

Questions for Governors to ask the Headteacher/leadership team in their support and challenge role

A vital part of the role of school governors is providing effective support and challenge for their headteachers and senior leaders. In order to assist governors in that role, the [National Leadership Development Board \(NLDB\)](#) has drawn up the following key questions for governors to use. Made up of successful current headteachers and other senior educational professionals, the NLDB has a wealth of experience in this area.

The use of 'we' in all of these questions is deliberate to emphasise that the governors are an integral part of the school.

Below are starter questions that would require follow up questions dependent on the answers provided to ensure accountability e.g.

- What do we know?
- How do we know?
- How do we monitor this?
- What effect has this had?
- What plans do we have in place to improve this?
- When will we review these?
- Who is responsible for this?

Standards

- How are pupil numbers reflected as percentages – what is the actual number of pupils being considered?
- How good are standards in the school? How do we know?
- Are our pupils performing as expected, better or below expectations?
- Are these results an improvement on last year?
- Is there anything we should know about the cohort of pupils which could affect the results?
- How is achievement analysed and evaluated? What impact does this have on standards?
- What are the trends in the key indicators in the Foundation Phase/Key Stage 2/Key Stage 3/Key Stage 4/Key Stage 5 over the last 3 / 4 years?
- Is there a trend appearing for certain subjects, if so what strategies can we put in place to improve results in that area?
- What are our best performing areas of learning /subjects in the Foundation Phase/Key Stage 2/Key Stage 3/Key Stage 4/Key Stage 5?
- What subjects/areas are a cause for concern the Foundation Phase/Key Stage 2/Key Stage 3/Key Stage 4/Key Stage 5?
- What does the 'value added' element look like?
- How do we compare with schools with similar Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement? What are our benchmark quartiles for each indicator?
- How do we compare with schools in our family?
- How well do our boys perform compared to our girls? How well do our boys perform compared to boys in other similar schools?

- How well do our FSM /Additional Learning Needs (ALN)/English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupils perform compared to pupils in other similar schools?
- How well do our More Able and Talented (MAT) pupils perform with regard to achieving the higher levels compared to pupils in other similar schools?
- How well do other groups of pupils perform compared to pupils in other similar schools? (Dependent on the context of the school there may be particular groups of pupils that the governors would want to challenge the school on their performance e.g. English as an additional language; gypsy / traveller children; minority ethnic groups...)
- How well do these groups perform over time?
- How can we show we are consistently "adding value" both within year groups and across phases?
- What is the impact of the various interventions used in the school? Do they give value for money?

Skills

- What are the standards of our pupils' literacy, especially reading, writing, numeracy and ICT?
- Does work across the curriculum match the standards in the end of phase assessments and national tests?
- How well do we plan to develop our pupil's skills in Welsh?
- How good are our pupils standards in Welsh at Foundation Phase/Key Stage 2/Key Stage 3/4?
- How do we compare with similar schools – family and FSM group?
- What are the proportions of our pupils studying full course Welsh qualification (all schools) / Welsh first language (Welsh medium and bilingual schools) / Welsh second language (bilingual and English medium schools)

Wellbeing

- How well does the school promote pupils' wellbeing?
- What are the overall absence levels for the school?
- Has anything happened during the term to affect the attendance figures, e.g. bad weather conditions, high incidence of illnesses?
- What were the attendance figures for the last two years?
- How does our attendance compare to modelled expectations over the last 3 years?
- Have we improved, stayed the same or worsened? Is there a pattern/trend to the figures?
- How does our attendance compare with similar schools for the same period?
- Have we analysed the attendance of different groups of pupils? How do these compare?
- Who are our persistent absentees? What improvements have we made with these pupils?
- What strategies do we use to improve or ensure good attendance?
- If we disregard the worst 5 or so attendees what would the figures look like?

- How well do our pupils behave? How do our exclusion rates compare with other schools? What is the trend for fixed term exclusions over the last three years? Have we analysed the exclusions of different groups of pupils? How do these compare? What strategies do we use to improve or continue this positive / negative trend?
- How effective are our pupil voice strategies? What input do they have in what they learn?

Learning experiences

- What are the good features of the curriculum?
- What are the shortcomings in the curriculum?
- Does the curriculum meet the needs of all our pupils? Are there any barriers in terms of equality or access to the curriculum?
- How well do our options meet the needs of all our learners?
- How do we develop progression in learners' literacy, especially reading, writing, and numeracy skills across all subjects? How well do we develop our pupils' ICT skills? How well are these skills taught and reinforced across the curriculum?
- How well have we implemented the LNF? What did the NSP partner report tell us about our provision / leadership / standards?
- As a result, what are the standards of our pupils' literacy, especially reading, writing, and numeracy?
- How well do we plan to develop pupils' wider skills – thinking, problem solving, working with others, improving their own learning and performance?
- How well does the school provide for a good range of Cwricwlwm Cymreig?
- What are the standards of our pupils' thinking / problem solving / skills?
- How well do we plan to develop pupils' understanding of ESDGC? What role do pupils play in developing these aspects across the school?
- How do we know if we are providing quality careers advice /work experience to support youth engagement and progression?

