



Nottingham  
City Council

# Arno Vale Junior School Review of Governance

Date: April 2016

# Arno Vale Junior School

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## FROM THE NATIONAL COLLEGE REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE FOR SCHOOLS REQUIRING IMPROVEMENT DOCUMENT

### AREAS OF STRENGTH

#### **Strong governance supporting school improvement:**

1. The Governing Body (GB) is influential in setting the strategic direction of the school in partnership with senior leaders.
2. Governors have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's overall performance. Governors have an understanding of the data which they use to cross reference and challenge what they are told by school-leaders.
3. Governors regularly evaluate their own effectiveness and this informs the evaluation of school leadership.
4. Governors ensure the performance management of the Headteacher and other staff is focused on the school's strategic priorities and on improving the quality of teaching/pupil outcomes.
5. Agendas/work programmes reflect a clear commitment to an annual cycle of timely discussion, review and approval of key compliance requirements e.g. Child Protection Policy.
6. Governors can clearly articulate the link between self-evaluation, school development planning and the appraisal/performance management process.
7. Clear and consistent monitoring of the impact of the appraisal process demonstrates the impact of CPD on quality of teaching, leadership and management and pupil progress.
8. Governor questions demonstrate a relentless drive for improvement, e.g. what more can be done to improve quality of teaching and pupil achievement?
9. Governors ensure solvency and probity and that the financial resources made available to the school are managed effectively
10. Governors routinely monitor the schools financial control mechanisms and know through evidence that financial probity exists.

### AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

#### **To increase the strength of governance to support the school's improvement the governing body may wish to further develop so that:**

1. Governors play a significant role in creating a vision that is shared by all members of the school community and is based on input from and consultation with a range of stakeholders.
2. The GB ensures decisions are made in line with the school's vision and strategic priorities and monitors the impact of these decisions.
3. Governors actively take advantage of a wide range of opportunities to engage with all key stakeholder groups.

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<b>OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS</b>		
<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Overall	A/B	<p>The majority of the practice of the governing body is strong governance as defined in the National College’s Review of Governance template. No aspects of the work of the governing body are anything less than sound.</p> <p>There is no complacency in the governing body and all governors expressed a desire to continue to improve the operation of the governing body so that it could support the school to become even better.</p> <p>Governors are rightly proud of their school and should also feel proud of their contribution to the school.</p>
Strategic effectiveness	A/B	<p>The governing body has sound strategic principles underpinning all its actions and with the school’s senior leaders provides strong and effective leadership.</p> <p>Governors have identified that with a new Headteacher in post and in line with changes to educational structures there is an opportunity to revisit the school’s vision with all stakeholders, and then use the vision to underpin all strategic decisions.</p>
Knowledge of school	A/B	<p>Governors have good knowledge of the school through a variety of sources, with no areas where their knowledge is weak.</p> <p>The governing body may wish to consider whether to extend the sources of evidence received, including through external reports, reports from more members of staff and from more stakeholders.</p>
Challenge, support and impact	A/B	<p>As a result of the strong team ethos and the good relationships between the senior leadership and the governing body, the governing body provides very effective supportive challenge.</p> <p>There are many examples of where the governing body has had an impact on the school, all focused on supporting the school to further improve.</p>

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Operational effectiveness	A/B	<p>The governing body operates well, using the strong skills of its members to good effect. The excellent chair has provided continuity through the period of a new head teacher joining the school and, whilst he has said he will stand down as chair at the next meeting, will remain on the governing body to provide support to a new chair.</p> <p>The governing body recognises that there are ways in which it can improve practice; however these are minor and governors are very willing to address them.</p>
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<b>STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS</b>		
<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Vision, values, aims and culture of ambition	B	<p>All members of the governing body have a very thorough commitment to the values of the school and to creating a culture of safety and good behaviour where each child can excel, together with a powerful appreciation of the value of diversity and inclusion. Governors are ambitious for the school, staff and children.</p> <p>There is an opportunity for the governing body to be influential in the process of developing a new vision, which engages the whole school community. This can then become the destination around which strategic decisions are made, and would inform both challenge and support.</p>
Policies reviewed, approved and published	A	<p>All statutory policies are in place. Policies are reviewed on a regular basis with governor involvement. Policies are published on the school's website</p>
Involvement in school self-evaluation and identification of strategic priorities	A/B	<p>Governors have a thorough understanding of the school through reports received from the school, external reports and data, and from school visits. This provides them with an accurate understanding of the schools strengths and weaknesses, so the governing body can ensure that relative weaknesses are addressed through improvement plans.</p> <p>Governors speak accurately and confidently about the schools strengths and weaknesses and minutes reflect the governing body's involvement in improvement planning. Governors ensure that objectives are SMART.</p> <p>Through access to external reports, including the QA report from the LA, the governing body will validate its knowledge about strengths and weaknesses.</p>
Budget setting and strategic financial responsibilities	A	<p>The governing body has efficient processes in place for setting a balanced budget which meets the needs of the pupils. There is also a plan in place for key capital works and maintenance, and for refurbishment and replacement of assets. The use of the skills and knowledge of members of the governing body is used. All deadlines for budget setting are met. Financial delegation decisions are reviewed periodically. SVFS has been completed with no issues identified.</p>

