GOVERNANCE4FE

EXTERNAL REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE

STANMORE COLLEGE

26TH SEPTEMBER 2023

Contents

OVERVIEW

Board Review: art or science? Qualitative or quantitative? Compliance approval or forward looking? The reality is that Board Reviews are evolving rapidly. It is all the above and today there is no standard experience common across all boardrooms, though they are increasingly focused on:

(i)   deriving meaningful insights on key issues and

(ii)   using the recommendations and findings to align the Board and Executive and increase effectiveness

Every Board – however experienced - can increase its effectiveness and this review, through collaborative diagnosis between the reviewer, governors, and management, has sought to identify areas of effectiveness that can be built upon to deliver a greater maturity of governance. The follow up presentation and discussion with the Board is a key component to increasing effectiveness, as is our on-going support, guidance, and being a sounding board, during the months following the Review.

Of course, the Board Review should provide comfort that the Board is alert to its duties and diligent in the performance of those duties. This is critically important for stakeholders, in particular our funders and regulators. In addition, the Review has considered how the Board is helping the organisation to achieve its purpose. At Governance4FE, we are pleased to be tailoring our Board Review to shine a light on this key question and provide recommendations and a pathway as to how the Board can increase its effectiveness and value contribution.

Framework

The GREAT framework is developed on an evidence base gained over three decades of working with multiple boards, alongside academic study. We work in accordance with the DfE's current guidance on External Governance Reviews and the Chartered Governance Institute's Code of Practice for board reviewers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF REVIEW OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Within the overall review of the Board's effectiveness, this report shows a picture of an appropriate governance function at Stanmore college, increasingly enabling the Board to address the challenges of their sector. This summary of review outcomes should be read in conjunction with the full report as the report contains important contextual information, rationale, and evidence for all the recommendations made. The review considered the Board's effectiveness and governance maturity across the 5 principal areas.

GOVERNANCE ROLES & STRUCTURES

The Governance Professional has collaborated closely with a National Leader of Governance to ensure governance structures and processes are appropriate, and statutory and regulatory compliance is being met. Roles and responsibilities are set out clearly in documentation and could be further clarified through the issuing of a Letter of Engagement to board members, and as part of a personalised induction program.

RELATIONSHIPS

There is a satisfactory level of candour and mutual respect between governors and between governors and the senior team. More opportunities for social interaction between governors and between governors and the Executive will continue to support relationships built on trust and openness. The Board seeks engagement with all stakeholders and wishes to see this element of the role increase, enabling greater triangulation of executive information and more understanding of the implications of discussions and decisions on stakeholders.

ENABLING

Board members, which include a number of new members, are growing in confidence in their role as critical friend, providing constructive challenge. Members are committed and are keen to participate and feel appreciated. Members feel able to contribute freely and willingly to discussions in meetings. More detail in executive reports on the decision-making process underlying presented recommendations and actions, including implications on stakeholders and on the achievement of the strategic objectives, could give board members greater confidence in the decisions they make.

ALIGNMENT

The Board has been engaged in strategic planning discussions, agreeing the vision, values, and ethos of the college, and reviews risks on a regular basis. Expanding the governors strategic role to include a more generative mode of governance, could strengthen the Board's alignment behind the strategy. As the Board becomes more familiar with the Local Skills Improvement Plan and the college's Accountability Agreement, it should gain a deeper understanding of local skills need, both immediate and future, and how the college's curriculum plan aligns with this.

TEAM

The Board has sought to recruit members with diversity of skills, expertise, and thought, to bring different perspectives to discussions and decisions. Setting out a detailed strategy/principles/KPIs for greater diversity and inclusion at Board level could support this work further. Board members understand how their skills and expertise are relevant to the college's work and are committed to improving governance. Succession planning for both the Executive and the Board could be more formal as this is a key risk area, and therefore requires greater clarity. Using exit interviews is a fantastic way to support succession and governance improvement and should be considered.

Governor Questionnaire Responses

Legend: ■ Not sufficiently well ■ Well enough ■ This is effective
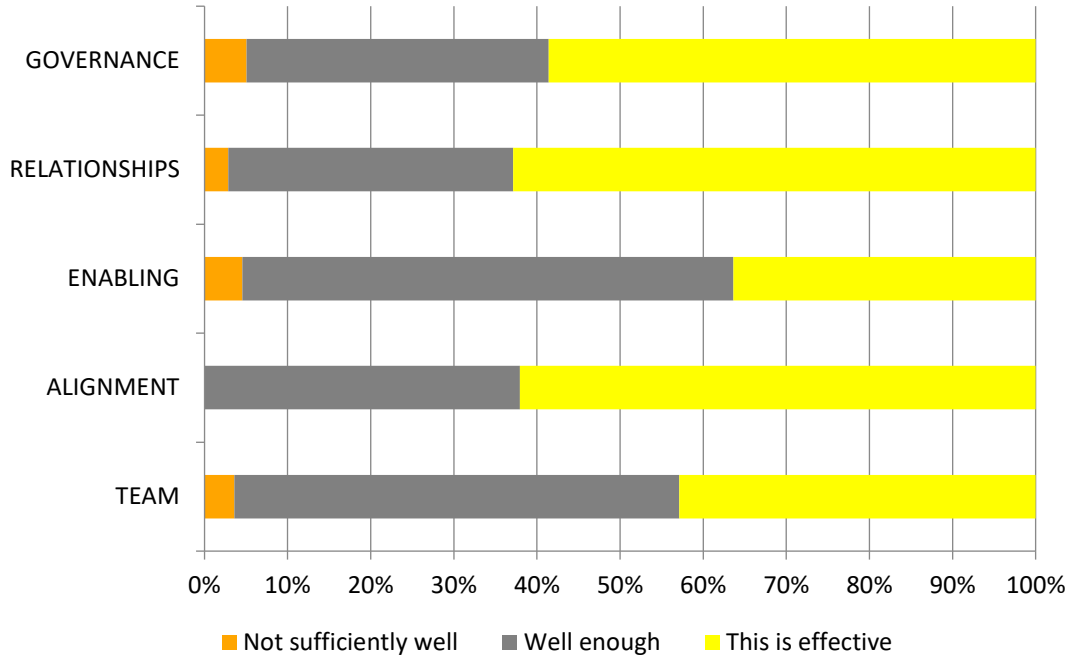
A number of new governors ticked the 'I cannot say' option to some questions in the questionnaire. These have been removed to give a clearer picture of the Board's current performance.

