform, guide and provoke change in Governor thinking and practices. If this happens then the research will have made a contribution to more effective and credible School Governance and provide a better service to the pupils whose welfare, needs, interests and education in a continuously changing world are of paramount importance. This should be the ultimate goal of a Governing Body.

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These Model Guidelines for Governors should be considered as being complementary to the statutory Governor role as described in the Standards and Framework Acts, The Education Reform Acts and The Guide to the Law for School Governors.

They are intended to be a practical working tool for new and existing school Governors.

The Model Guidelines set out issues related to School Governance which have been drawn from:

- o Current literature and legislation including NRwS (2005)
- o Research between 2001& 2005 in the education sector
- o The Higgs Report published in 2003
- o OFSTED Judgements, September 2003
- o Principles of Public Life
- o Best Value Principles

Contents

1. Introduction

The purpose of the Model Guidelines for Governors is to help Governors carry out their role effectively and efficiently and provide a basis for Governor accountability and Governor development.

They are based on the premise that no team can operate effectively unless each member understands the organization, knows exactly what their job is, has the skills to carry it out and shares a common expectation of how the team should work together.

This guide has been developed to enable Governing Bodies to improve their understanding of the Governor role and thus their effectiveness, through a participative process, which is both enlightening and unifying.

There is a range of uses for the Guidelines. Some of these are to:

- Clarify, define and illustrate the processes and practices of School Governance.

- Focus on continuous improvement.

- Involve people in change.

- Provide equity, a common vocabulary and a set of principles.

- Help Governors measure their individual and collective effectiveness.

- Prepare for OFSTED inspections and statutory self evaluation (SEF) and the advent of Extended Schools by 2010.

All of these require appropriate and clear guidelines, which will enable the Governing Body to assess its effectiveness and to plan improvement.
The conditions that will promote the successful use of the Model Guidelines for Governors are a:

- Willingness of all Governors to share control and responsibility.

- Readiness to reflect and talk about the Model Guidelines in relation to their own school and subsequently develop an action plan for improvement.

- Genuine desire to improve the effectiveness of governance in their school.

- Willingness to invest time and effort.

The following diagram illustrates a method of using the Model Guidelines.

INPUTS	PLANNING	OUTPUTS
Use Model Guidelines to Review & Evaluate: -existing practices - existing systems - involve all Governors Review Annual Plan **Collect** -school evidence -feedback from stakeholders	**Plan:** -what changes are needed -rank priorities -organize rolling programme for updating SEF	**Implement:** -change based on rank priorities -accept everything cannot be done at once -make part of the Governing Body culture

The Model Guidelines are not considered to be a 'one size fits' all and there is no legislation to force a Governing Body to accept them. However, the research indicates the need for general guidance or a standard which can be adapted and adopted by Governing Bodies, to suit their individual needs and to assist in conforming to their statutory roles which are to:

- *Improve standards*
- *Determine the strategic development of the school*
- *Be a 'critical friend' to the Head Teacher*
- *Develop community links*
- *Act as a corporate body*

The interests of pupils are best served through a strong, accountable Governing Body.

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2. Operating Infrastructure and Practices of Governing Bodies

The volunteer Governor role is complex and arguably, it could be daunting to many highly paid business executives.

Figure 1 identifies the four main areas of governance and the individual components of each area.
The Model Guidelines describe each component, giving where appropriate, suggestions and examples of good practice.
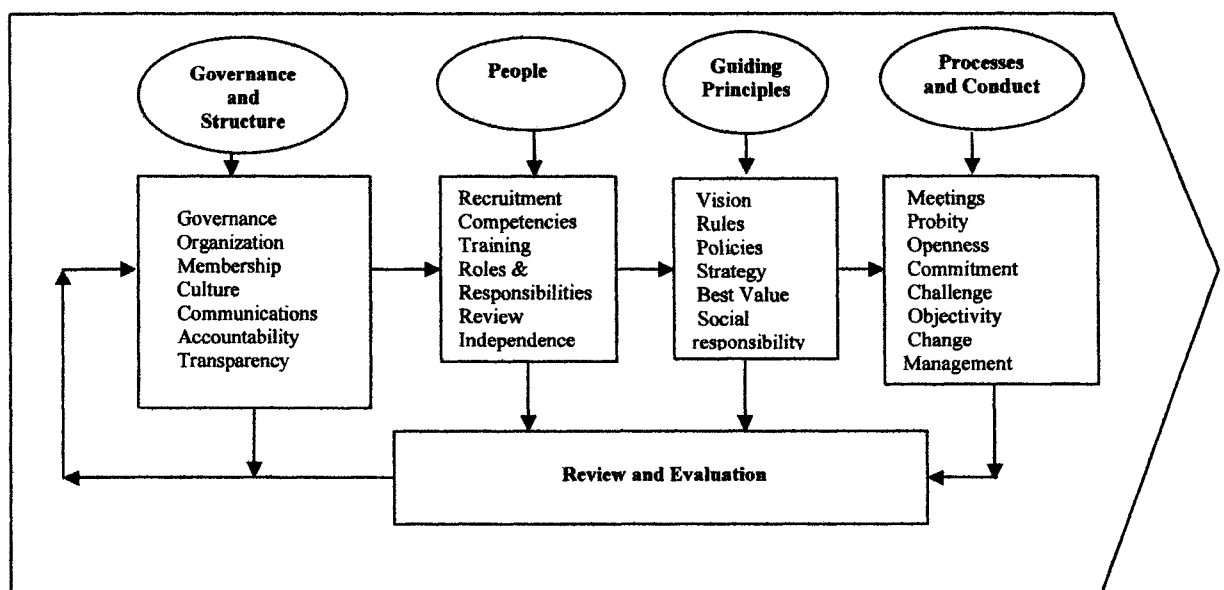
Figure 1. Main Areas of Governance and its Components

2.1. Governance and Structure

School Corporate Governance is:

The framework through which Governors are collectively accountable for quality and high standards in their school. They need to create an environment in which excellence can flourish.

The Governing Body is a corporate entity and should act as a group.
No-one has the right to act individually unless they have delegated authority. (Except for the Chair or Vice Chair if urgent action is needed)

Governance is about:

- Being supportive of the Senior Management Team.

- Having an overview of the school.

- Monitoring, scrutinising and challenging.

- Being independent, accountable and objective.

- Bringing an outside perspective to the school.

- Having a strategic focus.

- Bringing experience, knowledge and skills to the school and Governing Body.

The Governing Body should produce and regularly review, a Code of Conduct. This could become part of the School Profile (a statutory requirement from 2005)

This should contain a:

- A clear statement of the statutory responsibilities of Governors.

- A statement of the school values and ethos related to principles of ethics and behaviour.

- A description of the public role[1] and governance process of the school, including the committee structure, conflicts of interest and personal liability of individual Governors.

- A description of the management structure of the school and the reporting process.

- A statement of the roles and responsibilities, duties and expected commitment of Governors.

- The procedures for obtaining stakeholder feedback from parents, pupils, staff, the community.

- The procedures for self-review

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[1] This could be a copy of the Seven Principles of Public Life, 1997 (Nolan)

The Governing Body should determine what constitutes good governance in their school. In other words, 'how will we know when we are successful?'

For example:

- Informal questioning of parents and pupils.

- Formal questionnaires: parents, pupils LEA and other stakeholders.

- Benchmarking with other Governing Bodies.

Organisation

To be effective, the Governing Body should be of a size to allow contribution from all members. It should be of sufficient size that the balance of skills, knowledge and experience allow business to be undertaken without undue disruption.
A streamlined structure facilitates good communications, participative discussion and efficient, timely decision-making.

For this to happen, it is recommended:

- The existing structure should be analysed and simplified.

- The Executive Governing Body should have the minimum statutory number of nine members including the Head Teacher. The Executive will conform to the current statutory balance of stakeholders illustrated in Figure 2.

- There should be four committees each with four members; two from the Executive and two other stakeholders. The two other stakeholders will not be a member of any other committee nor the Executive. This determines the total Governing Body will have 17 members. The two non-executive stakeholders provide a balance of views and opinions.
  Annex E suggests a model Roles and Composition which would continue to be representative of stakeholders.

- Figure 2 suggests a streamlined Organisation Chart which conforms to current legislation.

  The benefits of this structure are that it:

  o Eases the workload of the Governing Body

- o Gives the opportunity for issues to be debated in detail and from a knowledge base
- o Shares the workload
- o Allows speedier decision making
- o Affords less opportunity for non governance issues to be raised
- o Allows for succession planning in that a member of a committee may become a member of the Executive.

- There should be a reasonable diversity of backgrounds and experience on the Executive Governing Body. The members should chair or be a member of one committee and should have skills and experience in the area related to the committee they chair or are a member.

- Meetings should be organized by the Executive to allow adequate time for meaningful, productive discussion. The full Governing Body (Executive and sub-committees), should meet at least once a year.

- The Clerk to Governors should attend all meetings.

- One member/chair of the curriculum committee should have an education background.

- The Executive Governing Body should align the structure to support the delivery of strategy and policies.

- The Chair of the Executive should ensure there are systems which provide clear, understandable and seamless communications.

Executive Governing Body Nine Members: 3 parents: 2 staff: 1 / 2 LEA: 2 /3 community			
Curriculum Committee Two members of Executive and Two other Stakeholders	Finance Committee Two members of Executive and Two other Stakeholders	Marketing and Community Committee Two members of Executive and Two other Stakeholders	Personnel, Health & Safety Committee Two members of Executive and Two other Stakeholders

Figure 2. Recommended Organization Chart

Membership Criteria

The current School Governance legislation is based on Stakeholder Governance. This means giving a voice to all stakeholders and collective decision making. Stakeholders are those individuals or groups who depend on the school or on whom the school depends. e.g. pupils, parents, staff, community groups, local businesses, the LEA and the DfES

The role is however, complex and it is recommended:

- Governors should have the attributes, skills and knowledge which meet the needs of the school.

- Governors should demonstrate support for the school.

- Governors should have the time available for regular attendance at meetings.

- Whilst retaining diversity, new Governors should have gender, specialism and knowledge fit with current membership of executive and sub-committees.