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Staffing structure planning	A	<p>The governing body reviews and approves changes to the staffing structure based on principles about best meeting the needs of the pupils. It recognises the need to ensure the staffing structure is affordable, sustainable and meets the needs of pupils.</p> <p>The governing body is fully aware of safer recruitment.</p> <p>The use of governors in recruitment processes makes good use of the knowledge and skills of governors.</p>
Use of targets and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	B	<p>Governors make use of the objectives from the school improvement plan; however few other KPIs appear to have been set.</p> <p>Having targets can be helpful in accountability.</p>
Strategic framework for performance management and pay decisions	A	<p>The governing body has in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appraisal Policy and Pay Policy (approved annually)</li> <li>• All HR Policies, including capability</li> <li>• Pay Committee</li> <li>• Appraisal governors.</li> </ul> <p>The governing body selects the External Advisor to be used for the head teacher’s appraisal.</p> <p>The governing body has requested further information about the links between CPD and the improvement priorities.</p>

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<b>KNOWLEDGE OF SCHOOL</b>		
<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Sources of information used by the governing body, including benchmarks and standards	A/B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Headteacher’s termly report</li> <li>✓ School newsletters on website</li> <li>✓ Raiseonline</li> <li>✓ School Development Plan</li> <li>✓ Reports from Business Manager</li> <li>✓ Governor Visit Reports, verbal to the full governing body meeting</li> <li>✓ Link Governor Reports</li> <li>✓ External Audit reports</li> <li>✓ Health and safety report</li> <li>✓ Safeguarding compliance report</li> <li>✓ Parent view surveys</li> <li>✓ Key policies for review and approval</li> <li>✓ Report on impact of appraisal</li> </ul> <p>Governors will be receiving the report from the quality assurance visit from the local authority,</p>
Understanding of assessment processes and access to pupil outcomes data	A	<p>Governors have an accurate knowledge of both the procedures in school and the systems for moderation of data. Governors have access to Raiseonline and make informed use of the information.</p> <p>Governors have knowledge about the baseline tests for pupils in year three, which are used for pupil tracking, which impacts on interventions and additional support for pupils, and on appraisal processes.</p>
Focus on disadvantaged and vulnerable learners, including pupil premium, EAL and CLA	A	<p>The governing body has a very strong commitment to the achievement of vulnerable pupils and to the school’s ethos of inclusion and celebration of diversity.</p>

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Monitoring of progress towards strategic priorities, including previous Ofsted priorities	A/B	<p>The governing body is informed about progress towards the improvement priorities termly. Link governors are developing greater awareness of the improvement priorities relevant to their link area.</p> <p>The governing body recognises the importance of monitoring progress towards improvement priorities.</p> <p>There is evidence that the governing body asks about whether the objectives are going to be met through the implementation of the plan and also challenges the milestones within the plan.</p>
Safeguarding	A	<p>The governing body has systems and structures in place to ensure that all statutory responsibilities are fully met, including an expectation of training for governors. The LA's Compliance Checklist has been completed and presented to the governing body.</p> <p>Governors speak about their strong commitment to these responsibilities.</p> <p>Policies are in place and are regularly reviewed.</p>
Health and safety	A	<p>Health and safety responsibilities are taken seriously by the governing body, with the chair undertaking the role of governor linked with health and safety. Termly health and safety inspections are undertaken and reported to the governing body.</p>
Quality of teaching	A	<p>Governors have confidence in the quality of teaching and other staff in school, as a result of the information provided to them by the Headteacher, their analysis of assessment data and through their first-hand knowledge of the staff.</p> <p>They have information about the moderation activities undertaken</p>
Effectiveness of performance management systems, including CPD, to develop all staff and promote effective practice and secure sustained improvements in teaching	A/B	<p>Governors are informed that staff receive appraisals and that staff professional development is based on the personal developmental requirements of staff and the school's improvement priorities. They also have knowledge of the CPD and the use of INSET days.</p> <p>Appraisal governors report to the governing body on the process, and appraisals inform pay decisions.</p> <p>Governors have requested further information about the links between improvement priorities and the CPD undertaken by staff.</p>

