



SCHOOL
GOVERNORS'
ONE-STOP SHOP

*'Recruiting Governors with management skills
for Schools that need them most.'*



Governors Mean Business

School Governors' One-Stop Shop volunteers:
Their contribution and added value to schools in England

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FOREWORD



School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) was launched in response to the findings of research commissioned by the educational trust Industry in Education. This quantified the value-added contribution to schools of volunteers with skills developed in a business environment becoming school governors.^[i] The critical findings were that the skills

business and industry governors used, and which were desired and valued by Head Teachers and Chairs of governors, were the strategic planning skills relating particularly to finance, marketing and personnel. Head Teachers also particularly appreciated their acting as “objective outsiders”.

The remit of SGOSS, a private company with charitable status, is ‘To recruit Governors with management skills for Schools that need them most’. It works across England and in partnership with Local Authorities, or working directly with schools, will secure its 10,000th placement during 2010. An important element of the value that SGOSS adds is its capacity to engage a universe of volunteers that is somewhat atypical of the national norm, and in 2009–2010 for instance 54% of those it helped place were female, 19% were from an ethnic background, and 67% were aged between 18 and 45.

SGOSS has also always understood the necessity of validating the contribution of its volunteers and has previously researched the types of responsibilities they have undertaken, the skills they have deployed and developed, and their longevity in the role. On this occasion SGOSS has sought to re-affirm the basis on which it was launched i.e. the cross-referenced views of the governors themselves, their Head Teachers and their Chairs on the value they have added to their governing bodies. With funding from corporate supporters research was consequently commissioned from the University of Hertfordshire in 2009.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the companies who provided the money to undertake this research – Allen & Overy LLP, KPMG LLP (UK), Goldman Sachs, UB, PricewaterhouseCoopers and Herbert Smith LLP – all the Head Teachers, Chairs and SGOSS-placed governors who gave so willingly of their time to be interviewed for the research, and Dr Anne Punter and Professor John Adams who carried out the research in their particularly professional and diligent way. I am delighted that the findings are simultaneously a total endorsement of the added value that volunteers recruited by SGOSS deliver to the schools they serve, and of the SGOSS way of working.

Steve Acklam

Chief Executive, School Governors' One-Stop Shop

^[i] Industry in Education, 1999, *Business and Industry Governors: A case for promotion?*; School and College Governors from the Business Community: A report for Industry in Education researched and prepared by Anne Punter, 1994.



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

1. SGOSS Governors had undertaken many of the more responsible tasks of the governing body.¹
2. SGOSS Governors were perceived by Head Teachers and Chairs as particularly valuable in fulfilling Challenging, Monitoring and Evaluating roles. Head Teachers particularly valued their role as “critical friends” giving their support a rating of 4.65 against a maximum of 5.²
3. Head Teachers and Chairs concurred that SGOSS Governors demonstrated an ability to assimilate information quickly, ask the relevant questions, approach issues from a strategic standpoint and stay objective.³
4. 97% of Head Teachers and Chairs rated SGOSS governors’ attendance as Excellent (59%), Good (28%) or Fair, and 96% gave their commitment similarly high values with 68% rating it as excellent.⁴
5. 87% of Head Teachers and Chairs regarded the newly appointed SGOSS Governor as integrating Well or Very Well into the existing governing body.⁵
6. Head Teachers and Chairs rated SGOSS Governors’ overall effectiveness as 4.32 and 4.17 respectively (against a maximum of 5) with both ratings significantly higher than the 3.80 rating which SGOSS Governors gave themselves.⁶
7. For Head Teachers and Chairs the recruitment of skills-based governors was seen as an important and necessary means by which to enhance the effectiveness of the governing body.⁷
8. More than half the SGOSS Governors, unprompted, said they would definitely approach SGOSS if they wanted to offer themselves as a governor again.⁸
9. 100% of Head Teachers and Chairs said ‘yes’ they would welcome the recruitment of a governor via the SGOSS.⁹
10. The majority of Head Teachers and Chairs would welcome the opportunity to request governors from SGOSS directly.¹⁰
11. In secondary schools Head Teachers and Chairs gave a rating of 4.5 against a maximum of 5 for the value of SGOSS Governors providing information about business and industry.¹¹

1 see sections 5.2, 6.1, 6.3.

2 see sections 5.3, 6.1, 6.3.

3 see sections 5.3, 6.1, 6.3.

4 see sections 5.4, 6.1.

5 see sections 5.5, 6.1.

6 see sections 5.6, 6.1.

7 see sections 5.9i, 6.3, 6.4.

8 see sections 5.10, 6.5.

9 see sections 5.10, 6.1.

10 see sections 5.9, 5.10, 6.2.

11 see section 5.3.



2. INTRODUCTION

This is the most recent in a series of independent reports¹² on the work of the School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) carried out by the University of Hertfordshire. Together these studies comprise a continuing evaluation of the work of the SGOSS during the ten years of its existence. SGOSS was launched in support of the 'Excellence in Cities' initiative which prioritised local authorities in which schools needed to enhance their provision and where strengthening governance was necessary.

The remit of SGOSS, which is 'To recruit Governors with management skills for Schools that need them most', was specifically informed by the Punter, A. and Thody, A. (2000) study. This research demonstrated the significant contribution that managers from industry and business could make to school governance and how Head Teachers and Chairs valued the skills that these governors can offer, such as: problem solving, team working, decision making, financial planning, personnel management, strategic planning, marketing and the ability to "see the bigger picture" which helped governing bodies move from the detailed to the strategic. SGOSS began operating in January 2000 and worked in the Phase I Excellence in Cities (EiC) areas. Its remit was extended to cover the additional 22 Phase II EiC areas in 2001 and moved into the 19 Phase III EiC areas in 2002. On 1st October 2005 SGOSS rolled out nationally to the 150 Local Authority areas in England.

The main focus of this current study '*Governors Mean Business. School Governors' One-Stop Shop volunteers: Their contribution and added value to schools in England*', has been to capture Head Teachers' and Chairs of Governors' views on the value-added provided by business governors recruited by the SGOSS. The study validated the self-assessments of SGOSS-recruited governors by triangulating their responses with those of Head Teachers and Chairs. In addition, data was sought on the resistance / suspicion at the school level that might result from the possible perceived "imposition" of governors recruited by a non-traditional route.

The study involved 60 schools, split between Primary and Secondary, and male and female governors, and took place over the autumn term 2009 and the first part of the spring term 2010.

Note: *all italicised quotations in this report are taken verbatim from those who were interviewed and are used to give a flavour of the most frequently articulated opinions beyond those captured in the quantitative data.*

¹² The earlier evaluative studies were prepared by Punter, A. and Thody, A. (2000); Punter, A., Adams, J. and Lang, J. (January 2003); Punter, A., Adams, J. and Lang, J. (November 2003) and Punter A., Adams J. and Kraithman L. (March 2007).



3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aims

The principal aim of the study was to address the data gap of material from Head Teachers and Chairs in establishing the value of the contributions being made by SGOSS-recruited governors to their schools. Previous research (see 1. Introduction) has demonstrated that SGOSS Governors themselves consider that they make an important contribution to the work of their Governing Bodies and that the objectivity and skills of governors developed in business and industry environments are very significant factors in effecting that contribution.

Objectives:

- To record the tasks undertaken by SGOSS Governors.
- To record judgements of the value added by these governors to their governing bodies, particularly in relation to the much enhanced key roles of governors.¹³
- To give rigour to all the findings by also collecting judgements from the Head Teachers and Chairs of the governing bodies of which the SGOSS Governors are members.
- To ascertain if there are any differences in the deployment and performance of SGOSS-recruited governors between those serving in secondary and primary schools.
- To discover if there are improvements that could be made in the recruitment or deployment of these or other governors.
- To collect opinions from Head Teachers, Chairs of the governing body and from SGOSS Governors on the levels of responsibility and workload carried by the governing body and on governors' perceived significance in the community.¹⁴

¹³ Newly identified: by Ofsted in the inspection of schools documentation, Sept 2009 and updated in January 2010 (see Ofsted 2009 and 2010); by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) in the White Paper (June 2009); by Ed Balls the Secretary of State for Children Schools and Families in the accompanying letter to the White Paper and by the DCSF in '21st Century Schools: A World-Class Education for Every Child' (2008).

¹⁴ Balarin et al, 2008, p.4.



4. METHOD

This study took place over the autumn of 2009 and early spring 2010. Logistical and data protection issues led to the rejection of any random sampling, which had in any event been fully explored for earlier SGOSS studies. The approach was for the SGOSS to seek volunteers from among the governors they had placed in schools by running a search on the database to identify those governors who had served for more than a year. The study required this minimum length of service, in order that an in-depth judgement of their contributions and effectiveness could be made. The governors identified in the search were contacted by email and asked if they were prepared to be involved in the research, as outlined in the email, and to provide a telephone contact number for use by an interviewer. The details of governors who agreed were forwarded to the researchers. The intention was to recruit 60 governors to the survey, split between primary and secondary schools and male and female.