Governance Procedural Questionnaire - Overview

Legend: ■ Requires Improvement ■ Satisfactory ■ Good Practice
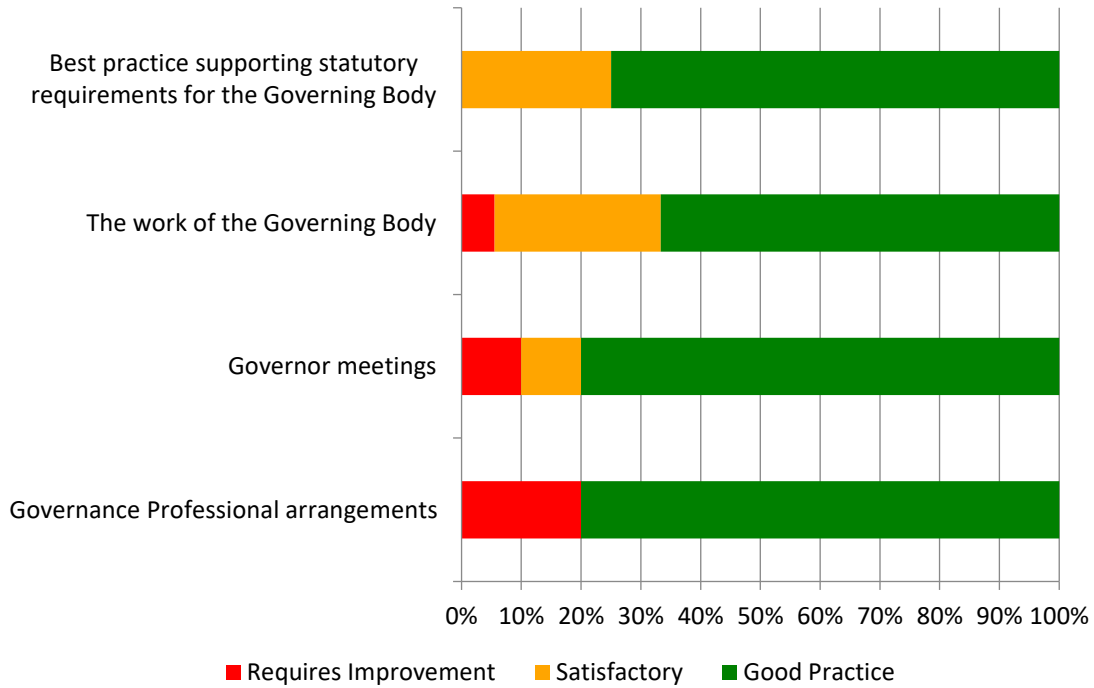
FULL REPORT

INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this Review is to support the board in becoming a more effective decision-making body as part of the organisations' commitment to excellence in governance and leadership, and to better understand how governance can move the organisation forward and the impact of governors – both when sat around the board table, and externally. The review identifies what is working well and how to build on that, as well as identifying priorities for any improvement, providing support on identified actions. By providing the catalyst for open, focused, and respectful dialogue, we have given board members and the Executive the insights and time needed to reflect on practices and behaviours and consider actionable solutions that will drive improvement. The aim is to develop mature governance - a board that fully understands its legal and governance duties, delivers them effectively, assesses them regularly, and learns continuously.

Process

Governance4FE was appointed in April 2023, to conduct an External Board Effectiveness Review. The review has been conducted over the period of May to September 2023. In conducting this review, we have undertaken the following activities.

- A scoping exercise was undertaken with the CEO and Chair of Governors,
- Questionnaires were drawn up and circulated to both board members and members of the senior management team.
- Conversations with chairs of committees, members of the Executive team, the chair of the Board, the CEO, and the governance professional.
- The governance professional undertook a governance questionnaire and supplied the reviewer with documentation for perusal.
- Observation of an Audit committee meeting and a Board meeting in person.
- A facilitated discussion with the Board on the report on 10th October.

The data collected forms a coherent picture of the Board's effectiveness. A draft report was circulated to the Chair, CEO, and governance professional for comment, and a further draft was circulated to all members. A facilitated discussion was led by the reviewer on the findings, to explore approaches to address any issues surfaced, and to agree methods of implementation of any required actions. These discussions are captured to form the action plan, which is the board's roadmap for the next 12-24 months. We register our thanks for the support from Stanmore College for the conduct of this review, and the co-operation from many individuals.

