

Vision, Culture and Strategy

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These notes should be read in conjunction with the PowerPoint slides from the event.

Data from Parentkind Insight Survey 2019: (Slide 5)

<https://www.parentkind.org.uk/Research--Policy/Research/Annual-Parent-Survey-2019>

- 46% of all parents believe their child's school prepares pupils well for the future job market
- 49% believe their school effectively helps children develop good mental health and wellbeing
- 57% said their school adequately helped children develop skills that are useful outside of school (critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, etc)
- 53% said their school teaches life skills, such as self confidence and resilience well
- 59% think the curriculum prepares pupils to become responsible adults

Were all primary schools focused on whether pupils were prepared for adult life? Many were more focused on SATs results and preparing pupils for secondary school.

This ethos had been lost because of the push for standards and attainment.

As governors it was easier to challenge headteachers on *outcomes* rather than on the development of students as a whole individual.

There were cost constraints which were exacerbated by schools picking up so many other social issues that were no longer dealt with elsewhere.

The phrase 'adult life' needed to be unpicked and it could not be assumed that everyone knew what it means. There were different cultures within our own society where adult lives represented many different sorts of life. It was necessary to know what the ideal was for adult life in order to set a vision and ethos; this would need to take account of various aspects including family life, gender and civic duties as well as work and leisure. Consideration should also be given to socio-economic factors that influenced options for adult life and how this could be dealt with.

(Slide 6) Being Strategic

(Slide 7) The Challenge

Discussion about the definition of 'Ethos' (Slide 8)

Suggestions:

'Living the values'

'Demonstrating respect, differences and good behaviour'

Attitude and aspirations'

If you spend time in school, you can feel it. If it is your child you make decisions based on gut feeling.

'the fundamental character or spirit of a culture'

'the character, atmosphere or climate of a school'

'the underlying sentiment that informs the beliefs, customs or practices of the school'

Vision (Slides 9-13)

Discussion about Culture (Slides 14-22)

Suggestions:

'Buy in'

'A way of living'

'The lived reality of the ethos'

'the ideas, customs, and behaviour of those in the school community'

'the way we do things around here'

'the unwritten beliefs, *lived values* and attitudes which characterise the day to day life of the school'

Sometimes there was more than one culture operating in a school, e.g. a culture of support staff and culture of students. It was also possible to have micro-cultures such as a culture of financial efficiency. Culture would need to be aligned with vision and ethos at all levels to succeed.

The school culture could be hugely different to the culture of the local community. Governing boards should create a culture that is right for that school with a breadth of education.

High performing schools demonstrated (Slide 23)

Measuring what you value (Slides 24-30)

Raising expectations: Suggestions

- Modelling excellence and best practice
- Stepping out of the classroom
- Through appraisal process
- Setting the example; be what you expect others to be; modelling
- Reflection of good examples – 'would be even better if'
- Good induction and mentoring process

Celebrating success: Suggestions

- Feedback to governors that NQTs had good first year and succeeded in achieving qualified teacher status
- Recognition of teachers for showing school values
- 'Thank-you's'
- Money
- Fair and transparent performance management process
- Progression of staff, reflecting what an individual wanted for their career - governors should support the headteacher and their own career progression if they were aspiring – training was for the greater good, not just 'our school'
- Governing board becoming more visible with staff and school

Creating Opportunities: Suggestions

- CPD
- Training and mentoring
- Platforms and arenas to share success
- Allowing time to step out of the classroom
- Cross learning – opportunities to visit other schools

Strategy (Slide 31-33)

The board's role (Slides 34-38)

Culture is relatively ignored in the Governance Handbook which mentions the work 'culture' only nine times compared to 'vision' 68 times and 'strategy' and 'strategic' 52 times. It is the work of governing boards.

Governance is about thinking not doing (Slide 39) i.e. not taking on work that should be done by school management.

Governors should ensure that they provide support for the Headteacher without doing their work for them.

'Eyes on hands off'

Your school or trust's values (Slide 40)

Relationship between values & policy (Slide 41)

Undertake and then consider appropriate feedback from surveys. Stakeholders need to know that action has been taken. Feedback to stakeholders – 'You said, we did'.

Focus on strengths and build on other aspects.

Measuring impact (Slides 42-45)

The governing board set the vision based on what was valued; governors oversaw the impact of the strategy as part of their strategic role.

It was suggested that there was an issue with expecting volunteers who were working to go into school during the daytime.

Governors were undertaking an important role with significant accountabilities – this was particularly evident for trustees of academy trusts who could potentially go to prison for their failures.

Governors should be encouraged to ask their employers for time off to undertake governance duties.

There was a legal right for governors of maintained schools to have time off work to fulfil duties. Organisations should also be asked to consider governance roles in connection with their own corporate social responsibility (CSR) agenda.

Final Discussion (Slides 46-48)

Succession planning for boards was necessary and an attendee felt that the National Governance Association (NGA) should look at this.

There had been a push by NGA to recruit younger and more diverse people to boards.

Attendees were urged to register with Inspiring Governance which was 'online dating for governors'. One governor attending said that he had been recruited that way but thought the website was somewhat confusing.

Organisations should also be encouraged to get aspiring staff to become governors – it was free CPD and offered an opportunity for them to gain board level experience.