A schedule was then constructed (see Appendix 1) which could be completed during a telephone interview. The questions in the schedule were firmly grounded in the current requirements and guidance for school governors and in significant issues captured in the most recent research studies on governance (see References). It was clearly most appropriate for the value of the impact of SGOSS Governors to be judged, rated and discussed in relation to the role of the school governor currently and for the immediate future, particularly as the requirements and guidance (Ofsted 2009 and 2010) had set out some significantly enhanced responsibilities and accountabilities.

Respondent governors were then contacted by email with attached copies of the schedule and invited to arrange interview times. An identical process took place with the relevant Head Teachers and governing body Chairs via an email to the schools, followed up by letters to the Chairs and telephone calls to the Head Teachers to arrange telephone interview times.

The interview schedule was in two parts: first a series of structured questions taking approximately 15 minutes, so that responses could be triangulated across the three groups of respondents (Head Teachers, Chairs

and SGOSS Governors) for rigour. The second part of the schedule contained a number of open questions, that allowed unprompted responses about improvements that could be made or key issues about governance. Many from all three groups chose to speak for much longer than the minimum time – typically 30–60 minutes in total – in order to make free-flow points about such matters. It is interesting to see that there was a commonality of responses from all three groups to these open questions, so that the responses could be easily grouped into several frequently-held sets of opinions; these are reported in sections 5.7 to 5.9 and also incorporated into relevant parts of this report.

The voluntary aspect was important since the co-operation of the school governor was essential, not only in participating in the survey, but also in alerting both the Head Teacher and the Chair of the school's governing body to the nature of the survey and in soliciting their willingness to take part. There was an expectation that the response rate from governors (given the fact of their volunteering) would be at, or close to, 100%. It was however recognised that lower response rates from Head Teachers and Chairs were probable.

The absence of sampling enabled qualitative research techniques to be employed with purposeful selection and researcher-led discussion being central aspects of the research design. The self-selected nature of the governor group, however, could be anticipated to generate a systematic bias in the data and this was born in mind at all stages.

Triangulation took place via interviews with both the Head Teachers and Chairs of the respective schools. In no case was any party made aware (either before or following the interview) of participating schools or the views of other individual respondents.

The results were collated in early spring 2010 and a draft report presented to the SGOSS in March 2010.



5. FINDINGS IN DETAIL

180 individuals were invited to participate in the survey. The response rates were 100% for Governors, 83% for Head Teachers and 50% for Chairs of governing bodies. No Chair refused to be interviewed, but one reason for the relatively smaller response rate from Chairs was that they had to be contacted through the school address as this is normally the only contact route possible for communications to governors; this builds in a further step for letters and emails to be forwarded and is a much less direct approach than a telephone call to the Head Teacher / the school secretary.

	Governors	Head Teachers	Chairs	Totals
Primary	39	32	18	89
Secondary	21	18	12	51
Totals	60	50	30	140

Table 1 Interviewees by role and school phase.

Although the group was selected to contain a balance of SGOSS Governors serving in secondary and primary schools in order to be able to calculate any emerging differences between governors' work in secondary and primary phases, few systematic differences emerged. In view of this, the findings from these data are reported collectively; where there are differences, these will be noted and analysed in the text of the report.

5.1 Profession / Professional Expertise (Question 5)

SGOSS-recruited governors were asked to give their profession or what they regarded as their professional

expertise. See Table 2 for the list of occupations. The average length of service of the governors in this study was 2.88 years, ranging from a minimum of one year to eight years.

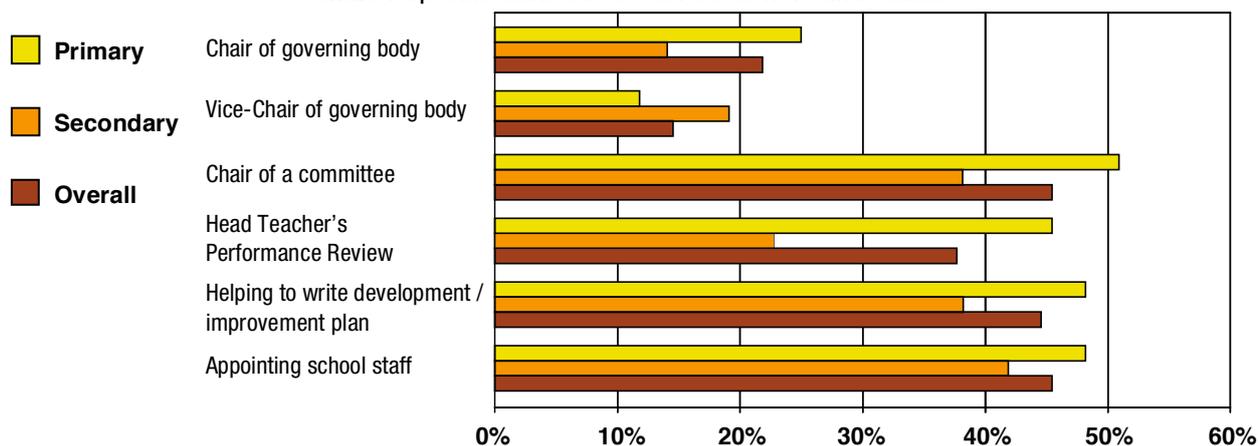
Accountancy and Finance	13
Education	8
General Management	7
Law	7
Other	7
HR	5
Health	4
IT	3
Engineering	2
Marketing	2
Science	2
Total	60

Table 2 Governors' professional expertise.

5.2 Tasks undertaken (Question 6)

The interview sought responses from the governors regarding the tasks they undertook. Head Teachers and Chairs were asked the same question as a cross-check to validate the governors' self-reporting. In almost all cases confirmation was given and lapses in memory and changes in personnel probably accounted for the remainder. It emerged that SGOSS Governors had undertaken many of the more responsible tasks of the Governing Body, with 13 (22%) of SGOSS Governors having become Chairs of their Governing Body and an additional 9 (15%) becoming Vice-Chairs. 28 (47%) were Chairs of commit-

Chart 1 Specific tasks SGOSS Governors have undertaken





tees, 23 (38%) had helped to conduct the Head's Performance Review, 27 (45%) had helped in preparing the school development/improvement plan and 28 (47%) had served on a school staff appointment panel.

A significant finding is that there were more SGOSS Governors undertaking these tasks in primary schools than in secondary schools (see Chart 1), so we might conclude that, in (normally) smaller primary school governing bodies, SGOSS Governors are a relatively more valuable resource in this setting, as the governing body as a whole has fewer people's expertise to draw on.

It should however be remembered that, given that both primary and secondary SGOSS Governors had agreed to participate in the research, they were more likely than not to be reasonably satisfied with their contribution to governance and so more likely to be playing a prominent role in their governing body. However, a comparison with the 2007 study shows some consistency in this regard; that survey concluded that: "SGOSS-recruited governors are more likely than the modal governor to undertake significant tasks..." (Punter, Adams, Kraithman, March 2007, p.4). That conclusion is confirmed by this study.

5.3 Roles undertaken (Question 7)

Both Head Teachers and Chairs were familiar with the Ofsted governing body roles listed in the interview schedule (Ofsted 2009 and 2010). They were acutely aware of the greater responsibilities now placed on the Governing Body. They were in agreement that SGOSS Governors were particularly valued as fulfilling these 'Challenging', 'Monitoring' and 'Evaluating' roles that had now taken on increased significance in the context of the school being required to demonstrate its Leadership and Management's 'Capacity to Improve'. Question 7 asked all three groups to evaluate the SGOSS-recruited governor's contribution on a scale of "Very valuable" to "No value"; there was a high degree of correlation in the judgements of roles in which the SGOSS Governors were of the most value. The SGOSS Governors themselves, were also aware of the contribution they had consciously made in these roles and gave similarly ranked ratings for their performance (see tabulations in Appendix 2).

