

Who Governs Our Schools?

Trends, Tensions and Opportunities

Expertise, impact, engagement and connectedness: Can we have it all?

Headlines from an investigation into the future of school governance

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Autumn Open Meeting

Oxfordshire Governors' Association

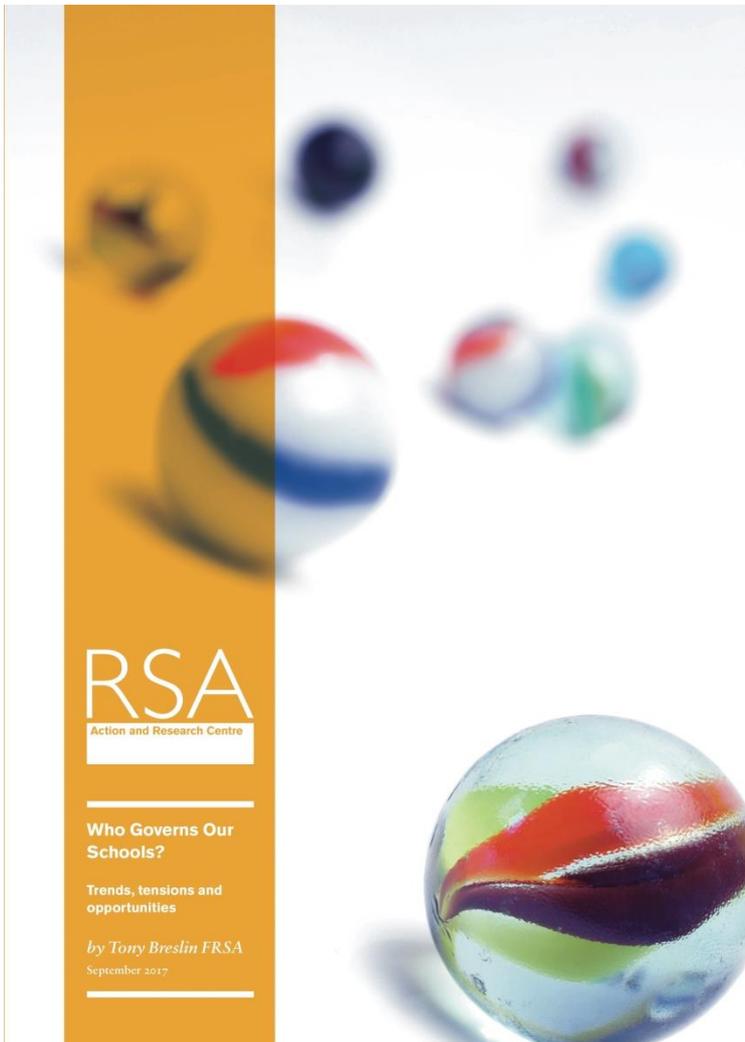
10.00am – 12.30pm

Saturday 29th September 2018

English Block JMC, Wheatley Park School, Holton, Oxford OX33 1QH

@UKpolicywatch #bettergovernance





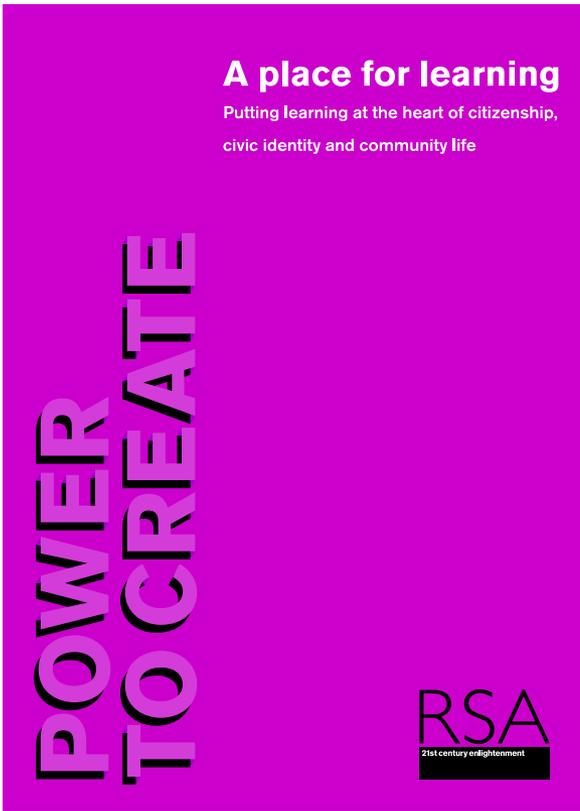
RSA

Action and Research Centre

Who Governs Our Schools?