- Governors should be representative of the community they serve.

Culture

There should be a culture of high expectation and the role of Governor should be challenging and satisfying. There should be clear values attached to the role; the culture should be supportive and recognize individual skills, expertise and talent. Higgs (2003) suggests a prerequisite for an effective board is a culture of openness and constructive dialogue in an environment of trust and mutual respect.

This could be achieved by:

- Recognizing all members' contributions.

- No one person having undue influence.

- Regular review of processes and practices.

- Considering where objectivity ends and becoming a member of the SMT begins.

- Considering whether there should there be time limits on the length of service of individual Governors and individual roles, e.g. rotation of roles.

- Providing opportunities for all Governors.

- Involvement of less active Governors by encouraging involvement and participation outside their normal area of expertise. This could involve on-the job training.

- Outsider appraisal of the Governing Body processes and practices.

Communications

Productive and effective relationships based on respect and trust, should be built between Governors and with the Senior Management Team.

This could be achieved by:

- Respecting each others opinions.

- Focusing on issues rather than personalities.

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- Focusing on common goals.

- Open and honest sharing of concerns, information and knowledge.

- Communications in a manner which avoids surprises.

- Open questioning.

- Every effort being made to promote the integrity and positive image of the school.

- An acceptance of majority votes unless there is a change of circumstances.

- No hidden agendas or intentionally misleading information.

- Top down, bottom up and horizontal information flow.

Accountability

School Governors represent their community and therefore are accountable to that community and other stakeholders. School Governors should ensure the interest of pupils, staff and the community remain central to all discussion and decisions.

This could mean:

- Being prepared to answer for how the school is governed and being prepared to take collective responsibility for this.

- Having a written Code of Conduct which is transparent and available to all stakeholders.

- Acting diligently and with objectivity on behalf of all stakeholders.

- Regular informal/formal discussion with primary stakeholders.e.g. parents, pupils, staff and the community.

- Monitoring school performance and being accountable for the results.

- Taking responsibility for the effectiveness of the Governing Body.

Transparency

Transparency refers to the availability of information to the stakeholders and the public.
Transparency in the public sector reduces uncertainty and can improve governance because it enhances participation, improves trust, encourages greater accountability and can combat corruption.

In School Governance this may be achieved by:

- Giving access to accurate and timely information.

- Procedures which are straightforward easily understood and applied.

- Data being freely available (unless deemed confidential).

2.2. People

Recruitment and Retention and Induction

Recruitment is a national problem and therefore a problem for many Governing Bodies.
Recruitment should be transparent, well organized and well planned.
All new Governors must undertake the LEA induction training.

This could be achieved by:

- Having a process for recruiting new Governors. A 'Governor bank' could be established. Suggestions for attracting new Governors are:
    - o Register with a Volunteer Centre which acts like an employment agency
    - o Distribute posters and leaflets in public areas
    - o Put a volunteering Governor story in the local media
    - o Giving talks to local businesses and associations. It would help to have something visual to illustrate the good points about being a School Governor
    - o Approach former and existing pupils
    - o Approach the Learning and Skills Councils
    - o By word of mouth. A point of caution here is that it may reinforce the lack of diversity as people tend to have friends who are of similar age, from similar backgrounds and with a similar outlook to their own
    - o Use the internet based volunteering website *'Do-It'* and post vacancies.
      (www.do-it.org.uk)

- Applying the concepts of Governor Shadowing or Succession Planning which could lead to a seamless transition when a Governor retires.

- Basing Governor appointments on the needs of the Governing Body and the school.

- Using semi formal / formal, transparent procedures for appointing new Governors.

- Supplying potential new Governors with a job description/job specification before appointment.

- Applying Risk Management procedures to ensure the suitability of new Governors. e.g. police checks as with teaching staff.

Competencies

The structure of the Governing Body will in itself, not improve School Governance.
Evidence suggests some skills are necessary.[2] Competencies can be described as the attributes, behaviours, knowledge and skills needed for high performance.
They are seen to be desirable, individual characteristics that underlie successful performance.

Recommendations for the Governing Body are:

- Use competency based job descriptions to prevent potential Governors misunderstanding the requirement of the Governor role.

- Link competencies to the strategic role of Governors.

- Rotate Governor roles.

Annex C suggests a Competency Framework which could be adapted to suit the needs of individual Governing Bodies.

Training

Both Initial and On-Going training should be part of the Chair and Governor role.

Areas which could be considered are:

- Appraisal and helping individuals to improve their performance.

- Identifying, classifying and matching people's skills, knowledge and competencies to the Governing Body and school needs.

- Present and future needs of the Governing Body.

- Developing a training plan to help ensure existing and potential Governors training match the needs of the school and the Governing Body.

- Development of team skills.

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[2] As opposed to the DfES headline 'No Qualifications are Necessary' DfES Governornet website, March 2003

- In-house and external training for all Governors.

- Visiting other schools and organizing joint training days

- A well organized induction, pairing or mentoring system

Roles and Responsibilities

There should be clarity and realism about the Governor role related to governance, time commitment, strategy and standards.

This could be achieved by:

- Having a balance of knowledge, skills and experience on the Governing Body appropriate to the school requirements.

- Having a clear division of responsibilities between day-to-day management and governance. Everyone should know the delimitations of their role, i.e. know what they cannot do as well as what they can do.

- The Chair, whose role is pivotal, creating the conditions for the overall effectiveness of the Governing Body.
  The Chair role is to lead the Governing Body and:

  o Ensure its effectiveness on all aspects of its role.
  o Ensure effective communications between the Governors, between the Senior Management Team and Governors, with other stakeholders and with the community.
  o Meet, understand and respond to stakeholder needs.
  o Ensure the provision of accurate, timely and clear information to Governors.
  o Set the tone and culture of the Governing Body, ensure constructive relations and facilitate effective contributions from Governors.
  o Arrange regular performance evaluation of the Governing Body and committees and consider individual Governor appraisal.
  o Promote a high standard of corporate governance.

(Adapted from Higgs, 2003, Review of the role and effectiveness of non-executive directors)

- The Head Teacher providing appropriate, quality and timely information so Governors can carry out their role.

- Governors in Foundation and Voluntary Aided Schools accepting they are the employer and therefore have responsibility for the staff of the school. In LEA Community Schools, whilst the LEA is the employer, accepting they have a duty to act as employer whilst being duty bound to take advice from the LEA. Concerns about and from individual members of staff should be dealt with initially by the Head Teacher.

- Governors getting to know their school with visits undertaken within an established and agreed framework.

- Being accessible, actively listening and responding appropriately to stakeholders.

Independence

Although there needs to be good, close, working relationships between the Governing Body and Senior Management Team, all Governors should be independent, willing and able to challenge, question and speak up.

A Governing Body should give consideration to the length of time any Governor can serve. This avoids long serving Governors losing some of their independence and their 'freshness of thinking' by becoming too close to the school management.
(Higgs (2003) suggests independence can be lost after serving ten years or more)

2.3. Guiding Principles

Vision

This means all Governing Body practices should be designed to enhance the school, its values and strategic direction.

This could be achieved by:

- Having a clear statement about the aims and roles of the Governing Body and their school. e.g. a Code of Conduct which is part of the School Profile.

- Governor meetings focusing on the strategic direction of the school and not day-to-day management issues.

- Having measurable goals.

Rules

- There should be a limitations policy, i.e. activities which relate to day-to-day management. The Governing Body should have a clear understanding of the demarcation line between governance and day-to-day management.

- The Governing Body should provide the Senior Management Team with a clear message regarding its expectations and the results which are expected.

- The Governors and the Senior Management Team need to have an understanding of their specific roles.

Policies

Together with statutory policies, these should include:

- Clear job descriptions.

- A recruitment and training policy.

- A self-evaluation policy.

- A Code of Practice.

Strategy

Every member should be clear about the strategy of the Governing Body and the school and this should be communicated to all stakeholders.

Areas to consider are:

- Understanding and anticipating national education developments, including legislative changes. Aligning national changes with school plans.

- Understanding and anticipating the future needs of the school. This could include 'softer' strategic development, for example, ethos, vision and school image.

- Obtaining and using information obtained from stakeholders, e.g., staff, parents, pupils and the community.

- Having a systematic approach to strategic planning and ensuring there is an effective process for reviewing and updating strategy.

- Transparency; ensure there is a process for communicating the strategy to all stakeholders.

- Comparing performance and learning from other schools.

- Understanding demographic and economic indicators.

- Identifying success factors, strengths and weaknesses.

- Identifying risk factors.

- Being realistic about what can be achieved.

Best Value/Value Added

The Governing Body should focus meetings and all work on activities which add value to the school. There should be emphasis on high level strategic issues.

Recommendations are:

- Have Governing Body targets and consider OFSTED Judgements on Governance. Annex F.

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- Maintain open agenda planning, i.e. not arranged exclusively by the Chair and Head Teacher.

- Apply the Best Value Principles of: Challenge, Compare, Consult and Compete.

Ask the questions:
  - Why are we doing what we are doing? Could someone else do it better? How do we know it is right?
  - How do we compare with what is being done in other schools?
  - What should we be doing differently to be more effective?
  - Do we consult others enough?
  - Who is likely to be affected by any changes we make?
  - Who should we consult to ensure our approach is sound?
  - Are we sufficiently competitive? Do we always obtain the best deals for the school?

- Work closely with the School Improvement Partner (SIP) to ensure Head Teacher targets are meaningful and measurable.

- Monitor strengths and weaknesses and act on weaknesses and build on strengths.

2.4. Processes and Conduct

The Governing Body needs to maintain clear lines of operation.

Meetings

- The Executive and committees should work towards common goals that are understood by all members.

- Agendas should be forward looking and concentrate on strategy. They should not concern themselves with be day-to-day management issues and avoid getting 'bogged down' in the detail.

- Paperwork should be supplied in a timely manner in a form and of a quality and quantity to allow Governors to understand the issues, prepare for meetings and to discharge their duties effectively.

- Conduct of Meetings.
    - o There should be a clear structure to meetings.
    - o Sufficient time should be allowed for the consideration of complex and contentious issues. Governors should not be faced with unrealistic timescales. Agendas should be time managed where possible.
    - o All members should have the opportunity to express their views and opinions.

