



Schools' Voices

The Weald School and Colgate Primary School on the Lead Governor Role

Reflecting and sharing practice and discussion with other lead governors has been an important element of the Lead Governor programme.

At a recent briefing event to celebrate governance, two lead governors were invited to speak about how the lead governor role has impacted on governance practice and strategic leadership, helping the board to know their school, and ensuring that the needs of learners are being addressed.

We are pleased to be able to share with you below these lead governors' thoughts and reflections on the training and its subsequent impact in their settings, as well as their experience of speaking at the briefing itself.

Alice Lerche & Nicola Waters, Governors at The Weald School



The Weald School is a large secondary school in Billingshurst with 1800 pupils from 11 to 18. As governors with responsibility for curriculum monitoring, we

recognised that we needed to change and adapt our approach in response to the current OFSTED Framework, with its emphasis firmly on the Quality of Teaching and the curriculum.

The West Sussex Governance Team introduced a training programme focusing on key priorities which included the role of the Curriculum Lead Governor. This training session came at a helpful moment as it both explained and highlighted what the curriculum encompasses and what OFSTED will be expecting. The presentations were succinct and stimulating and the breakout sessions allowed governors to share ideas about what is already happening in their schools, what is working well and what needs further progress.

Attending the training not only made us better informed but it also allowed us to reflect on how our own governing board currently monitors curriculum intent and impact. We left undoubtedly knowing more than we did but we also took away a series of questions.

These included a need for greater certainty on the effectiveness of our current approach:

- Which areas of the curriculum are fully developed, and which are still emerging?
- Which are the subjects that are doing well, and which should be the focus for the Senior Leadership Team?

We also need to ensure that a more developed knowledge and understanding is intrinsic to the governing board as a whole.



Implementing changes in our approach will take time. We had already adjusted our working methods by increasing the opportunities for governors to monitor the curriculum first hand with subject or department leads.

We had joined SLT for Progress Reviews and followed this up with governor visits recorded in short reports. In turn, SLT shared their findings with the governor concerned. As a result of the training, we have focused on improving governors' skills by commissioning a bespoke Governor Service's training session on Outstanding Governance, in addition to in-house training from the school's curriculum lead. We are implementing the use of effective questioning to make the most of our visits.

We have already observed the effect of some of the changes that have been made. All our governors have been encouraged to engage with curriculum monitoring and to record and share their observations. The governing board should have a much clearer understanding of the relevance of the curriculum at The Weald, and how it reflects our whole school vision. With this greater engagement and knowledge of the curriculum, governors will be better equipped to focus on their tasks more effectively and hold SLT to account for any areas that need improvement.

Beyond that we hope to review our approach to monitoring the curriculum and how this might be developed for the new academic year. We plan to have a greater focus on how the curriculum meets the needs of particular pupil groups, especially those with SEND and those who are classed as disadvantaged. This year, we have seen a significant number of new governors joining the governing board. We need to ensure our approach is properly disseminated and we should consider sharing lead roles as far as possible to improve resilience with a view to succession planning.

Amelia Calvert, Safeguarding Lead Governor at Colgate Primary School

I was delighted to attend a briefing event for West Sussex Governor Services for Schools on 12th September and talk about my role as Safeguarding Lead Governor at Colgate Primary School. In particular I focused on the value of attending the lead governor training provided by West Sussex Governor Services and on the interim task I carried out as part of the training.



From discussion with the headteacher at Colgate as safeguarding lead governor after taking on the role, we agreed to prioritise building upon the everyday culture of safeguarding in the school, rather than making it an annual 'tick box' exercise.

As lead governor I wanted to incorporate all governors into this safeguarding ethos, ensuring everyone played their part throughout the school year and had a broader understanding of our collective safeguarding responsibility.

Examples of actions included putting a safeguarding item on every full governing board (FGB) agenda, ensuring all governors did safeguarding training when they joined the



board and adding a question re safeguarding to visit forms for governors to consider when visiting the school. As lead governor, I began regular meetings with the head teacher in her role as Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) alongside meeting a wide range of stakeholders of the school to discuss their experiences and thoughts on safeguarding. Impacts of these actions included a development of our induction processes, getting a better understanding of the DSL role and their workload, the FGB feeling increasingly confident that safeguarding was well-managed at the school, and gaining a broader understanding of how safeguarding works within the school.

Essentially, I hope I captured at the briefing that as a lead governor we are there to champion the area we represent and that the lead governor training helped give a focus in my role.