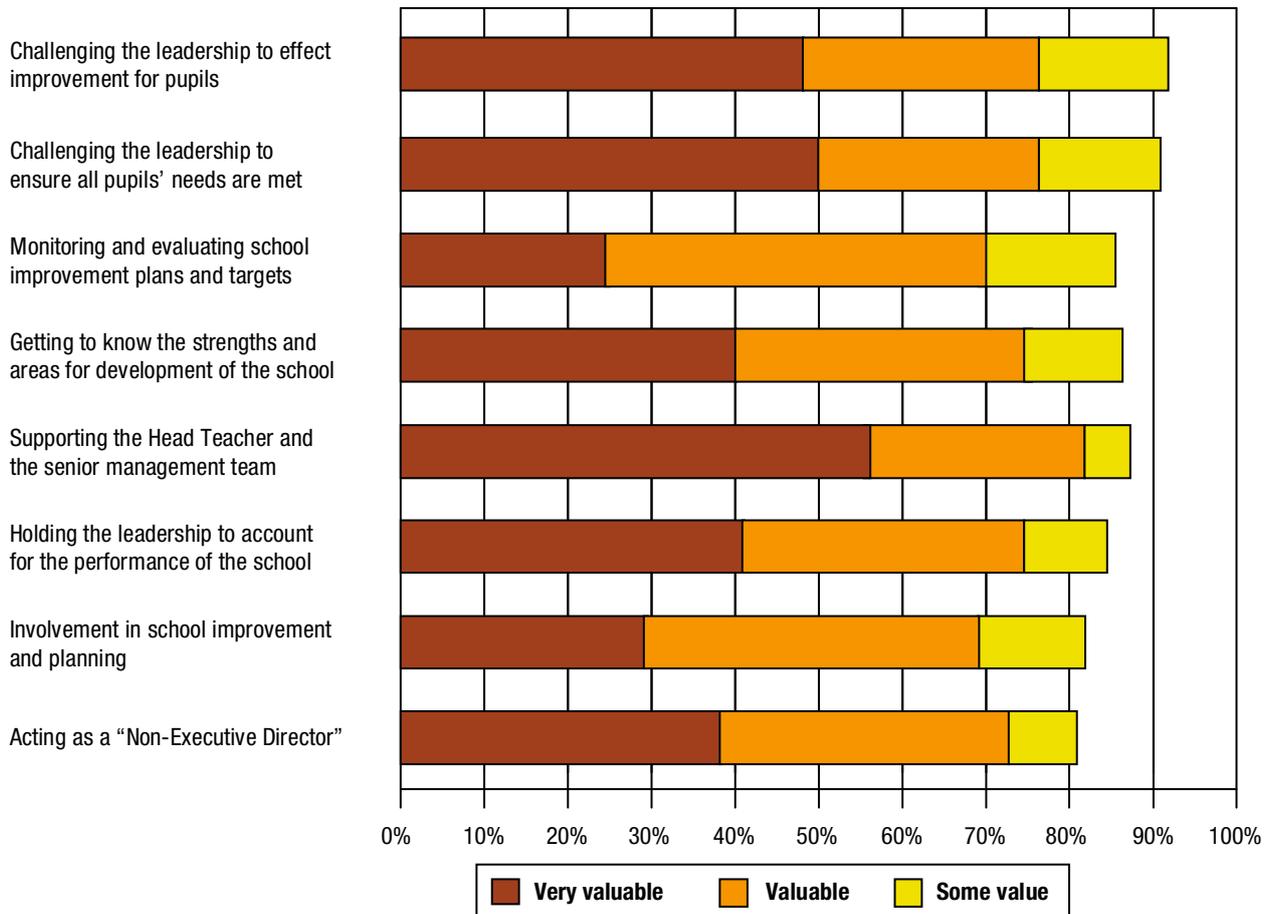
The roles in which the contribution by the SGOSS Governors was judged by Head Teachers and Chairs to be most significant are shown in Table 3.

Role rated by Head Teachers and Chairs combined	Very valuable % of SGOSS Governors	Valuable % of SGOSS Governors	Some value % of SGOSS Governors	Combined Very valuable, Valuable and Some value %
Challenging the leadership to effect improvements for pupils	48	29	15	92
Challenging the leadership to ensure all pupils' needs are met	50	26	15	91
Monitoring and evaluating school improvement plans and targets	26	44	18	88
Getting to know the strengths and areas for development of the school	40	36	11	87
Supporting the Head Teacher and the senior management team	56	26	4	86
Holding the leadership to account for the performance of the school	41	33	11	85
Involvement in school improvement planning	29	40	13	82
Acting as a 'Non-Executive Director'	38	35	8	81

Table 3 Roles in which SGOSS Governors gave the most value, as judged by Head Teachers and Chairs.



Chart 2 Roles in which the SGOSS Governors gave the most value as judged by Head Teachers and Chairs



During this part of the interview it was said frequently by Head Teachers and Chairs that these roles were often ones that other governors were less inclined to adopt because to fulfil them effectively, governors needed: to be confident without being combative, have a quick grasp of detail upon which to be able to base appropriate questions, be tenacious with attention to detail, have an overview of strategy without asserting any particular agenda, and have the ability to be sufficiently incisive. Head Teachers who were interviewed said, *"They are prepared to ask questions"*, *"now there needs to be challenge"*, *"she worked with me to develop the monitoring role of the governors"*, *"business governors understand performance management and setting clear targets"* and *"she is in tune with what we need to do now"*.

Very high ratings indeed were given to the SGOSS Governors 'Challenging the leadership'. Also high ratings were given to 'Supporting the Head Teacher' and this was most valued by the Head Teachers themselves with a weighted average rating of 4.65 for the SGOSS Governors by the Head Teachers, with 5 being the maximum average score

possible. High values attributed to both challenge and support give affirmation to the 'critical friend' concept of governance.

Most significantly, these eight roles are the most central to the governance function. It is a point worthy of emphasis that schools value most highly the SGOSS Governors' contribution to the most important aspects of governance. The roles are the distillation of that 'Non-Executive Director' approach that provides the objective checks and balances for the Executive, while being supportive and committed. Many of the respondents asked for clarification of the term 'Non-Executive Director' in the interview, as it is not used in the Ofsted documentation¹³ and is not part of a shared vocabulary in education. As soon as a definition was offered, however, respondents were swift to acknowledge the relevance of this term to the role of their SGOSS Governor. *"Yes, yes, yes, that's exactly what I need my governors to be"*, said one Head Teacher. Other comments, characteristic of the Head Teacher opinions about the value of having governors who fulfil a type of 'Non-Executive Director' role, were, *"it's very useful*

¹³ Newly identified: by Ofsted in the inspection of schools documentation, Sept 2009 and updated in January 2010 (see Ofsted 2009 and 2010); by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) in the White Paper (June 2009); by Ed Balls the Secretary of State for Children Schools and Families in the accompanying letter to the White Paper and by the DCSF in '21st Century Schools: A World-Class Education for Every Child' (2008).

to have someone on the governing body outside of the school.” and “business governors are objective as they have no children at the school”.

Good practice for governors, relating to an emphasis on these roles, is set out in the National Governors’ Association Code of Conduct for School Governors 2010.

Table 4 below shows roles rated by the Head Teachers and Chairs to be of value, but slightly less so than the eight roles in Table 3, because the governors are not involved in these aspects to such an extent, as distinct from their being less valuable. Explanations for this slightly lesser involvement, given by the Head Teachers and the Chairs, were that the Head Teachers and the senior management team write the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF), analyse the school performance data and have the vision for the school. They then present this material to the governing body for discussion, so that the governors can ask searching questions, and as two Head Teachers said: “challenge assumptions” and “review”. The SGOSS

Governors themselves were clear that their role is, as one governor put it, “to support the Head, not to direct the staff”. The governors are then adopting challenging, monitoring, evaluating, holding to account, strategic and supporting roles, as in the previous ‘top roles’ in Table 3.

The more day-to-day roles are taken on by others: someone is usually paid to manage the school’s finances and then governors are given this key information for scrutiny. Visiting lessons and being involved in the life of the school are often taken on more regularly by parent governors who reside in the locality and so can be available frequently during the school day. Monitoring and responding to parental issues are usually carried out by the parent governors.

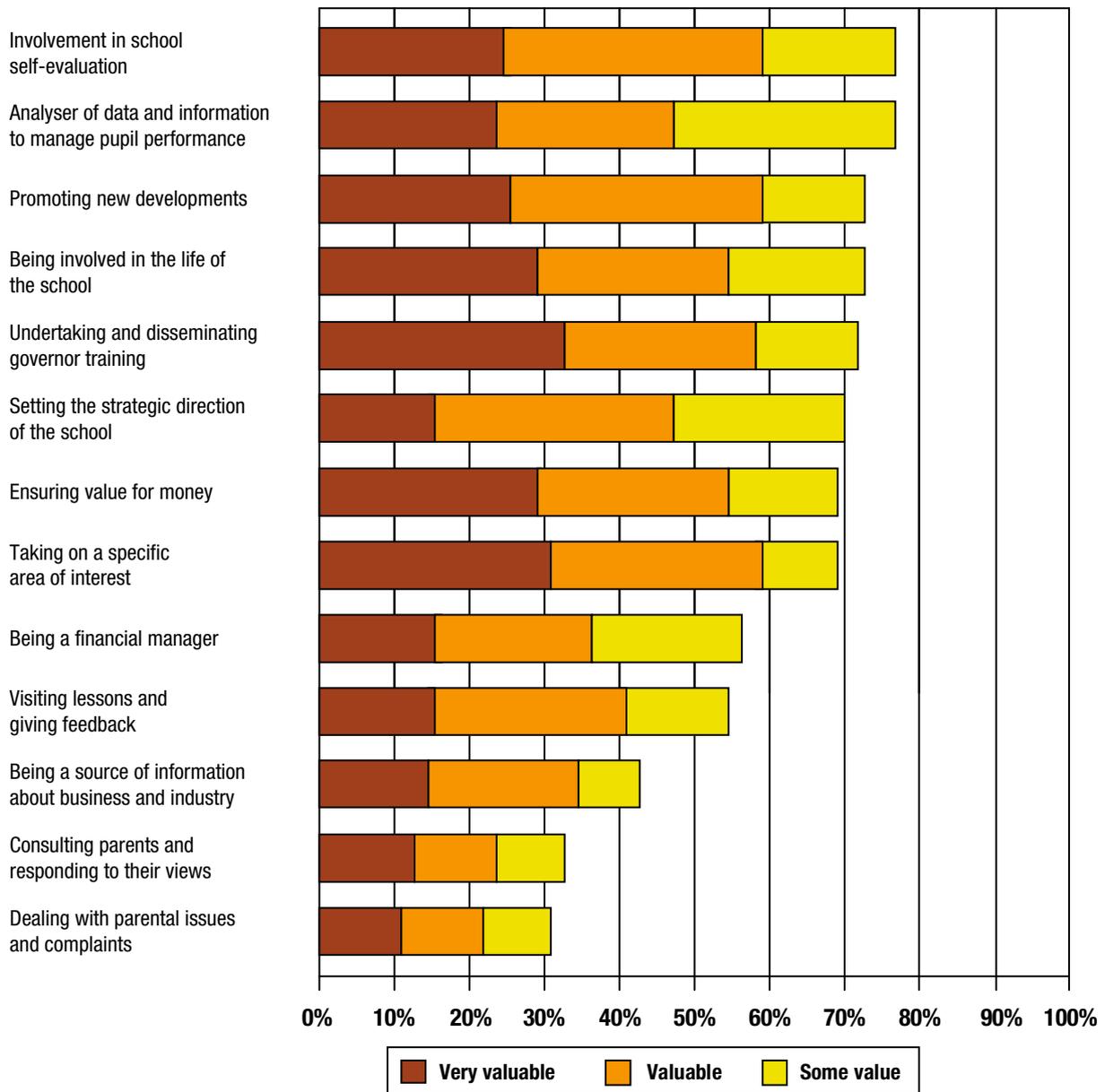
Therefore, the roles in this second group, while being important for the health of the school, may not be in the ‘challenge and monitoring and supporting’ dimension in quite the same way as those roles in Table 3.