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Breadth and balance of the curriculum, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning and preparation for life in modern Britain	A/B	Governors are proud of the breadth of the curriculum and the opportunities children receive in school. They are aware of the new National Curriculum and the changes to assessment systems. The Headteacher informs governors about how the school is preparing children for life in modern Britain and that this is an area of further development in school. Governors have completed Prevent training.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs / disability	A/B	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is discussed by the strategic development committee. The governor linked with SEND has visited; however a written report was not available for the review. Governors spoke passionately about the excellence of support for pupil's needs and also about the commitment of the school to meet children's needs.
Pupil personal development, behaviour and welfare, including attendance	A/B	Governors are strongly committed to ensuring the school is one where pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare is recognised as very important and is valued for creating an environment where children can learn. Their knowledge is based on reports from the Headteacher as well as their personal experience of school through their visits and, for governors who are also parents, from their own children's experience of school. Governors are informed about attendance and how absence is addressed. Governors may wish to consider whether there would be value in having a direct link with the school council.
Resources	A	The school has recovered from a recent small deficit through prudent financial management and ensuring that purchasing systems are robust and that purchases made will benefit pupils.
Financial, including PP and Sports Funding	A	Financial monitoring is a strength of the governing body, with regular meetings of the finance and personnel committee overseeing the setting of the budget and monitoring variance in expenditure against the budget. Governors are aware of PP income and how it is spent. The link governor for PE will be overseeing sports funding expenditure and impact.
Stakeholder views	A/B	Governors have received the results from the parent questionnaire. It is planned for the governing body to be involved in formulating the questions in the staff survey and to receive the results. A link with the school council could be developed.

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<b>CHALLENGE</b>		
<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Focus on progress towards strategic priorities and school improvement	A/B	Governors are confident in providing challenge towards the meeting of strategic priorities. They recognise the need for developing an overarching vision which would include input from stakeholders
Effective decision making	A	The use of the skills and knowledge of the governing body has been instrumental in ensuring that good decisions are made. This is evident in the requests for a business case to be presented for bringing catering into school prior to any decision being made.
Use of challenging questions	A/B	Whilst the governing body evidently asks a number of challenging questions these are not well recorded in the minutes.
Challenge from the GB to improve itself	A/B	As a result of considerable workload of the governing body in the recent past, including the appointment of a new head, the focus has been on the school. The governing body has recognised that there is currently an opportunity for the governing body to use its resources to improve its own practice and has therefore commissioned this review.
GB involvement in and oversight of Performance Related Pay	A	The appraisal process for the headteacher is rigorous. The governing body selects an External Advisor who has good knowledge of the school, and the appraisal governors ensure that the objectives set are SMART and linked with improvement priorities. Pay recommendations are linked with the successful completion of objectives and the success of the school. The governing body holds the senior leadership to account for improving the quality of teaching.

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<b>SUPPORT</b>		
<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Use of skills	A/B	<p>The governing body has completed the NGA skills audit.</p> <p>The skills and knowledge of the governing body are used to provide support for the school, resulting from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The skills audit being used to inform recruitment, training and the use of governors.</li> <li>• The governing body having a wide range of skills and knowledge including business, representation and educational.</li> </ul> <p>The governing body, having reconstituted, is confident the current membership meets the needs of the school.</p> <p>The governing body may wish to consider whether it would benefit from seeking to appoint a member with primary school leadership experience.</p> <p>Governors who are parents need to be mindful of not raising issues related to their own children as part of governance.</p>
Celebration of progress and successes of the school	B	<p>The governing body is very complimentary of the school, the staff and pupils. Whilst the chair occasionally adds to the school's newsletter, governors did not feel that they did enough to celebrate the excellence in school and publicise it to the school's community.</p>
Relationships with staff	A	<p>Relationships with staff are strong. The Headteacher reports back to staff following governing body meetings and staff governors felt confident that they could raise the views of staff. Staff welcome the involvement of the governing body in school.</p>
Understanding barriers	A	<p>Through their strong knowledge of the school and the specific issues related to being a junior school, governors are aware of barriers to progress and seek to support the school in finding ways to mitigate them.</p> <p>They are sympathetic where uncontrollable events impact on plans, and fully support the judgements of the headteacher and leadership team.</p>