The College

Stanmore College is a general further education college in northwest London. The college operates from its main site in Stanmore, as well as multiple satellite sites across London. There are approximately 2,600 learners, of whom about 1,300 are aged under 19. The college provides post-16 academic and vocational education, delivering strong outcomes for students. There has been a steady performance improvement, financial stability, and growth in recent times. The Governing Body is both focussed and committed to further transforming the college to become an Outstanding provider. Governance operates on a committee model of governance and is supported by a Director of Governance.

DETAILED FINDINGS

This board effectiveness review indicates that Stanmore college has a satisfactory level of governance maturity when assessed against the Governance4FE appraisal framework. Our comments around development must be understood against an improving picture of governance oversight and college performance. The focus of our efforts have been on how to optimise what the organisation has already achieved, and to support it in achieving its ambitions for Outstanding performance.

Examples of effectiveness across the 10 detailed areas of the framework are collated from the questionnaires, meeting observations, conversations, document review, and procedural questionnaire. The developments are flagged where most responses in the governor questionnaire fell into the 'not sufficiently well' and 'well enough' categories, as opposed to the 'effective' category, and where these and additional areas were raised in discussions and/or observed through the other activities undertaken.

Roles & Responsibilities

Examples of Effectiveness

Roles and Responsibilities are clearly laid out in documentation, and board members understand the difference between the operational role of management and the strategic role of governors.

Committee functions and delegations are clearly identified.

The Governance Professional has been supported in his new role by an NLG, and a minute taker is in place for meetings, allowing the Governance Professional to move from a minute-taker to a thought leader—from a secretary to a trusted advisor.

Appraisal of the Principal is undertaken primarily by the Remuneration Committee.

Areas for Development

Having an annual conversation between the Board and the Executive team would set out more clearly the expectations of each other – building trust, ensuring the Board work plan is strategic and delivers for all, ensuring delegation levels are appropriate, and giving clarity on reporting requirements. This could be extended to conversations between committee chairs and Executive leads, supported by the Governance Professional to ensure appropriate reporting.

Give greater clarity of expectations and responsibilities through supply of a Letter of Engagement on appointment of board members, and by providing a formal induction and individual development plan using training delivered by the sector.

Setting out the role of board members when not sat around the table, i.e., the ambassadorial role, supported by the Executive to leverage members networks and encourage more stakeholder engagement – both external and internal. This should include staff wellbeing and workload as part of oversight of the organisation's culture – what it is and where it needs to be, and how board members model this.

Appraisal of the Principal should be more visible to the Board. The Board, not the Chair, is the collective 'boss' of the Principal, and is collectively responsible for providing everything a good boss should give to their employee – control, support, encouragement, incentives, rewards, etc. The Board should be assured that this is being done in an appropriate fashion.

Structures & Systems

Examples of Effectiveness

The Governance Professional works well with board and executive members to ensure statutory and regulatory compliance requirements are met.

The quality of reporting to the Board and committees is improving, with shorter more focused reports.

The structure of governance is appropriate for the size of the organisation, although the Board is on the larger side of the sector average.

Areas for Development

Further work could be done on executive reporting, ensuring there is reporting on impact as opposed to activity; that executive summaries clearly state the ask of board members; and further reading is provided via an appendix or governor portal/SharePoint. This could reduce time spent by the Executive in producing papers and board members in reading them; bring clarity to decision-making; and help board members leave each meeting knowing how the organisation has moved forward.

Behavioural Governance

Examples of Effectiveness

There is a satisfactory level of candour and mutual respect between governors and between governors and the senior team.

Board members are committed and actively participate in meetings and a link governor visit scheme.

Areas for Development

Coming out of Covid and the recent recruitment of board and executive members, more opportunities for social interaction between governors and between governors and the Executive, will continue to support relationships built on trust and openness.

Stakeholder Engagement

Examples of Effectiveness

The Board seeks engagement with all stakeholders through a variety of means, including a link governor visit scheme.

Areas for Development

Stakeholder engagement activity should be increased, enabling greater triangulation of executive information and more understanding of the implications of discussions and decisions on stakeholders.

The Link governor scheme should incorporate all board members on a minimum of 2 visits a year. Seeing the college in action, and understanding the business of the business, is crucial to the governor's oversight role, therefore being involved in the curriculum and being visible in the college, are key functions for governors to fulfil.

Support & Challenge

Examples of Effectiveness

Board members challenge constructively, holding management to account on college activity and performance.

Board members seek to support the Executive in engagement with regulators and funders, for example through the recent positive Ofsted inspection.

The Executive gain benefit from governors through the link governor scheme, at sub committees, through their support at college events, being a sounding board, and the insightful commercial experience they bring.

Areas for Development
The Executive would like to see more challenge in the areas of educational performance, corporate culture, and environmental/sustainability issues.

There is opportunity to have more discussions and dialogue in meetings, moving away from an executive presentation style which treats the Board as an audience, and more towards shared enquiry, better leveraging the knowledge and expertise of those around the table. This requires a shift in report writing style beyond, 'what information do I need to supply?' to 'what conversation do I want this report to generate?.' This allows for the crucial knowledge exchange to take place between board members and the Executive.

The Board and its committees should seek to get a balance of information received internally and externally, about 50/50, allowing objective and independent challenge to take place.

Impactful Decision Making
Examples of Effectiveness
Board members are able to contribute freely and willingly in meetings.

Agendas are organised to prioritise strategic matters and key decisions early in the meeting.