Principles of Public Life

Governors hold public office and at all times should abide by these principles. The principles should guide the work and operation of the Governing Body at all times.

The Principles are;

Selflessness, which means:

- Not pursuing a course of action because it is of direct benefit to family or friends.

- Recognising being a School Governor is for the benefit of the pupils of your school.

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Integrity, which means:

Holders of public office should not place themselves under financial or any other obligation to any person or organization which might compromise them in the performance of their duty as a Governor.
e.g. by resolving a problem individually which may not fit with Governing Body thinking or with the aims and ethos of the school.

Objectivity and Independence, which means:

- All duties should be undertaken in a fair and honest manner. All appointments, promotions and issuing of contracts should be made on merit. To do this effectively, adequate information and training is essential.

- Higgs (2003) suggests that once a member has sat on a board for more than ten years their judgement could be affected.

Accountability, which means:

- Being prepared to be collectively accountable for the governance of their school.

- Establishing criteria to measure the Governing Body performance.

- Recognising lack of accountability could lead to reduced credibility.

Openness, which means:

- Being as open as possible about decisions taken.

- Being prepared to give reasons for decisions taken. (unless it is not in the public interest to do this)

- Considering carefully any information deemed confidential.

Honesty, which means:

- Governors have a duty to declare any private interests which might impact on their public role.

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Leadership, which means:

- Governors should promote and support these principles by both leadership and by example.

Commitment

To be effective, there should be a time commitment to the role. Time should also be devoted to induction, professional development, developing a strong base of knowledge on the school's affairs, participating in succession planning and in discussion with stakeholders.

(Based on Higgs, 2003, Review of the role and effectiveness of non-executive directors 2003)

Challenge

School Governors are expected to be the 'critical friend' to the head teacher.

Examples of this are:

- Monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

- Giving support and constructive advice.

- Challenging and asking questions of the Head Teacher.

Change Management

Research suggests people accept change more readily if they are involved in or are kept informed about change. Consider the popular phrase 'No one ever tells us what is happening!'
Involving people in change with wide and genuine consultation will motivate people.

Recommendations are:

- Establish appropriate methods for implementing change.

- Communicate process changes to all directly and not via the 'grapevine'.

- Ensure people are trained or have the appropriate skills to implement the change.

- Monitor change and make changes as needed.

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2.5 Review and Evaluation

Governing Bodies should regularly review their effectiveness and performance.

This could be achieved by the Governing Body:

- Establishing performance criteria and monitoring itself annually against these criteria.

- Acting on this evaluation, recognising the strengths and the weaknesses of the Governing Body.

- Considering the view "if we haven't articulated how it should be, how can we judge how it is?"

- Differentiating between school performance and Governor performance and subsequently considering 'whole school success.

- Ensuring there is clarity about what constitutes strategy, policy and process.

- Considering using an outside agency to lead the review e.g. an Education Advisor or Consultant.

- Considering having a Governance Committee with a remit to evaluate Governor effectiveness.

    OFSTED Judgements, Annex F, Model School Governance Effectiveness Criteria, shown in Annex A and The Higgs Performance Evaluation Guidance, shown in Annex B, could be considered and adapted to suit Governing Bodies.

The New Relationship with School Agenda (NRwS) commenced September 2005.
The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) will replace some OFSTED Inspections and is considered to be the key document.
This shows how well a school and its Governing Body, knows itself. This now requires even greater commitment and time.

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Governing Bodies need to develop an annual plan to:

- *review systems*
- *collect evidence*
- *update the SEF via a rolling programme*

By analysing what the Governor role is, how it is performed and what changes could or should be made, a Governing Body will be better able to feel confident in evaluating itself and its school.
In other words, Governors should not only address 'what is' and 'what may be' but also 'what could be'

Annex A: Sample School Governor Effectiveness Criteria[3]

	Criteria	Yes	No
1	Are there strategies in place for the recruitment and appointment of new Governors?		
2	Is the Governing Body of a size to allow every member to contribute?		
3	Does the structure of the Governing Body include members with in-depth knowledge and skills related to governance and the Governor role?		
4	Is a training needs analysis undertaken to ensure knowledge, skills and expertise of Governors are linked to the needs of the school?		
5	Is appropriate training undertaken when offered to individual Governors?		
6	Is every Governor involved and do all Governors demonstrate commitment to the school? e.g. • Attend school functions • School visits, pupil shadowing • Regular attendance at full Governor and sub committee meetings		
7	Does the Governing Body act corporately and as team rather than the representative of a particular sector? e.g. teacher Governors and parent Governors[4]		
8	Does every member of the Governing Body feel free to challenge the Senior Management Team and is this actively encouraged by the Chair?		
9	Does the Governing Body regularly define its aims, objectives and responsibilities and convey these to stakeholders? Is there a Code of Conduct?		
10	Is the paperwork for meetings distributed sufficiently early to allow Governors to give them due consideration and enable options to be discussed rather than 'rubber stampers'?		
11	Does the Governing Body and sub committees regularly review the school strategic plan?		
12	Does the Governing Body review its collective effectiveness and identify issues which are hindering progress and effective governance, openly and honestly without fear of recrimination?		
13	Has the Governing Body considered reviewing its effectiveness with an outside body, thus perhaps leading to greater objectivity?		
14	Is the Chair/Head Teacher relationship open with no 'behind the chair' decision making?		
15	Does the Governing Body conform to Best Value Principles and The Principles of Public Life?		
16	Have there been any complaints or accolades related to the Governing Body? If any complaints, were they resolved satisfactorily?		

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[3] These criteria evolved following the fieldwork. The Chair considered '*time consuming tick sheets*' were not an appropriate solution. He considered simple criteria would be inclusive and could lead to open discussion.

[4] At the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) conference, Easter 2005, David Hart, general secretary of the NAHT when speaking about parent Governors suggested some parents were not fit to sit on Governing Bodies and some were so irresponsible it would be like ' putting an alcoholic in charge of a bar' The National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations delegates responded by saying they considered parents are the people with greatest interest in the school

Annex B: Performance Evaluation

Adapted, with permission, from, Review of the Role and Effectiveness of non-executive directors. Derek Higgs 2003

The performance of the Governing Body as a whole, its committees, and members, should be evaluated at least once a year. Schools should disclose in their annual report whether such performance evaluation is taking place and how this evaluation is being used for forward planning.

It is the responsibility of the chairman to select an effective process and to act on its outcome.
The use of an external third party to conduct the evaluation will bring objectivity to the process.

The evaluation process will be used constructively as a mechanism to improve board effectiveness, maximise strengths and tackle weaknesses. The results of evaluation should be shared with the Governing Body as a whole, while the results of individual assessments should remain confidential between the chair and the Governor concerned.

The following are some of the questions that should be considered in a performance evaluation. They are, however, by no means definitive or exhaustive and schools will wish to tailor the questions to suit their own needs and circumstances.

The responses to these questions and others should enable Governing bodies to assess how they are performing and to identify how certain elements of their performance might be improved.

Performance Evaluation of the Governing Body

- How well has the Governing Body performed against the performance objectives which have been set?
- What has been the Governing Body contribution to the testing and development of strategy?
- What has been the contribution to ensuring robust and effective risk management?
- Is the composition of the executive and its committees appropriate, with the right mix of knowledge, skills and experience to maximise performance in the light of future strategy? Are inside and outside the Governing Body relationships working effectively?
- How has the Governing Body responded to any problems or crises that have emerged and could or should these have been foreseen?
- How well does the Governing Body communicate with the management

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team, staff, pupils, parents and other stakeholders?

- Is the Governing Body as a whole, up to date with the latest developments in governance and education?
- How effective are the committees, e.g. their role, their composition and their interaction with the executive?

The processes that help underpin Governing Body effectiveness should also be evaluated, e.g.:

- Is appropriate, timely information of the right length and quality provided to the Governing Body and is management responsive to requests for clarification or amplification? Does the Governing Body provide helpful feedback to the Head Teacher?
- Are sufficient meetings of appropriate length held to enable proper consideration of issues?
  Is time used effectively?
- Are Governor procedures contributing to effective performance and flexible enough to deal with all eventualities?

In addition, there are some specific issues relating to the Chair which should be included as part of an evaluation of the Governing Body performance, e.g.:

- Is the Chair demonstrating effective leadership? Are relationships and communications with stakeholders well managed? Is the Chair too 'cosy' with the Head Teacher?
- Are relationships and communications within the Governing Body constructive?
- Are the processes for setting the agenda working? Do they enable individual Governors to raise issues and concerns?

The Chair and Governors should consider the following issues and the individual concerned should also be asked to assess themselves. For each Governor:

- How well prepared and informed are Governors for meetings and is their meeting attendance satisfactory?
- Do they demonstrate a willingness to devote time and effort to understand the school and its business and a readiness to participate in events outside the boardroom, such as school visits?
- What has been the quality and value of their contributions at meetings?
- What has been their contribution to development of strategy?

- How successfully have they brought their knowledge and experience to bear in the consideration of strategy?
- How effectively have they probed to test information and assumptions? Where necessary, how resolute are they in maintaining their own views and resisting pressure from others?
- How effectively and proactively have they followed up their areas of concern?
- How effective and successful are their relationships with Governors, the Clerk to Governors and senior management team? Does their performance and behaviour engender mutual trust and respect?
- How actively and successfully do they refresh their knowledge and skills and are they up to date with:

  - the latest developments in areas such as corporate governance framework?
  - education data, at school, national and local levels?

- How well do they communicate with other Governors, senior management, pupils, parents and other stakeholders?
  Are they able to present their views convincingly yet diplomatically and do they listen and take on the views of others?