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<b>IMPACT</b>		
<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Financial	A	Over recent years the governing body has provided strong leadership around expenditure, ensuring that it is linked to pupil outcomes and school improvement priorities. This has resulted in the school no longer having a deficit budget.
Staffing, including quality of provision	A/B	The governing body effectively recruited a new headteacher, following a process which was supported by the LA. Governors have made decisions about changes to the staffing structure; however it is not evident that the governing body then monitors the impact of such decisions. It may wish to consider developing a review cycle into the decision making process.
Outcomes for pupils	A	The Strategic Development Committee provides considerable supportive challenge focused on outcomes for pupils and the analysis of results. It requests further information, including benchmarks, and ensures that improvement priorities are addressed through the development plan.
Leadership and management	A/B	The governing body was successful in the recruitment of the new Headteacher. Governors have been involved in changes to the leadership structure; however do not appear to have formally monitored the impact. The governing body has stable leadership over many years which has provided stability during the transition to a new headteacher. The governing body now recognises that there is an opportunity for the governing body to develop further, both in increased reporting to the governing body from governor's first-hand knowledge of school and in the use of a vision to underpin strategic leadership.

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<b>GOVERNING BODY OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS</b>		
<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Content of Head Teacher's report	A/B	<p>The report contains data about pupil progress and key performance indicators, together with a narrative about the operation of the school and progress towards improvement priorities. All aspects of the Ofsted framework are included.</p> <p>Where monitoring responsibilities are delegated to committee only summary information is included in the head's report.</p> <p>Governors have requested additional information for inclusion in the report.</p> <p>The report is circulated to all members of the governing body prior to meetings.</p> <p>Governors may wish to consider whether they would wish to receive reports from members of staff about their areas of responsibility.</p> <p>Information is not duplicated, as governors also receive school newsletters and other key correspondence.</p>
Sharing of workload	A/B	<p>Governors are all invited and encouraged to contribute according to the time they have available. Roles and responsibilities are shared among all governors, and skills and knowledge are used effectively.</p> <p>The structures for governance, including committees, working parties and link governors have been designed to make best use of the members of the governing body.</p> <p>A core group of governors does take more responsibility; however the effective communication with all members of the governing body means that all members have sufficient knowledge to make a valuable contribution.</p> <p>Having governors with enough time available to attend meetings and visit school could be a barrier to the governing body developing further.</p>

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Skills, knowledge and representation	A/B	<p>The governing body has a good range of skills and knowledge. Stakeholders are well represented on the governing body.</p> <p>For future recruitment the governing body may wish to recruit externally from the school / GB, possibly seeking someone with complete independence and ideally with primary school leadership expertise.</p>
Membership – recruitment and retention	B	<p>The governing body has no vacancies. Newly appointed governors are encouraged to develop their knowledge of governance through a wide range of mechanisms, including through attending training. In addition they receive in school induction and support. New governors are encouraged to attend both committees prior to selecting which one they would want to join.</p> <p>It appears that the prime method of recruitment has been to retain former parent governors in new roles.</p> <p>Recruitment focused on the gaps in the skills audit could strengthen the governing body.</p>
Training / development	A/B	<p>A matrix of governor training is maintained. The governing body has a governor with responsibility for the coordination of training.</p> <p>Governors attend some training; however there is no evidence of how it is used to improve practice. In the current context of changes in education and governance it is important that governing bodies ensure that they keep their knowledge up to date.</p>
Self-review	A/B	<p>The governing body carries out a review of each full governing body meeting, giving consideration to what challenge has been made and whether the governing body has had any impact. It has also carried out a skills audit which has been analysed and will be used in recruitment and training.</p> <p>The governing body recognised that visits could be improved and has therefore developed a policy and reporting structure.</p> <p>The governing body has excellent governors who can make the governing body even better, provided the time is taken to regularly review practice.</p>

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Meetings, agendas and minutes	A	<p>Meeting agendas are well structured, and include all responsibilities of the governing body.            Meetings are well attended.            The views of all governors are sought.            Meetings are very well chaired.            Minutes provide a satisfactory record of meetings, with committee minutes including a more thorough record of challenge and support. Governors may wish to review the level of content so that there is more evidence of the challenges made. The chair of the meeting should make amendments to draft minutes where necessary to improve their value in accountability.</p>
Chairing	A	<p>The chair of the governing body is very knowledgeable about governance and about the school. His manner has been influential in building the very committed team of governors. He ensures that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The work of the governing body is organised and structured</li> <li>• Best use is made of the members of the governing body and relationships with school are positive</li> <li>• Governor induction and training are managed effectively</li> <li>• Meetings are efficient and effective</li> <li>• The workload and information are shared and the voice of everyone is heard</li> <li>• The governing body makes a difference and brings value to the school</li> <li>• The new Headteacher has felt well supported.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair has informed governors that it is his intention to stand down as chair in the autumn term. The governing body has many governors who have the capability of taking on the role.</p>
Succession	A	<p>Many members of the governing body have the capability of taking on key roles.            If available time for specific roles is an issue then consideration should be given to creating additional leadership roles in the governing body and sharing out the responsibilities.</p>
Governor visits / links	A/B	<p>Link roles have recently been reviewed.            A number of governors visit regularly and their visits support their knowledge and understanding of the whole governing body. A new policy for visits has been produced and governors have agreed to produce written reports following visits.</p>