Areas for Development
A greater level of reporting on the decision-making process underlying presented recommendations and actions, including scenario planning, implications on stakeholders and on the achievement of the strategic objectives, could give board members greater confidence in the decisions they make. Board members are as keen to know what options management have considered and discarded as part of the process as they are to receive the proposed choice on which they are to agree.

Taking time at the end of each meeting to review the effectiveness of the decision-making process through focused questioning – 'did we have the right data in the right format/did everyone feel able to contribute and that they contribution was welcomed/were the strategic implications clearly stated? etc.' can contribute to better decision making.

Consider bringing committee reporting ahead of related key decision items on the agenda. Committee discussions should inform board decision making and therefore it is logical that the key elements of such discussions should be made known ahead of decisions. Consider using a risk style written report from committee chairs, such as the 3A model of reporting – what the Board needs to be Alerted to; Assured on; and any Actions to be taken.

Vision, Ethos, and Purpose
Examples of Effectiveness
The Board works collectively to set the vision, ethos, and purpose of the college.

Use wider mechanisms than the annual staff survey to have confidence that the culture of the college is where it needs to be. Many of the recommendations in this report such as wider stakeholder engagement, link visits etc., will support this.

Being Strategic

Examples of Effectiveness

The Board has been engaged in strategic planning discussions and reviews risks on a regular basis. The risk report to the Board is focused on the key strategic risks which allow for a more focused discussion on threats and opportunities, as they relate to achievement of the strategic objectives in the college's strategic plan.

Areas for Development

Further engagement by the Board in the area of generative governance (over and above fiduciary and oversight modes of governance), would further support alignment on strategy, particularly for newer members.

Ensure each report cover sheet (Executive Summary) details the strategic implications of the data on achievement of the strategic priorities set out in the strategic plan and includes strategic considerations/questions for board/committee discussion.

Consider the introduction of a Board Assurance Framework to support oversight of risk and compliance.

Composition & Succession

Examples of Effectiveness

The Board has sought to recruit members with diversity of skills, expertise, and knowledge to support oversight of the delivery of the strategic plan.

Board members understand how their skills and expertise are relevant to the college's work and are committed to improving governance, liaising with the Governance Professional to ensure their skills remain up to date and relevant.

Areas for Development

Setting out a detailed strategy/principles/KPIs for greater diversity and inclusion at Board level could support this work further.

Succession planning for both the Executive and the Board could be more formal as this is a key risk area, and therefore requires greater clarity. Using exit interviews is a fantastic way to support succession and governance improvement and should be considered. (Post-16 expertise is often an area the Executive would like to see strengthened, and Stanmore is no different).

Diversity & Inclusion

Examples of Effectiveness

The Board has sought to recruit members with diversity of thought to bring different perspectives to discussions and decisions.

The recommendation to make time for more social activity will help support understanding and appreciation of each members lived experience, their motivations, and the value they bring, including through their networks. Sharing of governors bios amongst members and the Executive, could support this too.

Areas for Development

The Board might want to consider setting out, in a Governor Appointment policy, some principles/KPIs for strengthening diversity and inclusion at board level.

Consider implementing a new governor 360 conversation at the end of the first 12 months of tenure. This will promote governor efficacy and inclusion, and potentially reduce turnover.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Critical to Success		**Roles & Responsibilities / Structures & Systems**
	1.	Having an annual conversation[1] between the Board and the Executive team would set out more clearly the expectations of each other – building trust; ensuring the Board work plan is strategic and delivers for all; ensuring delegation levels are appropriate; and giving clarity on reporting requirements. This could be extended to conversations between committee chairs and Executive leads, supported by the Governance Professional.
	2.	Further work could be done on executive reporting[2], ensuring there is reporting on impact as opposed to activity; that executive summaries clearly state the ask of board members; strategic implications & considerations are clear; and further reading is provided via an appendix or governor portal/SharePoint. This could reduce time spent by the Executive in producing papers and board members in reading them; bring clarity to decision-making; and help board members leave each meeting knowing how the organisation has moved forward.
		Support and Challenge
	3.	There is opportunity to have more discussions and dialogue[3] in meetings, moving away from an executive presentation style which treats the Board as an audience, and more towards shared inquiry, better leveraging the knowledge and expertise of those around the table. This requires a shift in report writing style beyond, 'what information do I need to supply?' to 'what conversation do I want this report to generate?.' This allows for the crucial knowledge exchange to take place between board members and the Executive.
Important to Success		**Roles & Responsibilities**
	4.	Give greater clarity of expectations and responsibilities through the supply of a Letter of Engagement[4] on appointment of board members, and by providing a formal induction and individual development plan using training delivered by the sector[5].
		Behavioural Governance
	5.	Coming out of Covid and the recent recruitment of board and executive members, more opportunities for social interaction between governors and between governors and the Executive, will continue to support relationships built on trust and openness.
		Stakeholder Engagement

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[1] Framework for Annual Conversation
[2] Guidance note on Executive Reporting
[3] Discussion vs dialogue
[4] Example Letter of Engagement
[5] Governance4FE Bitesize training / AoC governor inductions