Annex C : Model Competence Framework

Competence	Features
Vision and Strategic Focus	An analytic, clear thinker; decisive; strategic vision/thinking; organizational awareness
People/Social Skills	Is motivational and motivated; a team player; good written and oral communications
Specific Role Related Skills	Has business, academic, financial, legal, or other skill required by the Governing Body
Personal Effectiveness	Has commitment, maintains good relationships, has integrity, has the ability to clarify issues and good judgement
Self Awareness	Is confident and the ability to make decisions
Forward Planning	Drives for results, is adaptable and demonstrates organizational skills
Commitment	Prepared to commit time, commitment to education, the school and the community
Flexibility	Willingness to change to meet school needs. Challenges and makes hard but correct decisions
Creative Problem Solving	Identifies and collects relevant information, identify alternatives and make logical assumptions
Leadership Skills	Provides a feeling of trust; builds morale when things become tough; effectively handles conflicts; establishes a spirit of cooperation and cohesion
Professionalism	Sets an example; stays current in terms of professional development; promotes the school through active participation with the community and stakeholders

Annex D: Best Value Principles

Source: Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools.
Effective from September 2003

The policy of best value aims to increase the value for money provided by local government services. Although not statutorily required to conduct regular reviews of services provided, schools are expected to follow the four principles of best value - challenge, compare, consult and compete - when making major spending decisions.

Inspection should answer two questions.

- How well does the school apply the four principles in managing and using resources?

- **How well best value principles are applied to the school's management practices to secure improvement?**

Evaluate the extent to which:

- the school has absorbed the four principles into its management practices;

- best-value principles support and influence all management activities and decision-making including: setting targets; planning for improvement; allocating resources to priorities; managing implementation; evaluating school performance; and managing the performance of staff;

- each principle is applied, with a recognition the principles go more widely than value for money, having major implications for leadership and management in general and for efforts to raise educational standards;

- the application of the principles improves education and management;

- the principles are applied without increasing bureaucracy and paper work;

- under the principle of **challenge,** the school's managers should routinely question why they carry out particular tasks, what they need to achieve, what their stakeholders need and the extent to which alternatives might produce better results;

- under the principle of **compare,** the school should use performance data and benchmarking to judge its own performance, or sections of the school, against where it should be and what is being achieved in other schools, or in other sections of the school;

- the school **consults** those who use and depend on it to understand their needs, forge partnerships, listen to critical friends and win the hearts and minds of pupils, parents and staff when managing improvement;

- the school applies the principle of **compete** by making sure it is providing or buying the best possible service at the best possible price; and

- the best value statement reflects accurately and briefly the school's evolving development priorities.

Annex E: Roles and Composition of the Governing Body

Structure	Role/Responsibility	Composition
The Governing Body Executive	Accountable for the implementation of statute, rules, policies, strategy and monitoring of the school. Fiduciary responsibility: the school budget Delegation of functions to Head Teacher Appointing, setting targets and salary scale for the Head Teacher	Nine members including the Head Teacher.
Curriculum Committee	Accountable to the Executive for: The maintenance of academic standards, teaching and learning by: Reviewing the: - assessment policy - provision of religious education and collective worship -sex education, Special Education Needs and provision for talented pupils -school visits policy Monitor test and examination results Reporting findings to the Executive via the Chair.	Chair: member of Executive with education background Plus: One other member of Executive and two other members
Finance, Governance and Risk Management Committee	Accountable to the Executive for: Risk Management Strategy - built into all aspects of school life (Annex G) Financial Management Expenditure: recommend changes to keep income and expenditure within target. School Fund/s overview Capital Build Projects; capital expenditure; determining of priorities Effectiveness Strategy - raise the profile of effectiveness and quality standards amongst Governors and staff	Chair: member of Executive with financial/business background Plus: One other member of Executive and two other members

	Findings reported to the Executive via the Chair	
Marketing and Community Committee	Accountable to the Executive for: Community Strategy – encouragement of and obtaining feedback from pupils, parents, the community and other stakeholders. Corporate Social Responsibility (including feedback processes) Marketing Strategy Findings reported to Executive via the Chair	Chair: member of Executive with appropriate expertise Plus: One other member of Executive and two other members
Personnel and Health and Safety Committee	Accountable to the Executive for: Reviewing staffing provision within the constraints of the budget and curriculum requirements Reviewing Performance Management procedures Initial review of any staff grievances Preparation and upkeep of the Health and Safety Policy Ensuring the appropriate provision of school meals for the pupils Pupil/Staff Issues: Establishment of disciplinary procedures staff capability procedures and maintenance of Equal Opportunities Reporting findings back to Executive via chair	Chair: member of Executive with appropriate expertise Plus: One other member of Executive and two other members

Appeals Committee (a legal requirement)	Accountable to the Executive for: -staff discipline and appeals -pupil discipline and appeals	This is an extra committee convened when needed. Members must not have been involved in any preliminary discussion of an appeal
In Voluntary Aided and Foundation Schools there must also be a committee which deals with pupil admissions (a legal requirement)		

(All of the above roles to be developed to conform to current DfES guidelines related to Statutory Powers and Duties)

Annex F: OFSTED Judgements on Governance

1	Excellent	Creativity and dynamism in reflecting upon performance, promoting change, and capitalizing on links with the local community suggest excellent governance
2	Very Good	The Governing Body makes a major contribution to the leadership of the school including its sixth form. It is fully involved in strategic planning and formulating policies and supports staff in implementing them. Governors keep in close touch with the school's work across all stages, and this cements partnerships between the Governing Body and the school. The Pattern of the Governing Body's work meshes well with the school's development cycle, so that both are very influential. The Governing Body is fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and deals with them open and frankly, contributing fully to development planning. Performance Management procedures are monitored closely by the Governing Body.
3	Good	The Governing Body influences the work of the school and its policies through challenge and support. It has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses and has a significant strategic influence in leading the school's development with a clear focus on raising standards and improving the quality of provision. The Governing Body is prepared to take difficult decisions where necessary. It is well organized and improves its own performance through appropriate development activities and training.
4	Satisfactory	The Governing Body ensures that the school meets its statutory responsibilities, and has clear aims and policies. Its performance management policy operates efficiently. Corporately, it sets an overall direction for the school and formulates policies that reflect the overall character of the school. It reviews performance data to monitor the whole school's work and its recommendations for action are followed up. All Governors understand their role and any specific responsibilities. There is a businesslike relationship between Governors and senior staff in leading the school.
5	Unsatisfactory	The school fails to meet one or more statutory responsibilities and lacks some of the policies that are required. The Governing Body relies too heavily on the Head Teacher. Although supportive, Governors play a slight part in leading the school and do little to hold the school to account. Their work lacks focus and influence. They have insufficient knowledge of one or more of the stages. There is little corporate agreement about the school's strengths and weaknesses. The Governing Body has a limited grasp of the performance of the school and only modest effect on its development.
6	Poor	Important statutory responsibilities are not met. The Governing Body is remote from the school. Relationships between members of the Governing Body or between it and the senior staff are at best, indifferent.
7	Very Poor	High vacancies, poor attendance, hostile relationships and almost total reliance on the Head Teacher are indications of very poor governance. Relationships between members of the Governing Body or between it and senior staff are at best indifferent and may be acrimonious. Governors' business is badly organized and their conduct presents a barrier to school improvement. Governors are largely unaware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and in particular, of the effectiveness or otherwise of its senior managers. They have a limited influence on the work of the school. The Governing Body presents no challenge. Standards and quality are not assured and it fails to set a clear direction or priorities for the school'

Annex G: Exemplar School Risk Assessment Register

	High Risk Areas	Causes	Effects	Actions	By Whom	By When
1	Pupil Recruitment	Adverse media publicity	Fewer pupils in Yr 7 Less staff. Timetable difficulties	Marketing and PR campaign Appraise school ethos and style Timetable restructure		
2	Staffing	Pay Awards National Agreement – workforce reorganisation Under performance Department structure	Increased staff costs Cut backs on non staffing budget Staff redundancies	Prioritize expenditure Whole school review		
3	Buildings	Inadequate buildings Location of classrooms	Accommodation shortfall Lower staff morale Reduced academic achievement	Develop an estates strategy Appoint school estates team with both internal and external members		
4	School Reputation	Academic reputation Community reputation Poor OFSTED Report	Adverse effects on staff and pupils Recruitment problems League table position	Develop partnerships with community Review programmes Structured meaningful appraisal Improved staff development		
5	Government Policy Changes	Extended Schools Agenda	Longer school opening hours Higher running costs More community use of school Damage to property	Apply to DfES for extra funding Develop a charging policy Appraise overall value of the use of the school		
6	Emergency Incidents	Pupil/staff security	Reduced pupil intake	Develop links with other schools		

Annex G is a sample of one method of developing a Risk Register

It is recommended each Governing Body should:

- Identify and prioritize the high risk areas of their school
- Consider the causes, effects and required actions for each risk
- Have a named group or person responsible for actions
- Have a structured schedule for reporting back to the Executive and the Senior Management Team
- Appraise the register continuously and modify as needed

Front cover of guidelines

Unit 4: BTEC: Governor Accountability Unit

Unit value: 1

Unit level: 3

Unit code: 24757P

Description of unit

This unit covers a range of ways in which School Governors demonstrate their integrity.
It also looks at their contribution to the accountability of the Governing Body to stakeholders.
The unit enables candidates to show the part they play in ensuring that good quality education
is offered in their school.