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Governing body visibility on website	B	There is considerable information on the website about the governing body, including details of all governors including their responsibilities. In addition the minutes are published on the website. The governing body may wish to consider how it can increase its visibility on the website, including by adding an annual impact statement.
Organisation and administration	A	The papers from all meetings were available, together with all reports received by the governing body. In addition the Chair had excellent records. Policies are on the school's website. Papers for meetings are collated and sent out well in advance of meetings.

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<b>Governing Body Development Plan</b>			
<b>Objective 1:</b>	Play a significant role in creating a vision that is shared by all members of the school community and is based on input from and consultation with a range of stakeholders.		
Action	Lead by	When	Outcomes / Evaluation
Allocate either a part of a full governing body meeting, or hold a specific GB meeting to consider the process for development of the vision, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which stakeholder views to be included</li> <li>2. What process to follow, including whether to have a GB working party</li> <li>3. How the governing body's contribution will be made</li> <li>4. Consider whether academisation / partnership working should be included within the vision or be discussed and addressed separately</li> <li>5. When the proposed new vision will be brought to the governing body</li> <li>6. How the new vision will be shared with the school's community</li> </ol> Governing body to review and approve new vision	Headteacher	2016	All stakeholders understand and have a stake in the vision for the school Governors are able to articulate the vision
Use the new vision to identify any key performance indicators / milestones which would identify progress	Strategic Development Committee	Following vision being approved	Governing body minutes include challenge about progress towards the vision Agendas include reference to the vision

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<b>Governing Body Development Plan</b>			
<b>Objective 2:</b>	<b>Review leadership structure of the governing body and appoint to key posts</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead by</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Outcomes / Evaluation</b>
<p>Identify key responsibilities of chair and vice chair posts                      Full GB to consider whether to retain Chair and Vice Chair structure or to consider an alternative, for example:                      Chair with responsibility for chairing meeting and acting as a critical friend to the Headteacher                      Vice-Chair – governing body communication and support                      Vice-Chair – school link role / school liaison                      2 committee chairs.</p> <p>This group of people to act as the GB executive, with key responsibility for GB review and improvement, including the schedule of work for the year</p>	<p>Chair in the first instance</p>	<p>Seek interest in roles in summer term</p> <p>Post holders in post from autumn term</p> <p>Post holders to act as informal GB development working party</p>	<p>Governing body has a leadership structures which makes good use of the skills of all governors, but recognises the workload involved.</p> <p>Shared leadership should support succession</p>

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<b>Governing Body Development Plan</b>			
<b>Objective 3:</b>	<b>Operational improvements</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead by</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Outcomes / Evaluation</b>
1. Arrange for reports to the governing body from the SLT	Headteacher / GB working party	From autumn term	Increase GB knowledge and ability to hold SLT to account
2. Consider whether to increase external reports commissioned / received	Headteacher / GB working party	Immediate	Ensure GB has accurate knowledge of school
3. Improve reporting of visits through written reports circulated to all governors	Vice Chair – GB	Immediate	Increase governor knowledge and also evidence of GB work
4. Chair of meeting to remind clerk to minute specific challenges and to review minutes to ensure challenge minuted	Chair of meeting	Immediate	Improved accountability for GB
5. Involvement in staff survey	Resources Comm chair + staff gov	Summer term	Increase knowledge of stakeholder views and use in strategic planning
6. Consider key skills required when recruiting to next vacancy	Full governing body / Chair	When appropriate	Improved range of skills on GB Increase impartiality
7. Develop impact report for the website	GB working party	Autumn term	Improve accountability of GB
8. Consider communication with parents through annual newsletter	Chair / Vice-Chair	Summer term	Improve accountability of GB Support for staff / school

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## **Evidence basis:**

Minutes for four terms

Governance documents including skills audit report and training matrix

Headteacher's reports

Finance reports

Meetings with: Chair, staff governor, headteacher, LA governor, co-opted governors and parent governors