	6.	Setting out the role of board members when not sat around the table, i.e., the ambassadorial role, supported by the Executive to leverage members networks and encourage more stakeholder engagement – both external and internal. This should include staff wellbeing and workload as part of oversight of the organisation's culture – what it is and where it needs to be, and how board members model this.
	7.	Stakeholder engagement[6] activity should be increased, enabling greater triangulation of executive information and more understanding of the implications of discussions and decisions on stakeholders. The Executive should help facilitate this.
	Impactful Decision Making	
	8.	Taking time at the end of each meeting to review the effectiveness of the decision-making process through focused questioning – 'did we have the right data in the right format/did everyone feel able to contribute and that they contribution was welcomed/were the strategic implications clearly stated? etc.' can contribute to better decision making[7].
	Being Strategic	
	9.	Further engagement by the Board in the area of generative governance[8] (over and above fiduciary and oversight modes of governance), would further support alignment behind the strategy, particularly for newer members.
	Composition and Succession Planning	
	10.	Succession planning[9] for both the Executive and the Board could be more formal as this is a key risk area, and therefore requires greater clarity. Using exit interviews is a fantastic way to support succession and governance improvement and should be considered. (Post-16 expertise is often an area the Executive would like to see strengthened, and Stanmore is no different)
	A number of technical recommendations have been made and are captured below	
Supporting Success	11.	Appraisal of the Principal should be more visible to the Board. The Board, not the Chair, is the collective 'boss' of the Principal, and is collectively responsible for providing everything a good boss should give to their employee – control, support, encouragement, incentives, rewards, etc. The Board should be assured that this is being done in an appropriate fashion.
Supporting Success	12.	The Executive would like to see more challenge in the areas of educational performance, corporate culture, and environmental/sustainability issues.

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[6] Guidance note on governor engagement
[7] Meeting assessment template
[8] Modes of Governance
[9] Template Succession Plan

	13.	The Board and its committees should seek to get a balance of information received internally and externally, about 50/50, allowing objective and independent challenge to take place.
	14.	A greater level of reporting on the decision-making process underlying presented recommendations and actions, including scenario planning, implications on stakeholders and on the achievement of the strategic objectives, could give board members greater confidence in the decisions they make. Board members are as keen to know what options management have considered and discarded as part of the process as they are to receive the proposed choice on which they are being asked to agree.
	15.	Consider bringing committee reporting ahead of related key decision items on the agenda. Committee discussions should inform board decision making and therefore it is logical that the key elements of such discussions should be made known ahead of decisions. Consider using a risk style written report from committee chairs, such as the 3A model of reporting – what the Board needs to be Alerted to; Assured on; and any Actions to be taken.
	16.	Use wider mechanisms than the annual staff survey to have confidence that the culture of the college is where it needs to be. Many of the recommendations in this report such as wider stakeholder engagement, link visits etc., will support this.
	17.	Consider the introduction of a Board Assurance Framework to support oversight of risk and compliance[10].
	18.	The Board might want to consider setting out, in a Governor Appointment policy, some principles/KPIs[11] for strengthening diversity and inclusion at board level.
	19.	Consider implementing a new governor 360[12] conversation at the end of the first 12 months of tenure. This will promote governor efficacy and inclusion, and potentially reduce turnover

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[10] Example Board Assurance Framework
[11] EDI Principles
[12] New Governor 360 exercise

ACTION PLAN (TO BE AGREED AFTER 10TH OCTOBER 2023)

|	Agreed Action	Intended Outcome	Named Lead	Timescale
1				

BENCHMARKING

Review Recommendations

Board evaluation recommendations- themes	41 colleges
Annual conversation between Board & Management	9
Attendance to be increased	1
Audit / internal control *	1
Board culture requires improvement	3
Board portal implementation to manage papers	9
Board Structure: Carver or not to Carver rather than muddled hybrids	7
Board Team Skills - improvement required in ability to use the strengths of all members	14
Challenge: increase consistency/focus of governor challenge	12
Cycle of Business/agendas: review to prioritise strategic discussions	23
Diversity on boards - greater focus required	19
Evaluation - undertake for the board/cttee meetings, chair, and governors	27
Governance secretariat - greater involvement/better resourced	7
Governor development and training - implement a training plan/record/impact document	22
Inclusion - onboarding, mentoring, contribution of governors to be strengthened	8
Link Governors - more triangulation of information/greater engagement	11
Management reporting: greater use of data dashboard & KPIs	11
Management reporting: use summaries, keep focused, more timely	21
Minutes and action plans to be improved	7
Appraisal of the Principal/CEO	2
Risk: further scrutiny of risks required	5
Scheme of Delegation to be put in place	6
Skills: Finance/Property/FE required	12
Stakeholder engagement - governor ambassadorial role - value add to be clarified	10
Stakeholder engagement - greater oversight of stakeholder strategy	12
Strategy - more input from governors on strategic thinking, planning, & oversight	10
Student voice: more interaction	17
Succession planning: implement/improve succession planning for the Board	21
The Code - implementation & understanding of the requirements of the Code	5
Triumvirate - more regular meetings	2

Key:

Highlighted recommendations are those from this report for Stanmore College

Meeting Benchmarked Data

Category	Value
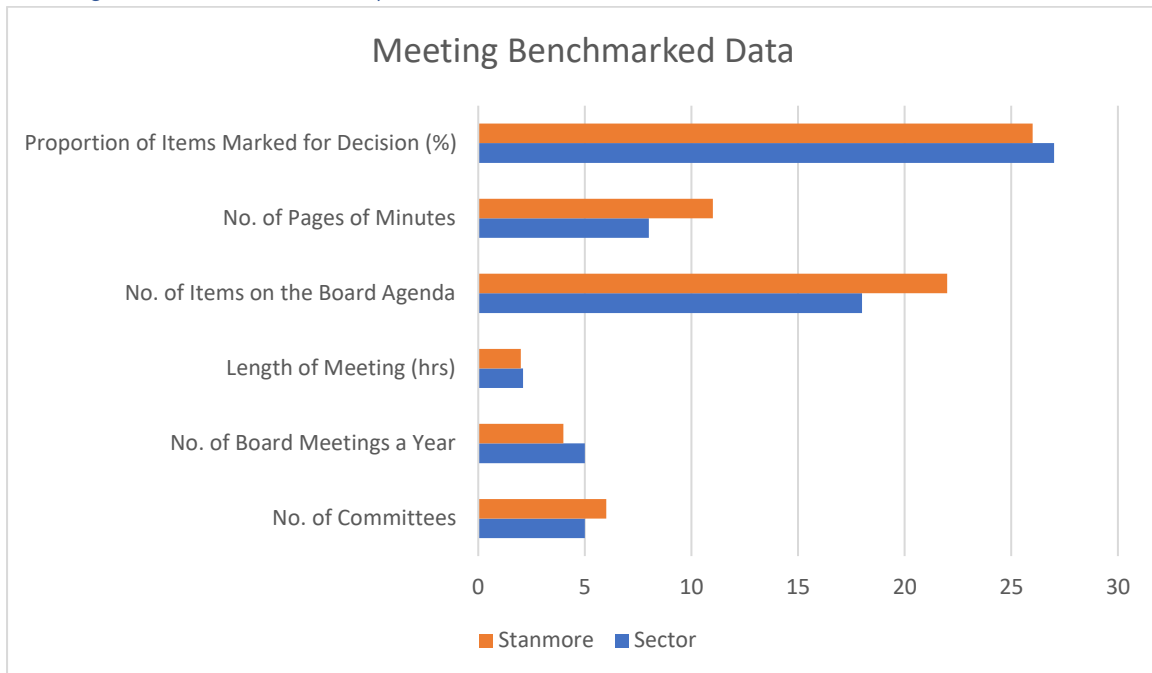
The above data shows Stanmore College:

- Has a larger number of items on the Board agendas. This could be reduced through the use of a consent agenda, with the added advantage of reducing the length of meeting time and/or freeing up time for discussion on strategic topics

Governor Questionnaire Comments

QUESTION 41: Name up to 3 other things you believe the Board does well and up to 3 things where there is room for improvement

GOVERNORS' THEMES

<u>Does Well:</u>

1. Support and engagement for/with the senior team
2. Commitment to good governance
3. A committee structure that works well
4. Receives comprehensive papers
5. Constructive challenge

<u>Opportunity for Improvement:</u>

1. Succession planning
2. Reviewing the Board's contribution to college performance
3. Knowledge of the business
4. Knowledge of stakeholders
5. Physical attendance in support of relationship building

Q.12 - Name 1 thing the board does well and 1 thing where it could become more effective.

MANAGEMENTS' THEMES

<u>Does Well:</u>

1. Robust review and questioning
2. Constructive challenge
3. Relationship with senior leaders

<u>Opportunities for Improvement:</u>

1. Additional assessment of our student performance.
2. More sense checking and possible deep dives
3. More involvement with the college curriculum – college visits

Introduction

Monitoring the effectiveness of governance is a key element of good governance and a requirement of every Code of Governance. Effective governance is primarily made up of two elements - procedural governance (processes, structures, and systems) and behavioural governance (relationships, culture, and ethos). This questionnaire looks at the first element, procedural governance, and covers the following areas:

- Statutory requirements for the Governing Body
- The work of the Governing Body
- Governor meetings
- Governance Professional arrangements

The objective of this report is to prompt the board and the governance professional to consider whether:

a) The adopted governance structure and model is fit for purpose

b) The composition of the Board reflects the needs and strategic direction of the college

c) There is a suitably robust induction, training and development programme, and on-going support in place for governors and the governance professional

d) The institution's governance framework and processes facilitate effective decision-making and suitable governor oversight of compliance and regulatory matters

This report details which criteria have been met and which have not, and rag-rates each question. The report is generated as a Word document to allow you to add details on actions – when and by whom. Acting on the outcomes of effectiveness reviews is as important as undertaking them. Therefore, it is recommended that this report and action plan are shared with the governing body.

1. Best practice supporting statutory requirements for the Governing Body

1. Governing Body membership is in line with its Instrument & Articles of Government & Standing Orders

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• The current record of appointed Governors and their terms of office align with membership as stated in the I&As and Standing Orders	

2. Statutory Information – the requirements set by the DfE on what colleges should publish online are met

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• A review of the college website has been undertaken • Any other relevant statutory policies are published i.e. modern slavery statement • The Governing Body is aware that it is responsible for website compliance	

3. Statutory Policies and documents are in place and reviewed by the Governing Body in line with stipulated review periods – including those policies referenced in statutory guidance

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• DfE Policies and other documents that colleges are required to have by law are in place • There is a process for ensuring policies are presented for approval in a timely way • Minutes evidence policies have been approved • Governors take a strategic view when approving policies – they may have input but do not draft them	

4. Equality & Diversity & The Equality Duty – information is published to show compliance with the Equality Duty at least once a year. Specific measurable equality objectives are set at least every four years

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Equality Act 2010 – A review of the college's equality objectives are undertaken annually • Minutes evidence governor discussion and decision on E&D matters • The gender pay gap is reported to the Board annually • Minutes indicate monitoring against college & board E&D targets	Diversity targets for Governing Body membership are set and monitored