Teaching

- How good is the teaching in the school? How do we know? What do we do to ensure good or improve teaching? What are our pupils perceptions of the school?
- As a result, how well do our pupils make progress in their lessons? Are there any classes / year groups / subjects that are a cause for concern? How do we monitor and support these?
- How do we set targets for pupils and measure their progress? How effective is this?
- What are expectations of teachers in respect to assessment, recording and reporting?
- What training does all the staff receive to develop teaching and learning strategies, including specific support to improve literacy and numeracy?
- How consistent is AfL across the school? Do learners get good feedback and act on it successfully?
- How do we know that our end of key stage assessments are accurate?
- What are the perceptions of teachers? Are we managing staff absence/capability issues? How do we know if other staff in the classroom are impacting on standards?

Care, support and guidance

- How well do we support all our pupils' health and wellbeing, including healthy eating and living? What structures do we have in place? How do we monitor their progress?
- What provision is there for less able and more talented pupils? How do we monitor this? How effective is this provision?
- What staff training is there on identifying and supporting pupils' additional learning needs (ALN)?
- What staff training is there on Child Protection (CP) matters? How are CP issues recorded? Are our procedures robust? How do we know? Are all adults in the school included in this training?
- How secure is our site and buildings? How do we know?

Learning environment

- How effectively do we promote an inclusive ethos, racial tolerance, equal opportunities and diversity? Have all staff received appropriate equality training? How do we record and monitor issues or complaints that arise?
- What are the current priorities for the accommodation and resources? Do our pupils agree? What plans do we have in place to meet these?

Leadership

- What is our vision for the school?
- How do our aims, strategic objectives and plans meet the needs of our pupils? How are they monitored?
- How well do you communicate these expectations to all the staff in the school?
- How well is the school, and teams within the school managed? How effectively is the work of these teams monitored?
- How effectively do you challenge, but also support staff through performance management to achieve their best?
- What is the impact of this?
- What are the arrangements for succession planning and talent spotting?
- How is leadership contributing to the development of the next generation of school leaders?
- Are there any issues of underperformance? How have you addressed these issues? What strategies are in place to challenge and support these members of staff?
- What are our local and national priorities? How effective are we in meeting these?

Improving quality

- What are the schools strengths and weaknesses?
- How well do we evaluate and review all aspects of school life? How often do we observe lessons? How often do we scrutinise pupils' work and teachers' assessment of the work?
- Does the SLT work together and with others to ensure judgments are standardised?
- How effectively do we take on the views of pupils? How effectively do we take on the views of parents? How effectively do we take on the views of external stakeholders

e.g. LA, consortium, community members, other providers...? What effect does this have on teaching and learning, management or provision?

- How often and how effectively do we review the work of departments/year groups?
- As a result, what are the schools priorities for improvement? Do these arise from self-evaluation? How well is progress against priorities monitored and evaluated? What improvements has this led to?
- How well have we planned to ensure these improvements? What actions, resources and time are required to achieve these? How do we / will we monitor these?
- Are all departments clear on what they need to do to improve? Who are our best performing departments / year groups which departments/ year groups are a cause for concern?
- How well do our pastoral / learning co-ordinators (heads of year / learning) evaluate their work and plan to improve the provision in order to raise standards?
- How does all this impact on pupils' standards?

Partnership working

- What strategic partnerships do we have?
- How do we work with all these partners to plan, manage and quality assure provision?
- What impact do these partnerships have on pupils' standards and wellbeing?
- Can we develop stronger relationships with partnership schools?
- How well does the school engage with other schools to raise standards?

Resource management

- How do we plan and monitor the management of our resources, especially staff development? Are all staff deployed in their specialist subjects? How do we support those staff that teach outside of their specialist subject?
- What opportunities are there for staff to develop teaching and managerial skills? What PLC's are staff involved in within and outside of the school? What impact do these have on standards and wellbeing?
- Do we work with schools within our family on aspects to improve standards?
- Are there schools in our family that have high standards in certain indicators / outcomes that we could collaborate with effectively?
- What impact do these have on pupils' standards?
- How do we prioritise our spending to ensure improvements over time?
- What impact does our spending of the PDG grant have on specific pupils' performance?