Role rated by Head Teachers and Chairs combined	Very valuable % of SGOSS Governors	Valuable % of SGOSS Governors	Some value % of SGOSS Governors	Combined Very valuable, Valuable and Some value %
Involvement in school self-evaluation	25	34	18	77
Analysing data and information to manage pupil performance	23	25	29	77
Promoting new developments	26	33	14	73
Being involved in the life of the school	29	26	18	73
Undertaking and disseminating governor training	33	25	14	72
Setting the strategic direction of the school	16	31	23	70
Ensuring value for money	29	26	14	69
Taking on a specific area of interest	31	28	10	69
Being a financial manager	16	21	20	57
Visiting lessons and giving feedback	16	25	14	55
Being a source of information about business and industry	14	20	9	43
Consulting parents and responding to their views	13	11	9	33
Dealing with parental issues and complaints	11	11	10	32

Table 4 Roles in which SGOSS Governors also gave value, as judged by Head Teachers and Chairs.



Chart 3 Roles in which the SGOSS Governors also gave value, as judged by Head Teachers and Chairs



One significant difference between the data for secondary and for primary SGOSS Governors was that secondary governors were acknowledged as a source of information about business/industry/careers. Although overall only 43% of Head Teachers and Chairs rated SGOSS Governors highly in 'Being a source of information about business and industry', those governors serving in secondary schools were judged by their Head Teachers to have an

average rating of 4.5 (against a maximum of 5), whereas those in primary schools were given an average rating of only 3.89. The governors also rated themselves more highly on this item in secondary schools and perhaps this result is unsurprising in the context of older children being prepared for their next career step.



5.4 Attendance and Commitment (Questions 8 and 9)

Head Teachers and Chairs rated SGOSS Governors' Attendance and Commitment as, on average, at least 'Good', with the majority being rated as 'Excellent' in both respects.

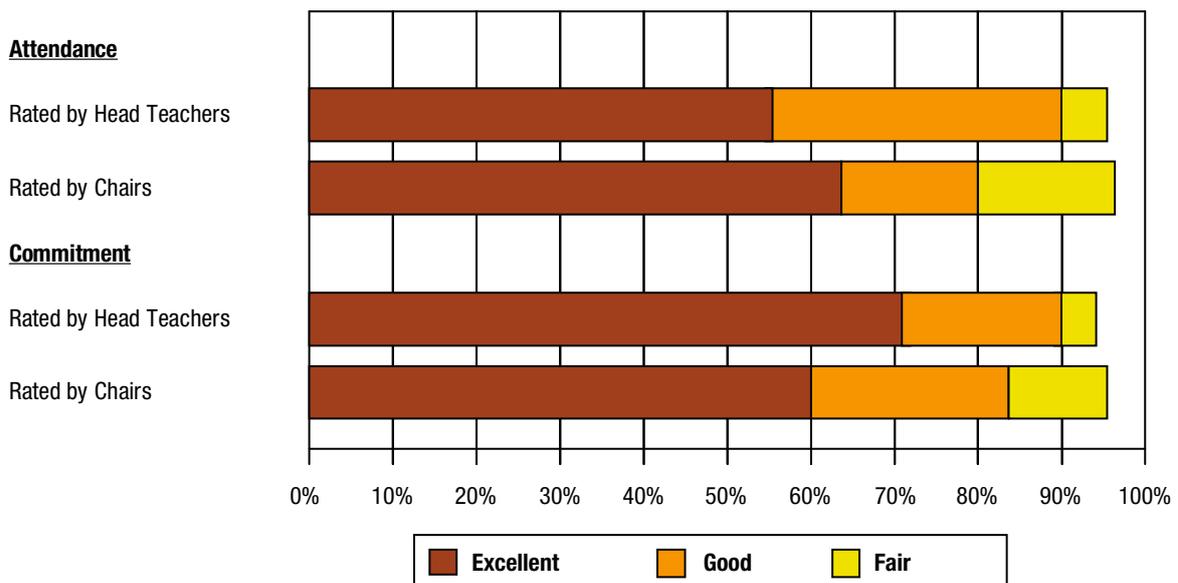
These findings confirm governors' own ratings. The higher 'Excellent' rating for 'Commitment' as opposed to

'Attendance' might be interpreted as the aspect of difficulty that full-time employees have in attending governing body meetings, when they are held during the working day. This interpretation was confirmed during interview. One Head Teacher said that he particularly valued that the SGOSS Governor was "*prepared to do the job*" and another that "*she is always there to back me up, is really reliable and does a fantastic job.*"

Attendance	Excellent %	Good %	Fair %	Combined Excellent, Good and Fair %	Mean score (5 max)
Head Teachers	56	34	6	96	4.40
Chairs	63	17	17	97	4.40
Head Teachers & Chairs	59	28	10	97	4.40
Commitment					
Head Teachers	72	18	4	94	4.54
Chairs	60	23	13	96	4.40
Head Teachers & Chairs	68	20	8	96	4.47

Table 5 Attendance and Commitment of SGOSS Governors, as rated by Heads and Chairs.

Chart 4 Attendance and Commitment of the SGOSS Governors, as rated by Head Teachers and Chairs

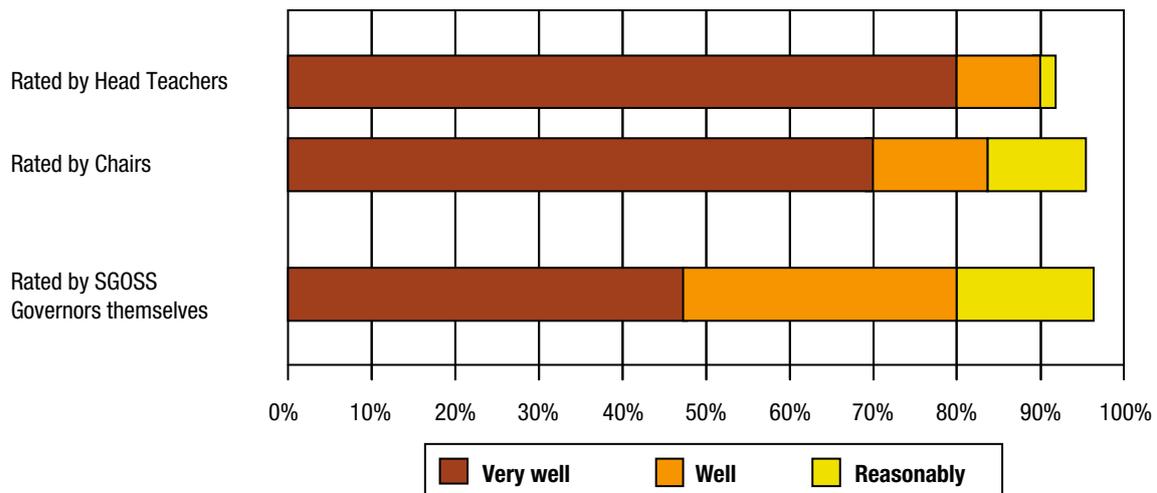




	Very well % of SGOSS Governors	Well % of SGOSS Governors	Combined Very well and Well	Mean score (5 max)
Head Teachers	80	10	90	4.62
Chairs	70	13	83	4.47
Head Teachers & Chairs	76	11	87	4.65

Table 6 Ability of SGOSS-recruited governors to integrate with the existing governing body members, as judged by the Head Teachers and Chairs.

Chart 5 Ability of the SGOSS Governors to integrate with the existing governing body members, as rated by Head Teachers and Chairs



5.5 Integration with others on the Governing Body (Question 10)

There may have been intimated in the past some sensitivities about how easily governors from business, with probably no direct links with the school prior to appointment, would integrate into their Governing Bodies. These data showed very little evidence for scepticism in this respect. 87% of Head Teachers and Chairs regarded the newly appointed SGOSS Governor as integrating “Well” or “Very well” into the existing governing body. It should be noted, however, that, in many cases, members of governing bodies did not know that the governors had been recruited from business by SGOSS, and indeed neither did the Head Teachers and Chairs in many cases (see section 5.10 of this report).