5. Safeguarding Children in Education – Governing Body meets its statutory duty

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• The annual safeguarding audit is completed & reported on, to the Governing Body • There is a named Safeguarding Link Governor • Safer Recruitment Training has been completed by some governors • The safeguarding audit shows all governors have completed safeguarding training • Minutes evidence that safeguarding requirements (including the Prevent Duty) are discussed and reviewed regularly by the Governing Body	

6. Financial probity – Governing Body meets its statutory duty

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Some governors have completed college funding & finance training • Minutes evidence that financial requirements are discussed and reviewed by the Governing Body • Monthly accounts are made available to all governors in a timely way • At least one independent governor is a qualified accountant • There is a 2-year financial plan in place • Governors use the ESFA financial benchmarking tool as part of their assessment of the college's finances • The budget is approved annually • Significant financial variances are recorded in the minutes • A costed curriculum plan is presented to the board each year for approval • Audited financial statements are approved & submitted to the ESFA by the stated deadline • The College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) is approved by the governing body	

7. Board Reporting – The Governing Body receives reports on confirmation of statutory compliance and best practice, publishes required information where appropriate, and the minutes show governors have discussed / given approval on such (note - an HE report is also recommended for those institutions with higher education provision)

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Health & Safety • Equality & Diversity • Safeguarding • Search Committee Activity • Remuneration Committee Activity • Audit Committee Activity • The Corporation's Annual Report and / or Governance statement in the Audited Financial Statements • Stakeholder Engagement, including student voice • Whistleblowing and Fraud Response Plan • Student complaints and appeals • Human resources / workforce strategy • Partnership working • General Data Protection Regulation compliance • Freedom of Information requests	

8. Governance Code - Adoption and Reporting

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• The Governance Statement in the Audited Financial Statements indicates which Code has been adopted, if the college is compliant and if not, reasons for non-compliance and planned actions to gain compliance (ESFA Accounts Direction stipulates FE corporations must comply with the principles of a code) • The Governing Body receives a report annually on compliance with a governance code	

2. The work of the Governing Body

1. Regular self-review of the effectiveness of the work of the Governing Body

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• An annual governance self-review is completed • A governance development plan is in place • Minutes show progress against any subsequent actions are regularly monitored • A review of the performance of the Chair is undertaken annually • The Board has undertaken an external review of governance within the last 3 years, or is planning to do so	

2. The Governing Body has a schedule of meetings planned for the year. Agenda items are linked to the college's quality improvement plan

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Full Governing Body and Committee meeting dates are planned in advance for the upcoming academic year	

3. Delegated responsibilities – the delegated responsibilities are reviewed annually and reflected in the committee terms of reference and Scheme of Delegation

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• A Scheme of Delegation is in place • Each committee has up-to-date Terms of Reference • Group governance structures and arrangements showing relationships and responsibilities, are published	

4. A schedule of agenda items and a policy review schedule is maintained to ensure that all statutory responsibilities are fulfilled by the Governing Body throughout the year

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• A Governing Body Cycle of Business is in place • Agendas for the Governing Body and committee meetings are planned at the start of each year, and include statutory and cyclical items • A policy review schedule is in place	

5. Chair / Vice Chair of Governor are elected annually / in line with Governing Body Standing Orders. Chairs of Committee are elected in line with Terms of Reference

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Governing Body Standing Orders clearly state an appointment process • Agenda / Minutes evidence appointments are carried out in line with the stated process • Chair and Vice-Chair(s) have a role description	

6. Governor Visits are planned in line with the Quality Improvement Plan and/or across college business areas. The Governance Professional keeps records of completed visits and circulates reports appropriately

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• A Governor Visits Policy and Visit form template is in place • Completed governor visit forms are circulated to all governors/a committee once the senior leadership team have had an opportunity to comment / respond • Minutes detail any actions arising from governors' visits	A schedule of governor monitoring visits for the year are planned termly

7. Governor Training – records are kept of the training that Governors have attended

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Feedback reports on any external training undertaken are provided to all governors • Whole Governing Body training requirements are identified and planned • An assessment of the impact of training on Governing Body effectiveness is undertaken each year	Individual Governor development plans are in place

8. A review of governor skills has been undertaken to inform training needs / succession planning / governor recruitment

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Completion of a skills audit is undertaken at least annually, taking into account the college's strategic objectives and risk register • A succession plan is in place • Agenda / Minutes show discussion of recruitment and succession planning • There is a policy stating the maximum term of office for board members, and succession planning shows adherence to the policy	

9. Governor recruitment is based on skills to contribute to effective governance and the success of the college.

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Skills audits are undertaken when recruitment is being considered • Search committee minutes evidence skills-based recruitment	A Governor Appointment policy is in place
	The Governor Appointment policy reflects the college's policy and targets for diversity

10. All prospective / new governors are helped to understand the role of a governor and the Governing Body's Code of Conduct.

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Governors sign up to a Code of Conduct • Conflicts of interest are recorded and updated on an on-going basis • Conflicts of interest are reported annually to the Board and made available for public viewing	A declaration of continued eligibility of each governor is signed annually

11. A governor induction pack / mentor arrangement is in place / all new governors have completed induction training

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• A college governor induction process in place • Each new governor is assigned a mentor • Student governors are given appropriate support to help them fulfil their role	Governors attend or complete a Governor Induction course

12. A Principal/CEO Appraisal Review is undertaken annually

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Appraisal is discussed at RemCo and Governing Body meetings • Minutes record the rationale for any pay increase/bonus paid to senior post holders	

13. Board members play an active ambassadorial role, making known the work of the college, and review regularly how the college meets the needs of all stakeholders

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Board members regularly engage with the local community and the college's stakeholders. • The governing body has reviewed and published how the college's education and training offer is meeting local skills needs, having due regard for the Local Skills Improvement Plan	

14. Governor working groups are utilised to prepare / research and make recommendations to Governing Body (if required)

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Each working party has an agreed Terms of Reference • Minutes reflect working party recommendations and Governing Body decision making.	