Summary of Outcomes

To achieve this unit the candidate must:

1. Contribute to the preparation of the school's annual report and/or newsletter
2. Demonstrate the Governing Body's accountability
3. Contribute to the integrity of School Governance

Outcomes and assessment criteria

Outcomes	Assessment criteria **To achieve this outcome a candidate must demonstrate the ability to:**
Contribute to the preparation of the school's annual report and/or newsletter	a. provide information or ideas for the school's annual report and/or newsletter b. take part in ensuring that the preparation, approval and presentation of the school's annual report meets statutory requirements
Demonstrate the Governing Body's accountability	a. take part in the school's annual meeting, open evening or parents' evenings b. deal with parent's comments and questions, formally or informally c. seek out the views and concerns of parents, pupils and staff d. explain which matters should be kept confidential and the procedures for dealing with them
Contribute to the integrity of school governance	a. explain how Governing Body agenda and minutes should be prepared b. describe how an individual Governor's decisions and actions contribute to the integrity of the Governing Body

Year	Legislation	Content
1839	Education Act	Creation of Government Education Office with Secretary of Education and two School Inspectors
1870	Elementary Education Act	Allowed the creation of ten school boards
1902	Education Act	Required secondary schools to have Governors
1918	Fisher Act	School leaving age to be 14 years old Members of the community, teachers and parents could not be Governors Local authority and central government had full control
1944	The Butler Act	New education structure for post war England and Wales Introduction of the 11+ examination and tripartite system of education. Governors to be 'suitable people' but with only limited powers School leaving age rose to 15 years
1967	The Plowden Report	Stresses the need for parent and community involvement in schools
1972		Leaving age rose to 16 years
1977	The Taylor Report	'A New Partnership' set out to reform Governing Bodies with some sharing of responsibility with the LEA
1986	Education Act	First real restructuring and defining of responsibilities of bodies LEA majority removed The advent of LMS
1988	Education Act	Governor role further defined and more parental involvement
1993	Education Act	Increased the flexibility of Governors and enabled school to become Grant Maintained (opt out from LEA control)
1998	Education Reform Act	Standards and Framework. The Governor role to include standards of achievement
2002	The Way Forward: A Modernised Framework for School Governors	Related to composition of Governing Bodies
2005	NRwS	Increased responsibility for Governing Bodies. Introduction of the SEF,SIP, Extended Schools and Workforce Reform

Berry and Perrin, 2000: What do non-executive directors add?

Table7: Contribution that NED made to SMEs compared with literature (Hampel, 1998; Dunne, 1997; Atherton and Hannon, 1999; Maw and Craig-Cooper, 1994; Cadbury, 1992; GHN, 1997; CISCO,1995; BDO,1994)

NED Contribution	Results from all firms with NEDs (N=180) %	Results from the 1-49 employee band (N=65) %	Results from the 50-499 employee band (N= 115) %	Supported by other literature
Outside objectivity	73	63	80	Yes
Strategic planning process	50	48	51	Yes
Finance expertise	33	34	25	Yes
Operational expertise	31	29	31	Yes
Network of contacts	28	18	33	Yes
Structured board procedures	28	22	31	Yes
Helped with growth problems	16	14	17	Yes
Brought marketing support	14	14	15	Yes
Provided ally on board	13	14	11	No
Reduced board conflict	11	3	15	Yes
Gave confidence to financiers	11	17	15	Yes
Prestigious name on board	9	6	11	Yes
Helped with turnaround	7	3	9	Yes
Customer information provided	7	5	8	Yes
Competitor information given	4	3	4	Yes
Company floatation advice	1	3	1	Yes

Q. What do you see as the single most important contribution you make? [Non- Executives]

Q. What do you see as the single most important contribution Non-Executive Directors make to the company? [Chairmen & Executive Directors]

	Non-Executive Directors %	Chairmen %	Executive Directors %
Experience/knowledge	38	21	19
Develop company strategy	17	10	7
Independent	14	15	27
Outside perspective	8	10	13
Ask questions/challenge actions and decisions	7	11	14
Protect shareholder/investor interests	5	8	5
Lead/manage the board	4	1	0
Monitor performance of the board/other directors	3	4	4
New ideas/insight	0	3	1
Other	11	8	9
Don't know	1	1	1

Base: All Chairmen (72), Non-Executive Directors (276), Executive Directors (257) of UK listed companies, 12th Aug - 18th Sept 2002

Executive directors have a slightly different perspective, with independence the most commonly cited

Contribution non-executives make (27%). Experience and knowledge is highly valued (19%), but to a lesser degree than given by non-executives themselves or Chairmen. Executive directors are also less likely to see the non-executive directors most important role being the development of company strategy (7%).

There are no significant differences by company size or FTSE type.

Examples of verbatim comments made by all directors, which were subsequently analysed to provide the figures given in the chart, are given below.

MORI

(continued)

Review of the role and effectiveness of non-executive directors.

Commercial experience and independence of thought.

Non-Executive Director

To keep the company mindful of the ordinary people who have investments in the company.

Non-Executive Director

My independence and objectivity. I don't have day-to-day responsibility so I can be more objective. I can help executive directors analyse problems in an objective way.

Non-Executive Director

They give balance. Outsiders are more removed than those closely involved in the day-to-day running of the company.

Chairman

They challenge and question executive directors in terms of both what they're doings and what they're considering doing.

Chairman

Ability to question executives having regard to their own business.

Executive Director

An independent, non partisan view, so they can see the bigger issues and not get bogged down in detail.

Executive Director

They bring specialist knowledge that we don't have in the company. In effect they are a testing board for what we are doing.

Executive Director

They bring a wider perspective and they stop us from becoming tramlined and blinkered.

Executive Director

Barriers to Greater Effectiveness

A quarter of directors think that the largest barrier to the greater effectiveness of non-executive directors is their own lack of time or commitment to the company (25%). The findings as a whole suggest the barriers are also a question of whether non-executive directors receive the information they need and have the required level of understanding about the company.

Barriers to greater Effectiveness

Q. What do you think are the barriers to greater effectiveness of non-executive directors?

	%
Lack of time/commitment	25
Lack of knowledge/understanding of the company	14
Executive Directors hold back information	11
Lack of involvement in the company/only turn up for board meetings	9
Lack of information	7
Can't pay enough to motivate/recruit	7
Personal faults/lack of ability	6
Too many responsibilities elsewhere	5
Not enough good candidates/too old/lack of fresh ideas	4
Too many rules/red- tape	4

Base: All Chairmen (72), Non-Executive Directors (276), Executive Directors (257) of UK listed companies, 12th Aug = 18th Sept 2002

MORI

Review of the role and effectiveness of non-executive directors

Executive directors are significantly more concerned with the lack of time/commitment (30%), lack of knowledge and understanding of the company (19%), and lack of involvement in the company (12%) than other directors.

Barriers to Greater Effectiveness

Q. What do you think are the barriers to greater effectiveness of Non- Executive Directors?

Top Ten - Overall

	Non-Executive Directors	Chairmen	Executive Directors
Lack of time/commitment	22%	22%	30%
Lack of knowledge/ understanding of company	10%	15%	19%
Executive Directors hold back Information	13%	13%	8%
Lack of involvement in company/ only turn up for board meetings	7%	10%	12%
Lack of information	9%	10%	5%
Can't pay enough to motivate/recruit	6%	10%	-
Personal faults/lack of ability	4%	7%	7%
Too many responsibilities elsewhere	4%	6%	7%
Not enough good candidates/too old/lack of fresh ideas	1%	7%	5%
Too many rules/red-tape	6%	3%	3%

Base: All Chairmen (72), Non-Executive Directors (276), Executive Directors (257) of UK listed companies, 12th Aug - 18th Sept 2002. NB - Responses below 4% are excluded, therefore figures do not add up to 100%

Source: Mori

There are no significant differences by company size or FTSE type.

MORI

Policy Governance Principals

> The board exists to hold the organization in trust on behalf of an identifiable "Ownership"; the board's primary relationship is with these "owners" rather than with the staff.

> The board speaks to the CEO with one voice through written Ends and Executive Limitations policies; it does not create Board structures such as committees that interfere with that clarity of delegation.

> Board decisions are predominately policy decisions; the Board creates policies in four categories: Ends; Executive Limitations; Governance Processes; Board-CEO Relationships.

> Policies come in "sizes"; the Board addresses larger values first, before addressing smaller values that are contained within the larger. When the Board reaches sufficient level of policy detail, it delegates all further definition to someone else, and accepts any reasonable interpretation of its policies from that someone else.

> The Board should define and delegate not react and ratify; the Board focuses on identifying the "Ends" it wants, and clearly identifying what means are not acceptable, rather than "approving" event-specific decisions or "ratifying" staff plans.

> The key role of the Board is identifying "Ends" – what benefits the organization is to produce, who the benefits are for, and how much they are worth.

> The Board controls staff means by limiting, rather than prescribing; the Board controls staff actions by constructing a 'fence' within which freedom and creativity are allowed. This is beat done with negative language.

> The Board explicitly designs its own products and processes, clearly stating what it expects of itself – what it will add to the organization, its own structures, its own code of conduct, how it will control its agenda and evaluate itself.

> The Board's link to the inside of the organization is through the CEO. This link is both empowering and safe. The Board's policy clearly sets out how the Board will delegate to the CEO and monitor CEO performance. Board and CEO together constitute a leadership team with clearly differentiated roles that are supportive and respectful of each other.

> The Board rigorously monitors performance of the CEO, but only against criteria set out in policy.

GUIDANCE ON THE ROLE OF THE NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As members of the unitary board, all directors are required to:

. Provide entrepreneurial leadership of the company within a framework of prudent and effective controls which enable risk to be assessed and managed;

. Set the company's strategic aims, ensure that the necessary financial and human resources are in place for the company to meet its objectives, and review management performance; and

. Set the company's values and standards and ensure that its obligations to its shareholders and others are understood and met.

In addition to these requirements for all directors, the role of the non-executive director has the following key elements:

Strategy. Non-executive directors should constructively challenge and help develop proposals on strategy.

Performance. Non-executive directors should scrutinise the performance of management in meeting agreed goals and objectives and monitor the reporting of performance.

Risk. Non-executive directors should satisfy themselves on the integrity of financial information and that financial controls and systems of risk management are robust and defensible.

People. Non-executive directors are responsible for determining appropriate levels of remuneration of executive directors, and have a prime role in appointing, and where necessary removing, executive directors and in succession planning.

Non-executive directors should constantly seek to establish and maintain confidence in the conduct of the company. They should be independent in judgement and have an enquiring mind. To be effective, non-executive directors need to build recognition by executives of their contribution in order to promote openness and trust.

To be effective, non-executive directors need to be well informed about the company and the external environment in which it operates, with a strong command of issues relevant to the business. A non-executive director should insist on a comprehensive, formal and tailored induction. An effective induction need not be restricted to the boardroom, so consideration should be given to visiting sites and meeting senior and middle management. Once in post, an effective non-executive director should seek continually to develop and refresh their knowledge and skills to ensure that their contribution to the board remains informed and relevant.