Trends, tensions and opportunities

by Tony Breslin FRSA
September 2017



A place for learning

Putting learning at the heart of citizenship,
civic identity and community life

**POWER
TO CREATE**

RSA
21st century enlightenment

Spot the similarity?

- RBS and the banking crisis
- The failure of Carillion
- The crisis at the Co-operative Group
- The closure of Kids Company
- The collapse of Wakefield City Academies Trust
- Employment practices at Sports Direct
- The Trojan Horse affair in Birmingham
- Oxfam in Haiti and the high street
- Child abuse in football, in the church, and in a range of institutional care settings
- Financial reporting at Tesco
- The fall of various former “Super Heads”
- The Rochdale grooming scandal
- Volkswagen and the fraudulent testing of cars
- The treatment of Windrush migrants

School governance – a scoping study

- A scoping study focused on the future of school governance
- Commissioned and hosted by the RSA
- Funded by the Local Government Association, The Elliot Foundation and RSA Academies
- Supported by an “Expert” Group drawn from the Local Government Association, The Elliot Foundation, the National Governance Association, the Association of School and College Leaders, the Centre for Public Scrutiny, the Catholic Education Service and RSA Academies
- Launched January 2016; published September 2017
- Sparking action within and beyond the education arena

(a) Who, why and what?

- ❖ Why does school governance matter?
- ❖ Who are the key partners in the governance process?
- ❖ What are school governors and Governing Boards responsible for?
- ❖ What do school governors and Governing Boards do that is not addressed elsewhere in the range of school accountability and regulatory frameworks?
- ❖ Other than governance, what else do governors contribute to their schools and their school communities?
- ❖ Where do we draw school governors from, and where should we draw school governors from?

(b) Emergent landscapes

- ❖ What might governance look and feel like in the emerging landscape?
- ❖ What are the risks implicit in less localized models of school governance?
- ❖ How does *trusteeship* in a MAT differ from *governorship* in a school?
- ❖ What might headship feel like in the emergent governance landscape?
- ❖ Do current policy guidelines and announcements capture the extent of this change?
- ❖ What governance lessons arising from the study might have a broader application?

(c) Preparation, quality and principles

- ❖ How do we best train and induct the various participants in the school governance process?
- ❖ Where and how do we strike the balance between local expertise and expertise sourced from elsewhere?
- ❖ How do we best inspect or otherwise assure the quality of school governance?
- ❖ What core principles must underpin any future framework for the governance of our schools?
- ❖ Might any of these principles be applicable in other settings and sectors across the public, private and voluntary sectors?

Headline 1: governance and the participative spirit

- ✓ *Effective governance is not just a vital engine of school improvement; engagement as a school governor is one of the most popular means of formal volunteering in the UK*
- ✓ *Any move which undermines either this purpose or this participative spirit should be viewed with caution*

Headline 2: training for governance

- ✓ *There is rightly a strong focus on the need for better induction and training for school governors, but training for governors alone is insufficient*
- ✓ *We need a better understanding of governance across the teaching profession and amongst others who work in and with schools, especially amongst school leaders and those who aspire to such roles*

Headline 3: governance reform - by accident or design?

- ✓ *Too often governors are left to navigate a changing landscape that is not of their making and which has not been crafted with governance, or at least locally based governance, in mind*
- ✓ *It is common for changes to school governance arrangements to emerge as the unintended consequences of change elsewhere in the system*
- ✓ *How we govern our schools should be an education policy priority, not an afterthought*

Headline 4: stakeholders can be experts

- ✓ *There is a false dichotomy in the minds of policymakers and in Department for Education documentation that assumes stakeholders cannot be experts*
- ✓ *Building on the locally contextualized knowledge of parents, staff, students and members of the local community is not a block on good governance; it is often the route to it - and it may have significant benefits in terms of personal and community development for the individuals and neighbourhoods concerned*

Headline 5: governance, locality and autonomy

- ✓ *Whilst there are undoubtedly benefits to the kind of strong, formal school partnerships that a system based around federations, multi-academy trusts, umbrella trusts and other arrangements that cluster schools into groups might deliver, we need to understand the impact of this shift, locally and system-wide, especially in terms of the recruitment and retention of head teachers, senior leaders and governors*

Headline 6: governance across the sectors

✓ We need to share lessons about what is and isn't good governance across and between sectors; those involved in school governance may have lessons to learn about governance from elsewhere in the public sector, the voluntary and community sector and the business world, but they also have much to offer, not least in terms of a universal commitment to values-driven leadership that places transparency and community service at its core.