5.6 Overall effectiveness (Question 11)

A central aspect of the study was a comparison between the perceptions that SGOSS Governors had of their effectiveness with that of the Head Teachers and Chairs of their respective schools.

These data showed that while SGOSS Governors felt that they had made an effective contribution to governance, they rated that input at a lower value than did Head Teachers and Chairs. On average, SGOSS Governors gave themselves a weighted average of 3.80 level of effectiveness, (5 being the possible maximum) while Head Teachers and Chairs rated the SGOSS Governors’ overall effectiveness as 4.32 and 4.17 respectively.

	Very effective % of SGOSS Governors	Effective % of SGOSS Governors	Combined Very effective and Effective % of SGOSS Governors	Mean effectiveness rating of SGOSS Governors (5 max)
Head Teachers	56	30	86	4.32
Chairs	43	40	83	4.17
Head Teachers & Chairs	51	34	85	4.25
SGOSS Governors self-rating	15	55	70	3.80

Table 7 Judgements by Head Teachers and Chairs of the Effectiveness of SGOSS Governors.



Chart 6 Effectiveness of the SGOSS Governors, as rated by Head Teachers and Chairs

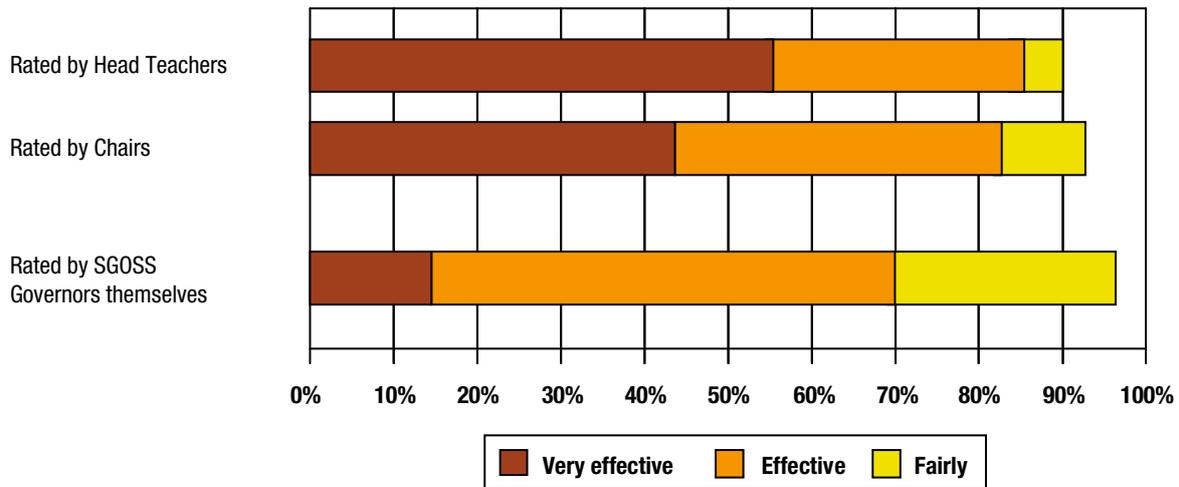


Table 7 shows that Head Teachers and Chairs combined rated 85% of their SGOSS Governors to be “Very effective” or “Effective” and that the average effectiveness rating of 4.25 for the SGOSS Governors was better than ‘Effective’.

By comparison, the SGOSS Governors rated themselves much more modestly, despite being urged during the interview to make a realistic assessment of the value of their own effectiveness. A reasonable interpretation is that motivated volunteers from business and industry do indeed undervalue the role that they can play as members of the governing body, while Head Teachers and Chairs are more acutely aware of how well these governors meet the current needs of the governing body.

5.7 Were SGOSS Governors, Head Teachers and Chairs surprised at the level of responsibility carried by school governing bodies? (Question 12)

The SGOSS Governors were, on average, only slightly surprised by the level of responsibility they were expected to carry, evidenced by the 1.85 average rating for this question, from a maximum of 3. Many of the SGOSS Governors said that they “*already knew*” about the responsibilities, “*were well briefed to start with*”, “*had done the research so knew what I was going into*”, it was “*like my job in business*” and so were not fazed by it. However, this did not mean that they were unaware of the level of responsibilities that they had undertaken to discharge and several remarked that this put even more significance on governors having “*skills to meet these responsibilities*” and it “*can exclude governors with non-academic backgrounds*”.

Head Teachers and Chairs, however, said they were very surprised by the responsibilities that governing bodies now have to carry, in the sense of considering such responsibilities and accountabilities to be unreasonable for a voluntary body. Head Teachers’ and Chairs’ ratings of their level of ‘surprise’ were 2.54 and 2.43 average responses respectively. They noted the impact of the Ofsted September 2009 Framework which included the grading of the governing body in the Leadership and Management section of the inspection. One Head Teacher said, “*There are twenty or more policies to write or update annually and governors are concerned about being graded. I am seriously worried that governors will leave because of the level of responsibility*”. Another said, “*the new Ofsted grading of governing bodies is unfair, there is too much accountability as unpaid volunteers*”. One Chair said that “*there was a huge expectation on the Chair and the Head*”, and this was the tenor of many such remarks made by Head Teachers and Chairs who also acknowledged that this had, unsurprisingly, increased their own workload recently.

5.8 Did SGOSS Governors, Head Teachers and Chairs feel that governors are ‘overloaded, that governance is overcomplicated and that governors are overlooked’? (Question 13)

The conclusions of the Balarin et al (2008) study, that governors were, “overloaded, overcomplicated and overlooked”, were mostly supported by this study. Almost all respondents agreed to some extent that governing bodies were overloaded and that governance was overcomplicated. Chairs of the governing bodies were particularly aggrieved and many mentioned such things as: “*the volume of paperwork*”,



“bureaucracy”, “CRB/ISA regulatory requirements”, “advice from the local authority—quantity and lack of clarity” and “endless policy updating” as reasons for this. Amongst the most frequently mentioned complications in governance were: “the use of data”, “the procurement of services through the local authority”, “eduspeak acronyms” and “financial management of schools”. “The government expects too much of willing volunteers” was one Chair’s opinion that was echoed by many others. One Head Teacher said, “documents are too complicated for many governors” and another “it depends on how skilled the governors are and the range of expertise on the governing body”. A Head Teacher of a larger school said that there is “no point in having fifteen governors if only five do the work” and another Head Teacher similarly said that “the load is very uneven on governing body members”. Both of these responses have in common the fact that sometimes there are “passengers” on governing bodies because of limitations in skills, commitment or time.

Several Head Teachers made points such as: “If the Head and Chair manage the task effectively, then it is manageable”. Another Chair said, “A good head demystifies things”. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the greater responsibilities now carried by the governing body as a whole had put a greater workload onto the Head Teachers and Chairs in particular, as indicated in section 5.7 of this report.

A total of 29 Heads, Chairs and SGOSS Governors emphasised the importance of having a skilled, trained and regular Clerk who knew what was required and would organise the paperwork and take good minutes. “The Clerk is crucial – makes information accessible and straightforward, keeps minutes and an audit trail of paperwork and filters information.” It emerged that clerking provision supplied by local authorities was often inconsistent (clerks of varying skill levels, a clerk not always available to attend meetings, different clerks sent to a school so loss of continuity) and so some governing bodies paid for a clerk from elsewhere so that they could be assured of regular support and consistency.

One critical issue with respect to workload related to small primary schools. Many of the tasks, both statutory and regulatory, required by governing bodies, are mandatory, irrespective of the size of the school. As one Chair said, “Small primary schools have smaller governing bodies and they have to do the same work. Parents often find the tasks beyond them, so the onus falls on a small number of governors with the appropriate skills.” A Head Teacher said that “small primaries have a similar bureau-

cratic workload to secondaries”. Two SGOSS Governors remarked that, “There was no recognition of small school resources” while a third said, “primary school governors tend to be overloaded as in smaller schools there are fewer people with expertise in support of the management of the school, and there is less funding to pay for a bursar, so the Head Teacher calls on the governors to do more.” It should be noted that the primary school SGOSS Governors in this study had undertaken more responsible tasks than those in the secondary schools (see Chart 1) and that these tasks carried with them greater responsibilities and accountability.

There was an almost unanimous response from the SGOSS Governors that they did not themselves feel overloaded in their schools and that “the Head and secretary made all the difference to you feeling valued when you arrive at the school”, “the Head raises the profile of the governors” and that “if you are valued in your own school that’s all that matters”. However, there was recognition by most SGOSS Governors, Head Teachers and Chairs that, nationally, governors are “taken for granted by the government”, there was “little support from the LA”¹⁵, and “most members of the public would have no idea what governors have to do”.

5.9 Suggested Changes to the Recruitment/Appointment/Election of school governors (Question 14)

The interview schedule sought suggestions regarding the process whereby individuals became school governors. The most frequently-given opinions expressed are grouped thematically in this section. Direct quotations from the respondents are used to give a flavour of those opinions.