Higgs Suggestions for Good Practice

SUMMARY OF THE PRINCIPAL DUTIES OF THE NOMINATION COMMITTEE

There should be a nomination committee, which should lead the process for board appointments and make recommendations to the board.
A majority of members of the committee should be independent non-executive directors. The chairman or an independent non-executive director should chair the committee, but the chairman should not chair the nomination committee when it is dealing with the appointment of a successor to the chairmanship.

Duties.

The committee should:

- be responsible for identifying and nominating for the approval of the board, candidates to fill board vacancies as and when they arise before making an appointment, evaluate the balance of skills, knowledge and experience on the board and, in the light of this evaluation, prepare a description of the role and capabilities required for a particular appointment;
- review annually the time required from a non-executive director. Performance evaluation should be used to assess whether the non executive director is spending enough time to fulfil their duties;
- consider candidates from a wide range of backgrounds and look beyond the "usual suspects";
- give full consideration to succession planning in the course of its work, taking into account the challenges and opportunities facing the company and what skills and expertise are therefore needed on the board in the future;
- regularly review the structure, size and composition (including the skills, knowledge and experience) of the board and make recommendations to the board with regard to any changes;
- keep under review the leadership needs of the organisation, both executive and non-executive, with a view to ensuring the continued ability of the organisation to compete effectively in the marketplace;
- make a statement in the annual report about its activities; the process used for appointments and explain if external advice or open advertising has not been used; the membership of the committee, number of committee meetings and attendance over the course of the year;
- make available its terms of reference explaining clearly its role and the authority delegated to it by the board
- ensure that on appointment to the board, non-executive directors receive a formal letter of appointment setting out clearly what is expected of them in terms of time commitment, committee service and involvement outside board meetings.

The committee should make recommendations to the board:

- as regards plans for succession for both executive and non executive directors;

- as regards the re-appointment of any non-executive director at the conclusion of their specified term of office;
- concerning the re-election by shareholders of any director under the retirement by rotation provisions in the company's articles of association;
- concerning any matters relating to the continuation in office of any director at any time; and
- concerning the appointment of any director to executive or other office other than to the positions of chairman and chief executive, the recommendation for which would be considered at a meeting of the board.

Help Schools Help Children
School Governor Recruitment Kit

Snippets

'School Governors have a vital part to play in raising standards to
Ensure that every child in our school reaches their full potential'

'School Governors do not need any formal qualifications –
just the will to make a difference to our children's education'

'To be a School Governor you need time, energy and commitment'

'You don't need to be a parent to be a Governor at our school'

'School Governors work together and make decisions as a team'

'What does a School Governor look like?'
YOU!

'School Governors are helping to shape the next generation'

'School Governors help to forge links between our school
and the local community'

'Help Schools, Help YOUR Children –
Become a School Governor'

Help Schools Help Children
School Governor Recruitment Kit

Become a School Governor at this School

The Governing Body of

Parent Governor Information Sheet

School Governors represent the largest volunteer force in the country with approximately 1% of the adult population serving in this capacity at any one time. The Governing Body of   has Governor positions of which   are for Parent Governors. Parent Governors are elected by their fellow parents and are vital to the Governing Body because they ensure that the other Governors are kept in touch with the concerns and issues of most important to our parents.

Governors are people who wish to make a positive contribution to the school and the education of its children. They will contribute to the effective day-to-day running of the school and have an effective input towards the educational achievements of its pupils.

A Governing Body's overriding responsibility is to work in partnership with the head teacher to promote continuous improvement in the performance of the school. This involves the establishment of a development plan, the setting of challenging but achievable targets and the interpretation of information to assess progress and determine appropriate action. Typically, a Governor's duties will average around 6 hours of spare time each month. Aligned to its important role, the Governing Body is there to be a 'critical friend' who can provide the right balance between supporting and challenging the performance of the Head teacher and the school.

LEA values the voluntary contributions of its Governors and in return aims to provide a high - quality training and support service. Governors are able to access this support in a variety of ways including training courses and a designated helpline. A regular newsletter is sent to all Governors in the area to keep them informed of developments in education policy and current best practices.

Being a Parent Governor can be stimulating, enjoyable and rewarding. If you have the enthusiasm and desire to become closely involved in the running of the school then please consider putting your name forward for vacancies that arise. Parent Governors are an important component in achieving an effective and well-balanced.

Contact ...., Chair of Governors on.............. or write directly to him at the school address.

Help School Help Children
School Governor recruitment Kit

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Help shape the future of a Cumbrian school

DO YOU:
- Care about improving children's educational attainment?
- Want to contribute to the local community?
- Want to work as part of a team and can value the contribution made by different people?

ARE YOU:
- Willing to ask questions?
- Open to ideas and willing to learn?
- Enthusiastic and committed?

If this is you, why not consider becoming a school governor?

Anybody over the age of 18 can apply, no qualifications are necessary, you do not have to be a parent of a child at a particular school, just the desire to make a difference and a couple of spare evenings a month.

A good school governing body is vital to a school's success in moving forward.

Governors make key decisions, which directly affect the education and well-being of children and can really make a difference in supporting improvement in standards throughout the school.

Joan Stocker, Cabinet Spokesperson for Education, explains why being a governor is not only important to the school, but what you can also get out of it.

She says: "Being on a governing body means that you have the opportunity to help youngsters achieve their goals and ambitions.

They make sure that staff have the right tools to broaden the children's knowledge and widen their horizons.

"In essence it's about making things better. It is not only the school that benefits from someone becoming a governor – the governors themselves get a chance to develop new skills, they have the chance to help other members of a team and have the knowledge that they have played a part in improving children's education and supported the school's staff."

If you would like to know more about becoming a school governor then please contact Mike Fox, Governor Support Services Manager on 01228 606926.

Opportunity: Help pupils meet goals

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The Education School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2003
(SI 2003/348) set out the new arrangements for the constitution of Governing Bodies of
maintained schools, including maintained nursery schools, in England. From September
2003, Governing Bodies can operate with a new constitutional model. Governing Bodies
have until 31 August 2006 to adopt a new constitutional model that complies with these
regulations.

The DfES issued guidance on this in May 2003, which was sent to schools. Meanwhile,
Governing Bodies seeking to adopt a new constitution this September may find it helpful to
know that the guiding principles determining the proportions of the different categories of
Governor have remained the same as in the draft regulations and guidance. The examples of
models of Governing Body size and make up which were shown in Annex 1 of the draft
guidance are still valid.

The instrument of government of a school must specify the size of the membership of the
Governing Body, which must be no fewer than 9 or more than 20 Governors, which must not
include any sponsor or additional foundation Governors.

In calculating the number of Governors required in each category in accordance with
regulations 13 to 16 the number must be rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.

In calculating the number of staff Governors required, the head teacher must be included
whether or not he has resigned his Governorship.

Community schools, maintained nursery schools and community special schools - The
Governing Body of a community school, a maintained nursery school or a community
special school must comprise the following:

(a) one third or more must be parent Governors;
(b) at least two but no more than one third must be staff Governorship
(c) one fifth must be LEA Governors; and
(d) one fifth or more must be community Governors.

The Governing Body may In addition appoint up to two sponsor Governors.

Foundation schools and foundation special schools - The Governing Body of a foundation
school or a foundation special school must comprise the following:

(a) one third or more must be parent Governors;
(b) at least two but no more than one third must be staff Governors

(continued)

(c) at least one but no more than one fifth must be LEA Governors;

(d) one tenth or more must be community Governors; and

(e) at least two but no more than one quarter must be Governors or, where the school does not have a foundation, partnership Governors.

The Governing Body may in addition appoint up to two sponsor Governors.

Voluntary controlled schools - The Governing Body of a voluntary controlled school must comprise the following:

(a) one third or more must be parent Governors;

(b) at least two but no more than one third must be staff Governors;

(c) at least one but no more than one fifth must be LEA Governors;

(d) one tenth or more must be community Governors; and

(e) at least two but no more than one quarter must be foundation Governors.

The Governing Body may in addition appoint up to two sponsor Governors.

Voluntary aided schools - The Governing Body of a voluntary aided school must comprise the following:

(a) at least one but no more than one tenth must be LEA Governors;

(b) at least two but no more than one third must be staff Governors;

(c) at least one must be a parent Governor;

(d) such number of foundation Governors as out number all the other Governors listed in sub-paragraphs (a) to (c) by two; and

(e) such number of foundation Governors appointed In accordance with regulation 8(2) as, when they are counted with the parent Governors, comprise one third or more of the total membership of the Governing Body.

In addition

(a) the Governing Body may appoint up to two sponsor Governors; and

(b) the person who is entitled to appoint foundation Governors may appoint such number of additional foundation Governors (up to two) as are required to preserve their majority. and grounds including external contracts. Monitoring health and safety and setting charging Policies

September/October 2003

Dear Governor

<u>Research into the role of school Governors</u>

I understand you are/have been a school Governor and I would really appreciate your assistance with my research at Northumbria University, into the role of school Governors.

Regulations made under section 38(3) of the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act say Governors should:

- Act as part of a corporate body.
- Take a strategic role and be responsible for setting the strategic framework with advice given by Head Teacher.
- Review progress of the school, review the strategic framework in the light of progress and 'to conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of achievement'
- Act as 'critical friend' to the Head Teacher.
- Appoint and set the annual targets for the Head Teacher.

With the above in mind, it would be of great help to me if you would complete this questionnaire and return it to me by email or in the enclosed s.a.e. by October 18th 2003.

I do realize this is yet one more piece of paper for you to contend with, but your help will be invaluable in my research.

Your reply will be treated as confidential.

Thank you for your cooperation.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL GOVERNORS QUESTIONNAIRE   MARCH/APRIL 2003

Your gender   Male.........   Female.........

Number of years as a Governor.............

Pupil age range of your school.............

1. WHY DID YOU WISH TO BE A SCHOOL GOVERNOR?

2. HOW WERE YOU RECRUITED?

3. DO YOU CONSIDER THERE ARE ANY DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED WITH
RECRUITMENT OF GOVERNORS? If yes, what are they?