15. Strategic planning – the governing body plays a fundamental part in strategic planning

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Strategic objectives are agreed each year by the Governing Body • KPIs are set annually for financial health, teaching and learning, student experience and outcomes, staff performance, and stakeholder opinions • Minutes show monitoring against organisational KPIs takes place at least twice a year • Strategic discussions reflect the college's objectives, ethos and culture, and stakeholder views to ensure they are aligned • Strategic matters are agenda items at the majority of governing body meetings	

16. Risk Management – risk appetite is set by the Governing Body and risks are regularly monitored

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• The risk register is regularly reviewed by Audit Committee • High / new risks are reported to the Governing Body regularly • The Governing body discusses the setting of risk appetite • The Annual Audit Plan is approved by the Board	

17. Educational Character. Governors are assured that the learning experience is being monitored

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Governors participate in the Self-Assessment Report validation process • The Self-Assessment Report is presented to the Governing Body annually • The minutes show regular oversight of the Quality Improvement Plan	

18. Charity Commission legislation and case law is complied with

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• None of the above apply	

3. Governor meetings

1. Agenda setting is managed effectively to ensure a) timely inclusion of items and b) sufficient time to commission supporting documents/ research/ evidence for governors to consider

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Agenda setting is commenced at least 4 weeks prior to a meeting • Agendas throughout the year include actions from the previous minutes • Agendas throughout the year include Items from the annual Governing Body Work Plan – e.g. standing items and cyclical items • Minutes of each meeting show apologies are accepted, interests are declared, and any non-quoracy is recorded	Agenda items are suitably organised to ensure priority/strategic items are discussed first

2. The agenda and supporting papers are appropriate and available for governor consideration in advance of meetings, and the management information is suitably robust to enable governors to exercise oversight

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Agendas and supporting papers are distributed seven days before meetings • Papers, such as college reports including the Principal/CEO's report are not 'tabled' at meetings • Reports are sufficiently detailed, transparent and comprehensive • The Governing Body and management have reviewed, discussed, and agreed the structure / format / length of reports	

3. All committee and full Governing Body meetings are attended and minuted by a suitably qualified/experienced governance professional

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Minutes reflect a governance professional in attendance at all meetings	

4. The Chair of governors and the Governing Body take advice on governance matters

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• The Governance Professional gives advice at meetings on the operation of Governing Body powers, procedural matters, conduct of its business, and matters of governance practice	

5. The minutes show evidence of Governor support & challenge

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Minutes of meetings record governor support & challenge • A record of the impact of governor support & challenge is kept	

6. Decisions made by the Governing Body are recorded – e.g., approval of budget / policies

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Minutes of meetings record decisions and their rationale	

7. Confidential minute items are kept to a minimum. The minutes are recorded in a way that means they are not confidential or if they are confidential, they are in line with Information Commissioner's guidance

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Minutes of meetings meet General Data Protection Regulation requirements • Confidential items are reviewed annually and considered by the Governing Body for publication	

8. Minutes are completed in a timely manner

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• [Draft minutes](#) are circulated for review within two weeks of the meeting	Once approved by the governing body, minutes are published on the website

9. Action points are recorded and carried forward / followed up by the Governance Professional in a timely manner

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• [Actions](#) are tracked and recorded • The actions list details persons responsible for completion of actions and the date they are completed	

10. Independence

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Audit Committee members meet with auditors annually without management present	

4. Governance Professional arrangements

1. Governance Professional training and development – the Governance Professional has sufficient opportunity and support to keep up to date with changes affecting the governance within the organisation

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Attendance at area [Governance Professional Network Meetings](#) • Attendance at [training events and conferences](#) • A member of the [FE clerks Jiscmail network](#)	

2. Governance Professional resources – the Governance Professional has access to resources to assist them in fulfilling their role

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Access to administrative support to facilitate meeting arrangements • College email address is provided • The college supplies resources – laptop, printing etc. • Access to an office on the college site is provided for the Governance Professional	

3. A Governance Professional Competency Framework (DfE / ICSA / Governance4FE) is used to shape the recruitment, development and behaviours of the Governance Professional

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• Chair and Governance Professional are aware of and have read the relevant framework • Chair / Principal actively consider the framework when considering recruitment and planning the work of the Governance Professional	

4. Governance Professional line management – the Governance Professional is provided with clear targets and Appraisal, including an annual appraisal

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
• An annual appraisal is undertaken by the Chair with Principal / CEO input • The Governance Professional has a personal development plan in place	

5. Governance Professional hours – the Governance Professional is provided with sufficient contracted hours or overtime to meet the needs of the Governing Body

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
	A review of hours worked against contracted hours forms part of the annual appraisal

Example Documents

The documents listed below are provided separately.

- Framework for Annual Conversation
- Example Letter of Engagement
- Governance4FE [Bitesize training](#) / [AoC governor inductions](#)
- Guidance note on Executive Reporting
- Guidance note on governor engagement
- Discussion vs dialogue
- Meeting assessment template
- Modes of Governance
- Example Board Assurance Framework
- Template Succession Plan
- EDI Principles
- New Governor 360 exercise

Editing Amends

None.