5.9(i) Skills-based governors

The recruitment of skills-based governors seems to be the main focus of change that Head Teachers and Chairs would see as a significant improvement. This was reported by 30 respondents. As one Chair put it, “Skills, Skills, Skills”. One Head Teacher said that the answer to the question ‘Are Governing Bodies overloaded and is governance over complicated’ entirely depended on “how skilled the governors are and the range of expertise on the Governing Body. It’s quality not quantity in governors that’s the key”.

Another Head Teacher summed up the current position as far as he was concerned, “Governors need to understand

¹⁵ LA = local authority, formerly known as ‘local education authority’.



educational details now and not just be 'supporters'. We can't expect parents from deprived areas to understand at a high level complicated data that needs to be processed. Governors need to work SMARTER¹⁶ in the current climate of responsibility, and where LAs hold them responsible for Health and Safety, for example". This focus does not necessarily mean that governors with appropriate skills can't also be representatives of the stakeholder groups in the school, but the inflexibilities of the categories of governor do, at the moment, limit the Head Teachers and Chairs from appointing governors to fill key skills gaps and respondents said that the representational roles were unclear.

27 respondents said that there is a need to audit Governing Body members for skills, to be able to fill the gaps to avoid disparities between schools. It is especially important to recruit governors to fill the skills and experience gaps in deprived areas where '*Professionals*' contributions are very valuable. "*Professionals are needed in deprived areas*" (SGOSS Governor).

5.9(ii) Governor categories

While it was recognised by three Head Teachers that parent governors might have more time and commitment, this was balanced by a number of Head Teachers/Chairs noting the limitations in the objectivity of current parents as governors, as parents can "*have a personal agenda and act as a 'crusader' for 'my child'*", and may have an "*emotional attachment to individualised issues*". Several respondents said that some parents, "*may try to micro-manage details in the school*". Additionally, a number of Head Teachers and Chairs said bitterly how difficult it was to elect parents when the catchment area did not seem to contain people who were able or willing to serve; this left the governing body short of governors and at a disadvantage compared with schools in more affluent areas where parents were not only willing and ready to serve as governors, but who also often possessed key skills.

In any event, it was suggested that former parents with skills are best because they carry no agenda but know and are committed to the school, while potentially being chosen because they have the skills that can contribute to the effective operation of the governing body.

There was some criticism of local authority governors. A significant number of respondents, particularly Chairs, felt that LA appointments were "*foisted*" on them. One Head Teacher said, "*They often leave early or don't attend*". Governance should be "*party neutral*" was the way

one experienced Chair summed this up.

25 respondents commented on the value of governors coming from the community as they were able to be objective and have no vested interest in groups within the school in any way. A further 10 respondents felt that the energy and motivation coming from outside of those immediately involved with the school was a "*breath of fresh air*".

The prevailing opinion of respondents can be summed up by saying that the representational roles of governors are perceived to be unclear, except for those of parents and school staff; they often seem to be interchangeable for local authority, community and partnership. Because there are categories of governor, however, this limits the freedom to recruit skilled governors as they have to fit into pre-defined pockets. It would be helpful to relax this regulation and take a skills-based approach to governor appointment where possible.

5.9(iii) Induction and training

A significant number of respondents felt strongly that induction needs to happen BEFORE appointment to acclimatise governors to the tasks and responsibilities they will need to take on and to deter anyone who may not be able to make the commitment. Members of this group also espoused the view that there should be a standard induction pack as a 'crash course' in education before appointment. Some Head Teachers and Chairs talked about the value of outlining clearly the roles that school governors should take on and of discussing these parameters with their governing body at the beginning of the year to establish the demarcation of roles and duties, rather than expecting governors to know this automatically.

23 respondents considered that training for governors should be compulsory, as with other public service roles. Particular areas for training mentioned were: time management, the significance of the minutes of meetings, Early Years Foundation Stage, reporting and Ofsted. There was general dissatisfaction with the training available mainly because it was too generalised and slow-paced. Several Head Teachers mentioned their preference for whole governing body training in-house, while SGOSS Governors also said that training packages on-line would be very helpful, plus an on-line update bulletin of governing body tasks for each term.

There was considerable support for mandatory training for Chairs, particularly on running meetings and set-

16 SMARTER an acronym usually meaning Specific Measurable Attainable Realistic Time-related Evaluated Reviewable or similar variations of this.



ting action points. There were numerous remarks about “*Meetings too long*” and “*Agendas too detailed*”. As one respondent put it, “*a trained Chair is essential as weak schools often have weak Chairs*”. Two Chairs said that chairing a Governing Body was like another career, which links well with the suggestion made by some governors that the governance of schools could become an accredited professional qualification, especially for Chairs.

5.9(iv) Advertising/Marketing for school governors

26 respondents suggested that the recruitment of governors could be improved by more targeted advertising. Generally the benefits of becoming a school governor could be promoted nationally and the work of governors could be better explained so that people understand what governors do (see section 5.8). Additionally, answers to question 15 revealed that the majority of Head Teachers and Chairs were unaware of the SGOSS, until this research interview (see section 5.10 for further details).

5.9(v) Human Resource issues

21 respondents said that the appointment of governors should be a more transparent and systematically managed procedure, common to the appointment of applicants for paid posts. This procedure should include governors being interviewed to determine their suitability, a CV should be automatically provided and there should always be a tour of the school before appointment. One SGOSS Governor said, “*it stuns me everyday ... there is no compulsory training, no interview, the LA hardly talks about governors*” and a Head Teacher said, “*We need HR processes to ape the increased care in the appointment of staff*”. The lack of HR procedures in the appointment of school governors implies an absence of any formal scrutiny of applicants (apart from child protection checks). Some respondents have said that schools were: “*pleased to get anyone*”, but “*anyone*” does not necessarily have the skills and competencies required to govern a school. As the task becomes more and more onerous, and more rigorously inspected, the need to recruit governors skilled in governance becomes commensurately urgent.

5.9(vi) Chairs

There was some focus on the role of Chair of the governing body, not only on training, as in 5.9(iii), but about tenure of office. Respondents from the SGOSS Governors and the Chairs themselves said that two terms of office (8 years) and one governor said one term of office only, should be

the maximum, as being in post for too long can lead to proceedings becoming “*cosy*” or “*partisan*” or “*exclusive*”. Chairs can become “*despotic*” or “*entrenched*”. It was emphasised that “*blind*” elections should be a requirement; three governors had experienced the re-election of Chairs “*on the nod*” during a full Governing Body meeting where it was very difficult for anyone to challenge the re-appointment without giving offence. Four Chairs thought that they should be paid an honorarium.

5.9(vii) Clerking

29 respondents spoke of the immense importance of the Clerk of the governing body to manage the documentation, know many of the rules and regulations, and provide a helpful preparation for meetings to reduce the workload for the Head Teacher, Chair and senior management team. Clerking was presented as an issue where improvements could be made, because, despite the legal requirement for a paid clerk, and for which the school is obliged to pay out of its own budget, Head Teachers who had served in different authorities had experienced very different levels of clerking support. Poor practice was evinced by: a local authority clerk not always being available for all governing body meetings and schools having to make their own arrangements for the remaining meetings; sometimes a different clerk being sent, so there were problems of continuity in minute taking and understanding of the issues; clerks sent by the local authority having only basic minute-taking skills, rather than knowing the legal requirements so that they would be able to give clear and helpful advice. In order to obviate these problems, some Head Teachers had made arrangements to employ a regular clerk from within the school or someone outside of the school with the necessary skills and availability. Given that the work done by the Clerk is very significant in contributing to the Leadership and Management grading of the school by Ofsted, it seems reasonable that schools should expect equal provision in this respect.

5.9(viii) Expenses for governors

In addition to those who suggested honoraria for Chairs, 18 respondents observed that no governors claimed expenses because they felt embarrassed to do so; they felt very guilty about “*robbing*” the school of its funding. These respondents considered that nominal expenses should be paid to governors as a set sum by the government. There was very little support for remunerating governors, indeed one respondent said, “*If I were getting paid for this, I wouldn't do it*”.



5.10 Would Head Teachers and Chairs approach the SGOSS again for a governor to fill an appropriate vacancy? (Question 15)

100% of Head Teachers and Chairs said 'yes' they would welcome the recruitment of a governor via the SGOSS.

This question also revealed interesting additional information. Many of both the Head Teachers and Chairs were not aware, until the research had brought it to their attention, that the governor in question had been recruited by the SGOSS. Because, in most cases, the governor had been channelled to the school by the local authority, both Head Teachers and Chairs assumed that the governor had been recruited by the local authority and the conclusion drawn was that the governor was, therefore, a political appointment. This impression was cemented by the fact that the governor was appointed in some cases into a local authority designated place on the governing body. One of the SGOSS Governors remarked on his particular appointment to his school that, "*The LA ... took a long time and kept SGOSS volunteers to fill the LA vacancies*". The SGOSS had undertaken to provide governors for any designated category of governor, with the proviso that the political affiliation was waived. However, in many cases schools had not been briefed about this. One Head Teacher said, "*It has made a massive difference to know that the governor was recruited through the SGOSS. We thought he was an LA person. For the future I'd like to go to SGOSS-Direct.*" It was not part of the interview schedule to ask if Head Teachers and Chairs would prefer to approach SGOSS directly for volunteers to fill governor vacancies, as it had not been identified as an issue un-

til the research study was underway. Despite this, however, 45 Head Teachers and Chairs said, unprompted, that they would definitely prefer to approach SGOSS directly. "*It is a big advantage for Heads to communicate with SGOSS directly about their governor needs.*"

A further result of this lack of information was that Head Teachers and Chairs had not seen the SGOSS skills audit information about the volunteer and so had not been able to use this to inform the governor's deployment. One Head Teacher, with a view representative of many, said, "*I would like more governors via the SGOSS route as they are better at recruiting the relevant skills*".