4. HOW WERE YOU APPOINTED TO THE GOVERNING BODY?
For example, were you interviewed and if so, by whom?

5. DO YOU HAVE A JOB DESCRIPTION?

6. WHAT DOES IT CONSTITUTE? (If possible, would you enclose a copy?)

7. HAVE YOU HAD INITIAL TRAINING AND SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES?

What were they and how could they be improved?

8. IN WHAT WAYS HAS BEING A GOVERNOR MET YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

9. IN WHAT WAYS HAS BEING A GOVERNOR FAILED TO MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

10. WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE ROLE/S OF A GOVERNOR?

   For example, were you involved in setting the strategic framework?

11. WHICH SKILLS DO YOU CONSIDER ESSENTIAL TO BE AN EFFECTIVE GOVERNOR?

   a. individually?

   b. collectively?

   Please comment.

12. HOW SHOULD THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOVERNING BODY BE MEASURED?

13. THERE IS A NATIONAL SHORTAGE OF SCHOOL GOVERNORS. HOW DO YOU THINK THE 'POOL' OF POTENTIAL GOVERNORS COULD BE INCREASED?

14. AS A GOVERNOR HAVE YOU EVER CHALLENGED AN IMPORTANT DECISION OF THE GOVERNING BODY OR SENIOR MANAGEMENT? (Please tick the appropriate box)

NEVER	SOMETIMES	OFTEN

If YES what was the main issue?

What were the effects of this?

Thank you for your help.

School Governance
Pilot Survey of County Governors
October/November 2001
Gladys Spedding

Fifteen well established Governors and members of various Governor Support Services were asked the following questions. Initially some felt the questions to be either too pointed or difficult or as one said 'incriminating'

Question1. AS A GOVERNOR HOW WOULD YOU KNOW IF YOUR HEAD TEACHER WERE DOING A MARGINALLY SUB- STANDARD JOB EVEN IF THE SCHOOL WERE ACHIEVING HIGH A-C SCORES?

Main factors mentioned	No. responses
• By examination of PANDA data	4
• Examine data related to similar schools	3
• Governors need to have data interpreted correctly for them by Head Teacher	5
• Undertake a full SATs analysis and compare potential with results	4
• Set targets for Head Teacher	7
• Meaningful Head Teacher performance, review biannually	5
• Ensure quality monitoring and evaluation	7
• Link Governors with appropriate skills and expertise to individual departments	1
• A close working relationship with Head Teacher	3
• A mutually supportive management system;' the critical friend'	4
• Good committee system	5
• Continuous professional development for Governors	2
• Numbers of pupils continuing in 6th form	3
• The Head Teacher's report	1
• Difficult to know	4
	58

(* Totals from 15 respondents each offering more than one suggestion.)

Question 2. WHO WOULD BE ANSWERABLE?

Main factors mentioned	No. responses
• OFSTED would hold Governing Body answerable	9
• Governors should have a system for holding the Head Teacher responsible for results and school shortcomings	4
• The Senior Management Team	3
• Governors and Head Teacher	7
• Staffing and curriculum committee	
• Difficult to be answerable without full knowledge/power	11
	24

(*Totals from 15 respondents, some offering more than one answer.)

Question 3. WHAT ARE THE FAILINGS, IF THERE ARE ANY FAILINGS OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM?

Main factors mentioned	No. responses
• Too little individual child target setting	2
• Inadequate child tracking systems	1
• Insufficient/inadequate comparative data	3
• Too many Governors do not fully understand their responsibilities	5
• Governors have to rely on the Head Teacher's honesty re. quality of teaching and learning in the school	3
• Lack of understanding of objective data(PANDA)	2
• Governors are not in a position to make proper judgments about quality	2
• Governors do not always know what questions to ask the Head Teacher	5
• Many Head Teachers find Governor questions 'threatening'	3
• Some Head Teachers will avoid telling Governors anything they feel reflects on their own capability	2
• The constant changes being imposed by the DFES	2
• Too much paperwork is often a 'smoke screen' at meetings	5
• Governor imbalance of experience and expertise	2
• Personality of the Head Teacher	4
• Heads only want help when there is a problem	1
• No response	2
	2
	46

(*Totals from 13 respondents each offering more than one answer)

PANDA   Performance AND Assessment Report
SATs   Standard Attainment Tests
OFSTED   Office for Standards of Education
DFES   Department for Education and Skills)

The evidence from this survey indicates Governors do not really feel 'in charge' of standards in their schools.

For at least one Governor the whole question of recognizing when a school was under-performing was extremely problematic. He said:

> *I feel Governors are in general lacking in skills and too often allow themselves to be led by the Head Teacher. They make an assumption that the head is always right and many feel they cannot question the head's competence. I even doubt if performance management will solve the problem as it does seem to be rather 'tepid' in both content and execution.*

Another Governor did however suggest that the degree to which a governing body could identify under-achievement would always be limited and they were completely dependent on the Head Teacher. He added:

> *Governors have a responsibility for standards; it is in itself difficult since there are so many other factors to consider like home and base-line ability. Children should always achieve their potential and it is up to the Head Teacher to see that this happens.*

There did however seem to be a view that Governors want to be more pro-active, more effective and have more responsibility than was being suggested by recent legislation.

There also appeared to be no generally agreed system of monitoring the Head Teachers performance, emphasis appears to be on the Head Teachers report.

An interesting and particularly worrying aspect of this mini-survey was the fact that none of the Governors could really say how well their schools were actually performing and all appeared to rely on GCSE results, by which time it is too late for the pupils involved.

A further concern is the general feeling that responsibility is 'sort of ours' but really it is the Head Teacher who is in charge and we give support.

The responses to the question about identifying an under-performing Head Teacher were wordy but did not produce practical solutions.

Governing Body Self Review
July 2001

Analysis and Report
Gladys Spedding
September 2001

Responses to the GOVERNING BODY SELF-REVIEW August/September 2001

This report is based on 9 responses representing approximately 50% of the governing body in July 2001

QUESTION 1 – PRACTICE

Training and Development

100% of respondents said the school does not give high priority to the development and training of Governors.
Comments included:

> *It should be given high priority*

> *Appoint a Link Governor responsible for training*

The general feeling in this section indicated the need for an analysis of Governor skills and an appropriate induction system for new Governors.
Comments included;

> *Adopt a mentoring system*

> *Poor but improving*

Relationships

The results indicate that Governors in general feel there are good relationships; however, 1.8 suggests that there is an issue relating to understanding the difference between management and governance
Comments included:

> *Will take time and has to come from the top*

> *It is starting to improve*

> *We now need to convert discussion into action*

Teamwork

In this area opinion divided 1.12 indicates that Governors feel able to contribute to discussion, 1.15, 100% of respondents feel the governing body understands collective responsibility 1.14 indicates the need for action. (Possibly Related to 1.1 training)

Comments included:

There is a disproportionate split of workload

Need for greater involvement and encouragement

Improving

Use agendas as tools to promote teamwork (no explanation of how given)

Meetings

The general feeling of responses indicates that meetings are productive, enjoyable, makes decisions and 100% of respondents consider there is good administrative support.
Comments included:

Variable

Genuine pride and interest in school

Too many individual agendas

*Was good in sub-committees, beginning to improve in full
Governors meetings*

Delegation

The general feeling is that delegation is not *balanced* but that Governors trust those with delegated powers and the system for feedback is good.
Comments included:

Highly valuable

Seems to be top loaded

A framework has just been put in place

It is all beginning to happen

QUESTION 2 - PLANNING

Direction

The general *slant* although marginal, is Governors are not sure about having an

agreed vision nor has it reviewed this recently
Comments included:

> *Beginning to change following OFSTED and recruitment of new Head Teacher*

> *It is a must that we understand the school and have an agreed vision"*

Planning

Again the *slant* was towards an indication that Governor involvement and knowledge of planning could be improved
Comments included

> *Signs of improvement but still at all early stage*

> *Poor, but improving*

Decision Making

Most Governors felt there was reasonable decision making although 50% felt consultation with staff and parents could be improved
Comments included:

> *I am seeing a real move to improve or are we just being more open?*
> *Is it that we just agree with the person who proposes?*

> *Some signs of improvement*

Information and Documentation

Clearly Governors feel they receive information but there is
some imbalance related to the way policies are developed
and reviewed.
Comments included:

> *Identified by OFSTED as an issue*

> *Improved but early days yet*

> *Some information is not user friendly,*
> *too much jargon/acronyms*

QUESTION 3 - PROGRESS

Monitoring and Evaluation
The general feeling of respondents was that this was only adequate to poor.

Comments included:

Helping Governors have a clear understanding of their roles may be a start

Currently being reviewed

*After OFSTED we now know **WHAT WE SHOULD KNOW!***

School Improvement
Governors feel that this is now in general, adequate to good (many references to OFSTED)
Comments included:

Improving

NOW have access to policies and awareness of issues and targets (previously paperwork was given out 'selectively' according to some Governors)

Needs more planned work following OFSTED

Efficiency
Governors feel efficiency is adequate to good
Comments included:

Need for need for greater understanding of issues

Should be an on-going activity

Effectiveness

The balance of responses was towards only adequate to poor effectiveness
The only comment made was it may be that undertaking this review would be the start.

Equality

Equality was slanted towards only adequate to poor, although more respondents felt Governors were encouraged to participate.

No extra comments were made

QUESTION 4 – PARTNERSHIP

Representation

Generally felt to be adequate
Comments included:

> *No real consultation*

> *Need to re-enforce participation*

Participation

Responses balanced between good, adequate and poor.
Comments included:

> *Improved but insular*

Communication

The balance of opinion seems to be that communications are only adequate to poor
Responses included:

> *Improving with Link Governors*

> *No, it does not really happen (re review of communications with parents)*

> *Do we have any communications with parents?*

> *Need reduction of the US and THEM scenario*

Accountability

Received a spread of responses with the general feeling of being adequate.
Comments included:

Improved

On balance it was felt Governors do support the school, celebrate success and work
towards improving the school's ethos and image
Comments included:

Need to ensure that staff receives thanks where appropriate

Need to do more work in primaries and with primary Governors

Use news media to sharpen public perception

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SUGGESTIONS FOR WAY FORWARD

1. *A General Discussion highlighting areas for action, and perhaps an 'away day' from school.*
2. *Personnel Sub-committee review analysis and produce an Action Plan based on findings*
3. *Needs Analysis undertaken as part of review*

(1) MAIN PURPOSE OF JOB:
To ensure that the business is staffed by the appropriate number of properly paid skilled and motivated employees in an environment which is safe, harmonious industrial relations, in order to meet future business goals within agreed budgets.

PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITIES:

1.   Manpower Planning
Ensure that the organisational structure and the people within that structure are appropriate to meet the changing needs of the business.
Deliver recruitment and headcount reduction programmes, In order to meet the business Plan.

2.   Employee Relations
Develop a culture in which employees feel involved committed and valued.
Ensure that the mechanisms for employee participation in the business are effective.

Develop and implement P9flCies and procedures to comply with Employment legislation: ensure, through the Managers that disciplinary grievance and absence control procedures are effective.
ensure that working relationships are harmonious and that disputes and grievances   are resolved promptly, without detriment to the business.
Ensure that payment and incentive mechanisms reward performance and retain high performers within the business.

3. Communications

Ensure that there are effective two-way communications at all levels of the business.
Develop and maintain effective mechanisms for communications, in order that working teams understand key events, issues and problems.
Develop and promote mechanisms to ensure the capture, analysis and implementation of ideas which deliver improvements. Training and Development
Develop and maintain the mechanisms for ensuring that individuals have the opportunity to maximise their contribution to the business.

Ensure that there is an effective succession plan in place and that individuals are developed in such a way that they are prepared for future roles within the Group.

Ensure that the resources are in place to deliver individual development plans, in line with business goals, developing a multi-skilled, knowledgeable and committed workforce.

5. Occupational Health, Welfare and Safety

Ensure the provision of a first-class Occupational Health service which makes a proactive contribution to maintaining and improving employees' health, and meeting legal requirements.
Ensure effective administration of Pension Scheme on site, and other schemes designed to improve employees' well-being and morale, e.g. Private Healthcare Scheme and social functions.

Ensure effective Health & Safety advisory service to the Managers, promoting a working environment which is, as far as is reasonably practicable, free from risk of injury, nuisance or risk to health for our employees, customers, and the public at large.

6. Human Resource and Payroll Administration

Ensure provision of effective human resource and payroll administration service for managers and employees.
Develop and maintain human resources policies and procedures, in line with organisational and legislative changes and requirements.

Advise Line Managers on employment legislation, terms and conditions, and human resource procedures.

7. Personnel and Associated Costs

Prepare and control Personnel Costs budget, reviewing overspends and advising on corrective action.
Prepare and control budgets relating to Catering, Medical, Welfare, Company Cars,

(2) The Role and Purpose of the Governing Body

The role of the Governing Body is defined by the Regulations which came into force on the first of September 2000: *the Education (School Government) (Terms of Reference) (England)* Regulations *2000*. Governors have three main functions in the school, namely to promote high standards of educational achievement, establish the strategic direction
and ethos of the school and direct the overall Conduct of the-school.

Day to day management is the responsibility of the Headteacher and Staff who operate within the strategic framework determined by the Governors. The Governors oversee and monitor the, work of the school.

The Governing Body is accountable to the Secretary of State and the LEA for the school's performance' and effective use of funds; to parents, pupils and the community for the provision of, a good education and ,to its staff as employers.

The Governors' responsibilities include:

- Defining the aims and objectives of the school

- Setting targets and priorities, including pupil achievement.

- Setting statutory policies for Admissions. Special Educational Needs; Sex Education, Religious education, Equal Opportunities, Health and Safety. Discipline. Performance and Management.

- Monitoring and reviewing aims and objectives and whether the policies, targets and priorities are being achieved.

- Defining the school organisation -The instrument of government, OFSTED action plan. Times of school sessions and dates of terms.

- Appointment of Headteacher, Deputies and Assistant Headteachers and agreeing procedures for other staff appointments.

- Performance management of Headteacher.

- Ensuring delivery of the national curriculum.

- Ensuring the staff complement is adequate.

- The resource management policy for staff -their pay and conditions of service, development, performance management, discipline and grievance procedures.

- Approving and monitoring the school budget. Agreeing any changes to the budget and ensuring that funds are spent wisely and in accordance with statutory requirements.

- Strategy for premises.

Appendix P
Example of letter
of support for
Model Guidelines

**DC Solutions
25 Queen's Road
Sale M33 6GA
Tel: 0161 962 7963**

Mrs. G Spedding
Shrublands
Ashdown Place
Forest Row
East Sussex RH18 5LP

8 October 2005

Dear Gladys

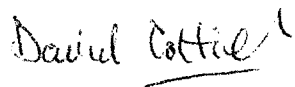**Model Guidelines for School Governors**

WOW!

Well done you.

I have noted a few comments throughout but have two fundamental points to make:

1. This is **far too good** to sit on a thesis shelf in a university library gathering dust.

2. So that raises the question of what you are going to do with it.

   - Publish in Education Publications and let Heads and Chairs of Governors know how they should be running the Governing Body?

   - Get it in front of some Minister of State to be adopted by Government. They may wish to use it as a model for part of their Education Policy?

I really think it needs to move on NOW.

Best wishes

David Cottier

David Cottier

Checklist for action
**Questions for governing bodies
and those who support them**

Please pull out and copy

In their management paper *Lessons in Teamwork*, the
Audit Commission and OFSTED identified questions for
governing bodies and those who support them to ask
themselves in order to identify ways of increasing their
effectiveness.

These questions have been drawn together in this pull out
checklist to be used to stimulate discussion, to help identify
the issues that are a priority and the person who should
take the lead in addressing them.

A·U·D·I·T
COMMISSION

Questions	Priority	Lead person
Defining the role of the school governing body		
Questions for governing bodies		
1 Do we have a written agreement setting out the respective roles of the governing body and the headteacher?		
2 What induction, training and other information do we provide for new and existing governors? Do we have a small budget for this?		
3 Do we have a programme of governors' visits to the school? Do we organise these properly, for example encouraging governors to develop a special interest in a particular class, year-group or subject?		
4 How do we keep ourselves up to date with developments in education?		
5 Do our governors attend meetings of a local governors' forum? If not, how can we join one or set one up ourselves?		
Questions for the LEA		
1 Do we send newsletters and other briefings to governors to keep them informed?		
2 Do we support governor forums in our area?		
Working practices		
Questions for governing bodies		
1 Do we all have an opportunity to contribute to discussions?		
2 Are we able to question the headteacher and hold him or her to account?		
3 Does our chair help to improve our working together as a team?		
4 Is all the business on our agenda important? Do we work through it effectively?		
5 Do we have control over our own agendas? Can we get items added to the agenda when we need to?		
6 Does the headteacher's report give us an adequate impression of the school's performance? Does it help us to look forward and to plan our work?		

Questions	Priority	Lead person
7 Do we receive enough comparative information about other schools?		
8 Do our committees and working groups have terms of reference, meet regularly and report back properly? Do we resist the temptation to go back over the ground again in detail?		
9 Have we made sensible arrangements for the two clerking tasks of administration and providing the governing body with legal and procedural advice?		
Accountability	.	
Questions for governing bodies		
1 Does the information in our annual report satisfy legal requirements?		
2 Does the report compare the past year's achievements with our planned targets and set out our aims for the future?		
3 Is the report friendly and interesting to read and does it encourage parents to attend and contribute to the annual meeting?		
4 Do we conduct the annual meeting in a way which encourages all parents attending to participate?		.
5 Do we keep in contact with parents through a newsletter or some other means?		
6 Do we make sure parents are aware of our response to any matters raised at the annual meeting?		
7 Have we reviewed our financial arrangements against the standards described in *Adding Up the Sums* and *Keeping Your Balance*?		
Influencing performance		
Questions for governing bodies		
1 Do we bring our knowledge of the wider community served by the school to bear on our decisions?		
2 Does the trust exist between ourselves and the school staff to allow an open discussion of strengths and weaknesses?		
3 Are we well enough informed to play an active part in monitoring and improving standards of education?		

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Questions	Priority	Lead person
4 Do we exert influence over the content of the school development plan?		
5 Do we monitor progress against the plan?		
6 Are we taking the necessary action when spending and other targets in the development plan are missed?		
Problems and some solutions		
Questions for governing bodies		
1 Are we showing several of the signs of a governing body which is in difficulty?		
2 Do we welcome new recruits and involve them immediately in our work?		
3 Do we have good relations with local groups so that we can identify candidates for co-option?		
4 Do we occasionally discuss how we work as a team?		
5 If we have territorial disputes, have we and the headteacher discussed this self-critically?		
6 Are we all agreed on the need to stand by the governing body's decision?		
7 Are we able to get external support if we think that we have problems as a governing body?		
Questions for organisations that support governing bodies		
1 Do we have any schools with the symptoms of a breakdown in good governance?		
2 Do we monitor governor attendance and vacancies at the schools we support?		
3 Have we allocated some of our best volunteers to the exceptional schools where governance is in disarray?		
4 Are we able to help schools to resolve conflict among the governors or between the governing body and headteachers?		

Checklist for Action from
Lessons in Teamwork
– How School Governing Bodies Can Become
More Effective

A·U·D·I·T
COMMISSION

OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

CODE OF CONDUCT : GOVERNORS

Governor conduct is underpinned by the following key principles :

- to act in the best interests of the school - this may require balancing short and long term issues, school and community issues etc.

- to work as a member of a team at all times and be loyal to collective decisions.

- to recognise that all governors have the same rights and responsibilities unless particular responsibilities are conferred on them by the full governing body.

- to understand that no governor can act alone except in exceptional circumstances prescribed in the regulations - the power of the governing body rests in it acting as a single body.

And that governors must :

- respect confidentiality.

- listen to and respect the views of others.

- express their own views clearly and succinctly.

- take their fair share of work/positions of responsibility.

- know, understand and work within the prescribed regulatory framework.

- report any evidence of fraud, corruption or misconduct to an appropriate person or Authority.

And should always :

- prepare for meetings by reading papers beforehand.

- attend training and take responsibility for their own learning & development as a governor.

- attend meetings promptly, regularly, and for the full time.