Suggestions

- A stronger recognition of the wider benefits of engagement in school and charity governance, including positive action to build engagement and broaden diversity through Governance Action Zones
- A focus on identifying and growing expertise in local settings, not on simply 'importing' it
- A focus on developing governance-literacy sector wide (and across sectors), rather than on simply 'training' those who take up governance roles
- A national cross-sector campaign, and dedicated initiatives and pilots, to boost engagement in governance, especially amongst under-represented groups
- Greater representation of those involved in educational and charity governance on Corporate Boards and vice-versa
- A cross-sector Better Governance Commission

Dissemination, developments and early outcomes

- Presentations in Brighton, Cornwall, Hampshire, Hertfordshire and Hull and to NCOGS, BELMAS, NCVO and ICSA
- Publication of the *Modern Governor* blogs: <https://www.moderngovernor.com/category/who-governs-our-schools/>
- National Schools Commissioner Sir David Carter describes governors and trustees as “the unsung heroes of the education system”
- Early discussions about establishing the first Governance Action Zone underway
- New DFE funded, NGA delivered Development Programmes for Chairs, Clerks and Boards launched
- New Institute of Directors governance initiative, the first output of which is education focused - an appeal to members (June 2018) and a report (due October 2018)
- Launch of #P20 campaign

Questions for Discussion

- What can schools in different settings, contexts and phases learn from each other about governance?
- How might engagement in governance contribute to personal development and community wellbeing?
- How do we balance the need for professionalism, effectiveness and impact on learner outcomes with the need for community engagement and involvement?
- In professionalising our governance arrangements and moving these up-stream, do we risk some of the issues that have arisen with, for instance, the professionalisation of our politics?
- How do we 'grow' governance expertise in our communities, whatever the social capital these communities start out with?

Recommendation 29

- **Recommendation 29** reads:

"Agencies across the governance landscape need to work together to establish a cross-sector working group or commission on governance"

- The rationale for **Recommendation 29**, as stated in the report, is to:

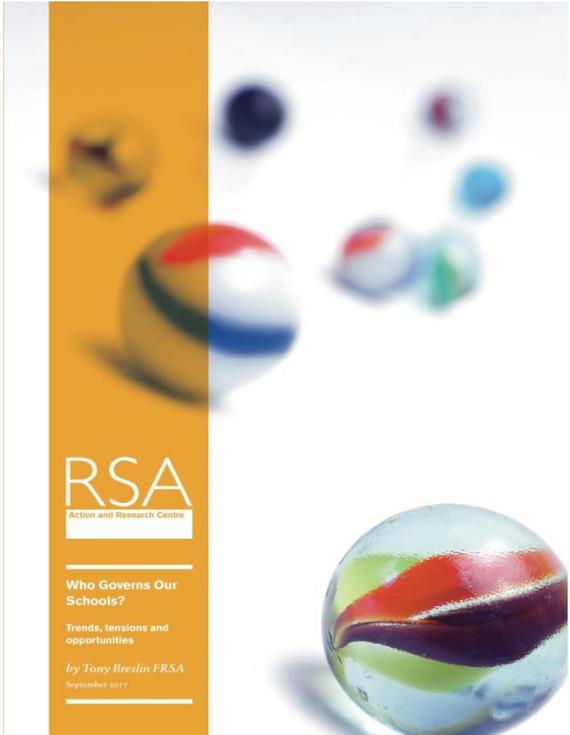
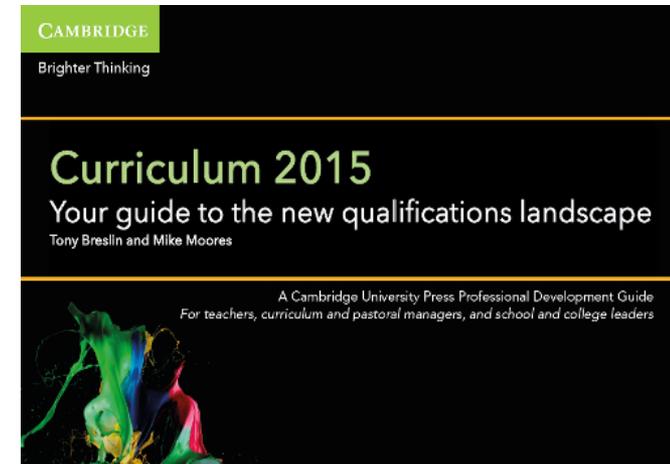
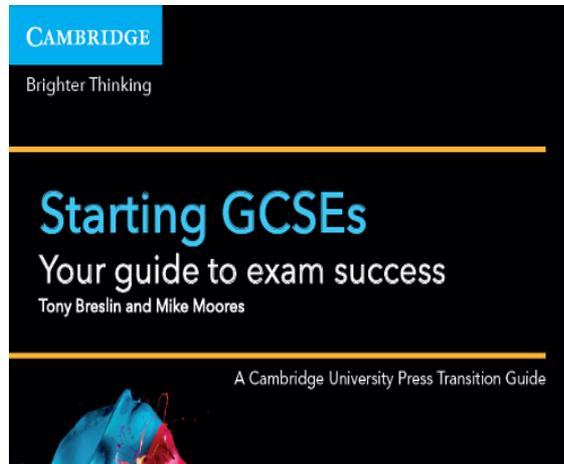
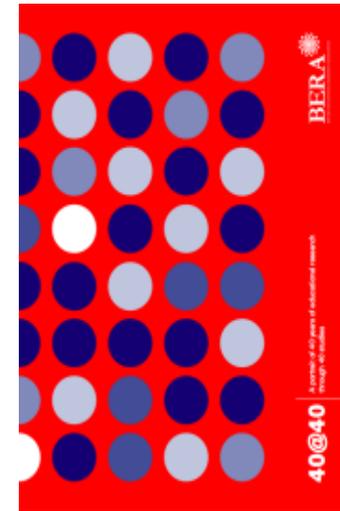
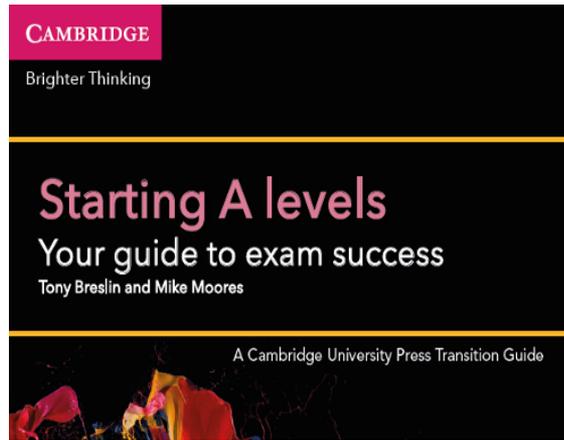
"...enable those in education, the public sector, the third sector and industry to learn from each other, and might be led by an alliance of “voice of the sector” bodies from each field. Initiatives such as the Inspiring Governance alliance have laid the foundations for this kind of work, but it now needs to reach beyond the schooling and educational domain and take on a genuinely cross-sector and inter-disciplinary approach"

The #R29 Campaign

- Launched at Parliament in March 2018 through a public sector focused roundtable discussion, hosted by the Non-Executive Academy, and facilitated by Ann Reeder at Frontline Consulting, following an introduction by Su Turner at Shaping Governance
- Driven forward by a series of five further sector and subsector focused roundtable discussions, hosted by the Institute of Directors, the National Council of Voluntary Organizations, Campbell Tickell, the National Governance Association and ICSA: the governance institute
- Supported by a Secretariat provided by Cosette Reczek at Permuto Consulting
- Now involved in a series of discussions about the establishment and funding of an all-sector Better Governance Commission, the case for which is outlined in an article by Breslin and Reczek, in the September edition of the FT's *Governance* journal

#R29: roundtable questions

- To what extent can those involved in governance across the sectors, (such as school governors, trustees and non-executives) learn from each other?
- What benefits might accrue from such learning and how might we facilitate this sharing of insight and experience?
- Can we identify a set of key principles that should inform governance, scrutiny and accountability, whatever the sector, organizational type and focus of activity and, if so, how might we go about this task?



Feedback

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