Additionally, 12 Head Teachers and Chairs said how important it is for the future to audit the skills present on their governing bodies and 14 said that they would like to be able to recruit governors to fill the skills' gaps and SGOSS provided that service.

Although not set as a question, over half the SGOSS Governors said they would definitely approach the SGOSS if they wanted to offer themselves as a governor again and had no other link to a school. Several governors said that they were pleased that the SGOSS was following up on how they were getting on and this continuing dialogue through the research study was appreciated.

5.11 Additional Information

All additional information given by interviewees has been incorporated elsewhere in this report.



6. CONCLUSIONS (C) AND RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

6.1 SGOSS Governors' effectiveness

C1 SGOSS Governors are particularly valued for their effectiveness by their Head Teachers and Chairs in the following ways:

- They take on roles that are central to the governance function that is now required: challenging the leadership, monitoring and evaluating, getting to know the strengths and areas for development of the school, holding the leadership to account, being involved in school improvement planning and in summary, acting as a 'Non-Executive Director'.
- They possess the range of skills that all the respondents in this research acknowledged as being of immense importance in fulfilling the significant roles listed above, and without which governors are likely to be of limited value. Head Teachers and Chairs say that having the necessary skills is one of the most, if not the most, important factor in governors being effective for the school in the current climate of responsibilities and accountabilities for the governing body.
- Their effectiveness, commitment, attendance and integration were rated highly by Head Teachers and Chairs.
- Many SGOSS Governors had already become Chairs of their governing bodies, Vice Chairs or Chairs of committees. They had also taken on other significant tasks such as the Head Teacher's performance review and serving on staff appointment panels.
- Head Teachers themselves particularly valued the SGOSS Governors' support.
- All Head Teachers and Chairs of the governing bodies said they would like another SGOSS Governor if they were looking to fill an appropriate vacancy.

R1 **The School Governors' One-Stop Shop should continue its work nationally in recruiting volunteers from business and industry and the professions to become school governors.**

6.2 'SGOSS-Direct'

C2 The majority of Head Teachers and Chairs said that it would be much more efficient and effective for them to liaise with the SGOSS directly to request volunteer governors, as they could then be more actively involved in the appointment and have access to the SGOSS skills' audit information that would inform the most effective deployment of the governor. Many Head Teachers and Chairs had not known that the governor had been recruited via SGOSS; they said that the research had raised the profile of the SGOSS as a powerful, "*politically neutral*" recruitment service.

R2 **The SGOSS to expand the option of an 'SGOSS – Direct' process, by which schools can approach the SGOSS directly for governors. This would be a key step towards marketing themselves more visibly to schools.**

6.3 SGOSS Governors in primary schools

C3 One significant finding shown by these data for primary schools is that more of the SGOSS Governors undertook more responsible tasks on their governing bodies (Chair of the governing body, Chair of a committee, appointing staff, being on the Head's Performance Review panel). Also, Head Teachers said that small primary schools in particular, with smaller governing bodies, have fewer governors (and possibly fewer skilled governors) who can fulfil the governing body roles effectively.

R3 **It is important to recognise the very considerable contribution that SGOSS-governors can make in primary schools. SGOSS should emphasise the fact that those volunteers are disproportionately valued by Heads and Chairs in the primary sector where there may be insufficient expertise of the type that SGOSS-governors can bring.**

6.4 Skills-based governors

C4 Numerous respondents in this study have urged the need for the governing body to contain the necessary skills to function in an increasingly complex governance environment. Because SGOSS Governors usually possess many of these skills, it has been highlighted through their governorship that such governors are crucial to the



effectiveness of the governing body. Understanding the financial management standard in schools (FMSIS), for example, requires a degree of financial sophistication. One respondent asked rhetorically, “How can a Governing Body operate without at least one accountant?”. RAISE¹⁷ On-Line data about pupil performance is also complicated. Both of these aspects of school performance are now part of the detailed picture that governors must interrogate, monitor and evaluate. Added to which the governing body will be judged by Ofsted on their effectiveness and will be graded. Belarin et al’s (2008) recommendation has been met in full: ‘The inspection of school governing bodies should be strengthened. Evaluation criteria for the performance of school governing bodies as recorded in the school self evaluation form should be enhanced. The involvement of the governing body in inspections should be mandatory’ (page 6).

The result of these significantly increased governing body accountabilities, effected by recommendations and then legislation, while enhancing the role and potential effectiveness of the governing body, has undermined the stakeholder model of governance. The existing model of school governance in England and Wales is based on the so-called stakeholder principle of democratic representation. Its legitimacy is derived from the need to represent the community in which the school is located; the school is a community resource, subject to the community ‘voice’. This has legitimated the democratic representation of parents, school staff, the local authority, the community, and the school’s Foundation where applicable. This was an equitable and effective model of governance.

We are now in a position, as evidenced by the findings of this research study, where Head Teachers and Chairs need, and will actively recruit where possible, governors who can meet the increased expectations and be able to dispatch their more onerous and complex roles. Boundaries of the stakeholder groups have become indistinct and purposely blurred when this facilitates the recruitment of a governor with sought after skills. “*Skills, skills, skills*”, is, arguably, the only way that governing bodies will achieve effectively this step change in their role since September 2009. If this is not effected, then instead of governing body meetings being opportunities for governors to challenge and support the ‘executive’ and hold them to account, they will be little more than opportunities for the Head Teacher and senior staff to explain to governors what is happening.

R4 SGOSS should continue to recruit volunteers from business and industry with these crucial skills. There

is, in the longer term for government, a need for continued debate about the relative merits of the ‘stakeholder’ and ‘skills-based’ models of governance. If the former is to be retained, measures must be in place to ensure, as far as possible, that the essential skills for effective governance can be found within the school governing body.

6.5 Levels of responsibility and workload

C5 SGOSS Governors were not surprised by the levels of responsibility they had to carry as they were used to functioning at this level in their paid work and had researched what was involved in being a governor. Head Teachers and Chairs, however, felt that the levels of responsibility that governors had to take on were too heavy and had increased significantly since the changes in the Ofsted Framework for Inspection in September 2009.

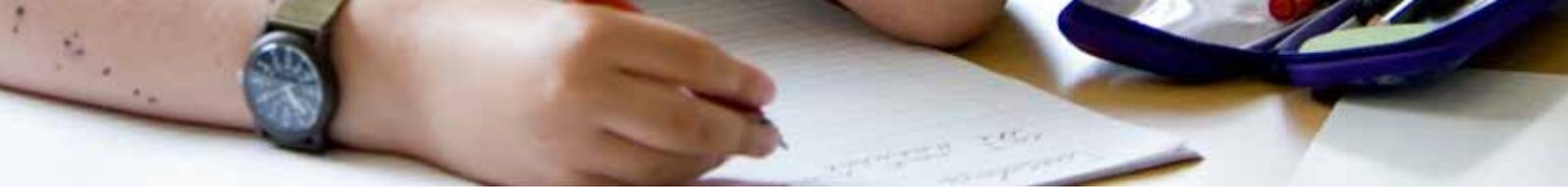
Most respondents considered that, to some extent, governors were overloaded and that governance was overcomplicated, but the degree to which this was the case depended upon the skills possessed by the governors themselves, the effectiveness with which the Head Teacher and the Chair managed the flow of information, the Chair’s management of the processes of the governing body and the level of support given by the Clerk.

There was considerable agreement about the immense importance of the Clerk in supporting the governing body, both by reducing and managing the workload and providing information and advice. There was also agreement that there was marked variability in clerking provision. This variability impacted directly on the level of effectiveness that the governing body could display and had an impact on the way the Leadership and Management of the school might be judged by Ofsted.

There was firm agreement from a significant group of respondents that there should be a maximum length of office, probably 2 terms (8 years) for the Chair of governors in order to give the governing body the chance to refresh its approaches and to avoid outdated or ineffective practices becoming entrenched.

No SGOSS Governor felt that s/he was overlooked by her/his school and many said that being valued by the Head Teacher, staff and other governors was the important factor in wanting to continue to do the work, despite the fact that governors seem to be taken for granted nationally and the extent and significance of their work undervalued by the general public. Many also said that they would

17 RAISE On-line = Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through School Self-Evaluation



approach the SGOSS if they wanted to offer themselves as a governor again.

R5 Again, the recommendation is that the SGOSS should continue to recruit volunteers from business and industry who are able to cope well with the workload and levels of responsibility that are now part of the governors' role.

Also, consideration should be given to:

- making training for Chairs compulsory;
- producing guidance that sets out best practice for Chairs' length of service and includes guidance on succession planning and the appointment of Chairs;
- how schools can receive equality of clerking provision in order to avoid some schools being disadvantaged;
- raising the status of governors nationally.

6.6 The process of recruiting and appointing governors

C6 There was a significant level of surprise and concern expressed by all respondents regarding the absence of "normal" human resource procedures in the appointment of school governors. The absence of application forms, interviews, scrutiny of CVs, and tours of the school, were all noted in unflattering comparison with standard employment practice. Prior exposure to, and knowledge of the Nolan Principles, for example, should be automatic for someone taking up what is, in effect, a public office. One Head Teacher said that she, "*had no say in who she got*

as a governor", and others referred to this predicament in the context of wishing that induction could be given to governors before appointment in order to deter those without the commitment, skills or mind-set for the role.

R6 Applications, CVs, interviews and school tours should be an integral part of the recruitment process for governors. Where SGOSS volunteers are channelled to schools by local authorities, it would be helpful if the information gathered by the SGOSS could be made available to Head Teachers and Chairs of governors before the volunteers' first visits to schools. An explanation of the local authority's position on political affiliation for the appointment would also be helpful.

6.7 Induction and training of governors

C4 It was considered strange that training was not a mandatory aspect of fulfilling this public service role and that the training that was available was very varied in its applicability both between and within providers. There was considerable agreement that standardised induction should take place before appointment and that thereafter undertaking training and updates should be expected or required. Training and updating for Chairs was considered particularly crucial for the effective management of the governing body.

R7 The significant support among the interviewees for increased training, which is reflected in the direction of the 21st Century Schools White Paper (DCSF, June 2009), should be highlighted by all interested parties. SGOSS itself could include in its future briefing materials and regular governor communications an emphasis on the importance of training and updating.

A photograph of a whiteboard with the handwritten equation $18 \times 12 =$ in black marker. The board is slightly out of focus, and the background shows a blue wall.

7. REFERENCES

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8. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Interview Schedule

SGOSS Governor Survey 2010

Interview Schedule

1. Name:
2. School:
3. Phase: Primary Secondary
4. Position: Governor Length of service (governors only) Chair Head
5. How would you describe your profession/professional expertise? (governors only)
6. Have you (s/he) performed a specific task within the SGB?

Exclusion panel member	Head's Performance Review
Chair of GB	Appointing School staff
Vice-Chair of GB	Pay Review panel member
Chair of a Committee	Taking an area of responsibility e.g. gov for special needs / literacy...
Helping to write the school development / improvement plan	Leading a Project
Other	

7. What specific roles do you think you (s/he has) have undertaken within the GB and how valuable have they been?

	Very Valuable	Valuable	Some Value	Little Value	No Value
Analysing of data & information to manage pupil performance					
Involvement in school self-evaluation e.g. SEF					
Visiting lessons and giving feedback					
Getting to know the strengths and areas for development of the school					
Involvement in school improvement planning e.g. SDP/setting targets (SMART)/setting priorities					
Monitoring and evaluating school improvement plans and targets					
Challenging the school leadership as a critical friend to effect improvements for pupils					
Challenging the school leadership as a critical friend to ensure that all pupils' needs are met					



Holding the leadership to account for the performance of the school					
Setting the strategic direction of the school					
Promoting new developments					
“Non-Executive Director” (strategic/questioning)					
Supporting the Head Teacher and school leaders					
Ensuring value for money					
Financial Manager					
Dealing with parental issues and complaints					
Consulting parents and responding to their views.					
Being involved in the life of the school					
Taking on a specific area of interest e.g. subject area/year group					
Undertaking governor training and disseminating to the GB					
Source of information about Business/Industry/ Careers					
Other...					

8. How would you rate your (his/her) attendance at governing body meetings?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Limited	Poor
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9. How would you rate your (his/her) commitment to the school governing body?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Limited	Poor
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10. How well did you (he/she) as the SGOSS-recruited governor integrate with the rest of the group?

Very well	Well	Reasonably well	Partly	Poorly
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If partly/poorly, Why?

11. What overall rating would you give to your (his/her) effectiveness as a school governor?

Very effective	Effective	Fairly effective	Slightly effective	Ineffective
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12. To what extent were you surprised by the level of responsibility carried by school governing bodies?

Very surprised	Surprised	Not surprised
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13. A recent review of school governance concluded that School Governing Bodies were “overloaded, overcomplicated and overlooked”. To what extent would you support this general conclusion?

Fully agree	Partly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Partly disagree	Fully disagree
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Expansion of answer...



14. If you could propose three changes to the way school governors are recruited/elected/nominated, what would they be?

1.

2.

3.

15. If you had another suitable vacancy, would you recruit a governor from the SGOSS again? (Head and Chair only)

Yes

No

If no, Why?

16. Any additional information you would wish to give.

NB In all cases the “you”/s/he in each question refers to the school governor recruited by the SGOSS.

Appendix 2 - Summary tables of results for questions 7–11

Question 7 Specific roles and value

	Heads & Chairs only						Governors only					
	Very valuable		Valuable		Some value		Very valuable		Valuable		Some value	
Analysing data and info to manage pupil performance	18	23%	20	25%	23	29%	9	15%	21	35%	17	28%
Involvement in school self-evaluation	20	25%	27	34%	14	18%	7	12%	25	42%	13	22%
Visiting lessons and giving feedback	13	16%	20	25%	11	14%	10	17%	16	27%	13	22%
Getting to know strengths and development areas	32	40%	29	36%	9	11%	23	38%	20	33%	13	22%
Involvement in school improvement planning	23	29%	32	40%	10	13%	12	20%	30	50%	6	10%
Monitoring and evaluating school improvement plans	21	26%	35	44%	14	18%	11	18%	30	50%	8	13%
Challenging the leadership for improvements for pupils	38	48%	23	29%	12	15%	20	33%	19	32%	15	25%
Challenging the leadership to ensure pupils needs are met	40	50%	21	26%	12	15%	29	48%	12	20%	10	17%
Holding leadership to account for performance of school	33	41%	26	33%	9	11%	17	28%	23	38%	14	23%
Setting strategic direction	13	16%	25	31%	18	23%	9	15%	18	30%	20	33%
Promoting new developments	21	26%	26	33%	11	14%	11	18%	19	32%	16	27%
"Non-Executive Director"	30	38%	28	35%	6	8%	17	28%	26	43%	7	12%
Supporting Headteacher	45	56%	21	26%	3	4%	24	40%	25	42%	7	12%
Ensuring value for money	23	29%	21	26%	11	14%	15	25%	14	23%	15	25%
Financial manager	13	16%	17	21%	16	20%	7	12%	11	18%	15	25%
Dealing with parental issues and complaints	9	11%	9	11%	8	10%	8	13%	15	25%	9	15%
Consulting parents and responding to their views	10	13%	9	11%	7	9%	9	15%	6	10%	8	13%
Being involved in the life of the school	23	29%	21	26%	14	18%	16	27%	13	22%	19	32%
Taking a specific area of interest	25	31%	22	28%	8	10%	17	28%	20	33%	9	15%
Undertaking Governor training	26	33%	20	25%	11	14%	16	27%	13	22%	12	20%
Source of info about business/industry/careers	11	14%	16	20%	7	9%	4	7%	19	32%	6	10%
Other	1	1%	2	3%	0	0%	1	2%	6	10%	0	0%

Question 8 Attendance

	Excellent		Good		Fair		Limited		Poor	
Heads	28	56%	17	34%	3	6%	1	2%	1	2%
Chairs	19	63%	5	17%	5	17%	1	3%	0	0%
Heads & Chairs	47	59%	22	28%	8	10%	2	3%	1	1%
Governors	36	60%	19	32%	3	5%	2	3%	0	0%
All	83	59%	41	29%	11	8%	4	3%	1	1%



Question 9 Commitment

	Excellent		Good		Fair		Limited		Poor	
Heads	36	72%	9	18%	2	4%	2	4%	1	2%
Chairs	18	60%	7	23%	4	13%	1	3%	0	0%
Heads & Chairs	54	68%	16	20%	6	8%	3	4%	1	1%
Governors	33	55%	24	40%	2	3%	1	2%	0	0%
All	87	62%	40	29%	8	6%	4	3%	1	1%

Question 10 Integration

	Very well		Well		Reasonably		Partly		Poor	
Heads	40	80%	5	10%	1	2%	4	8%	0	0%
Chairs	21	70%	4	13%	4	13%	0	0%	1	3%
Heads & Chairs	61	76%	9	11%	5	6%	4	5%	1	1%
Governors	29	48%	19	32%	10	17%	1	2%	1	2%
All	90	64%	28	20%	15	11%	5	4%	2	1%

Question 11 Overall effectiveness rating

	Very		Effective		Fairly		Slightly		Ineffective	
Heads	28	56%	15	30%	2	4%	5	10%	0	0%
Chairs	13	43%	12	40%	3	10%	1	3%	1	3%
Heads & Chairs	41	51%	27	34%	5	6%	6	8%	1	1%
Governors	9	15%	33	55%	16	27%	1	2%	1	2%
All	50	36%	60	43%	21	15%	7	5%	2	1%

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