



LIFE Education Trust

Local Tier Governance at LIFE

Information pack for governor training on
9th June 2022, 6:00 -8:00pm

This training session is aimed at all governors in all LIFE schools.

It follows the Trust's review of Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) in 2021/22 and the External Review of Trust Governance (ERG) in Spring 2022.

The session has been shaped by the following principles:

- Local governance is crucial.
- The local tier of governance is a key part of the Trust's governance structure
- Local intelligence matters
- Great communication, between the layers of governance and between governance and the Executive, matters
- Evidence-informed practice helps governors carry out their roles more effectively
- The Trust is the single legal entity and employer; we are one body!

This training session will have two distinct parts:

Part 1: Changes resulting from the Trust's internal consultation on governance

Part 2: The way that LIFE's Local Governance Committees (LGCs) will operate, making clear what is and is not within their remit and explaining how LGCs will discharge their responsibilities for the areas that are within their remit

Part 1: Response to the Consultation

In April 2022, the Board agreed 15 changes to Governance in the Trust in response to the consultation which was carried out in November 2021.

1. The name of LGBs changes to Local Governance Committees (LGCs)

- The Board has legal responsibility for the Trust, which it carries out through its Committees and the Executive
- The Board can delegate powers to the committees, including at the local (school) level
- The local governance tier in a trust does have different responsibilities to those of maintained schools
- Existing governors expressed a strong opinion to maintain the title of “Governor”

The chosen name reflects the fact that:

- They are local
- They are part of the governance structure
- They are Committees of the Board

2. Reviews of each LGC will be conducted every two years or more frequently where concerns emerge

There was general agreement on this. Self-evaluation at all levels is important, a point emphasised in the ERG.

3. LGCs will be responsible for the following:

- I. **Consulted** on key policies and strategy
- II. Continue to **monitor** the Quality of Education in the school
- III. Continue to **monitor** and present Healthchecks related to the Ofsted framework
- IV. **Represent** the view of stakeholders to the Trust through **scrutinising** the stakeholder surveys
- V. **Scrutinise** information on pupil progress and attainment
- VI. **Monitor** safeguarding at school level
- VII. **Monitor** progress towards school development priorities
- VIII. **Carry out** some panel work (eg complaints and grievances)
- IX. **Contribute** to the recruitment and appraisal of school leaders

This aims to clarify the roles and responsibilities of local governors in an academy trust

Questions: Is there anything on this list that you feel needs further clarification?

Is it clear how the role of the LIFE LGC is different from an LGB of a maintained school?

4. Focus clearly on educational performance using standard templates

This helps to strengthen local governance and brings greater uniformity across the Trust
There was general agreement on this

5. Receive the school budget and termly Finance report presented by a member of the Trust Finance Team

This may seem to be very different for some governors, but is a reality of being a part of the Trust and there was general agreement on this

6. Receive a termly Premises report presented by a member of the Estates Team

Although Premises is a central Trust function, there was general agreement that governors should be kept informed on this area

7. Assist in the recruitment of school leaders and receive termly HR reports presented by a member of the Trust HR team

Again, although HR is a central Trust function, there was general agreement that governors should be kept informed on this area and for Chairs to be involved in the recruitment of heads and in discussions about school leadership.

8. Agendas are prepared by the Governance Professional and LGCs have two meetings per term

This aims to assist the LGC to focus on standards in a structured manner

9. Board or Executive members are included on an LGC when a school joins the Trust or needs additional support

This aims to be a supportive measure for which there was general agreement. The ERG recommends limited overlap of governance layers, so any such support should be time-limited

10. Governor Visit Policy is adhered to

The guiding principle of the policy is that governor visits should be structured and have a specific purpose, rather than being ad hoc. There were some differences of opinion, but a significant majority agreed with this and it was validated during the ERG.

11. Link Governor for Safeguarding is created and conducts termly visits in accordance with policy and assists in the completion of a new Healthcheck

Safeguarding is already a feature of the Leadership and Management Healthcheck, which is where Ofsted inspect its effectiveness; however, given the importance of safeguarding (and the removal of other Healthchecks from LGC responsibility), there was general agreement on this

12. Link Governor for SEND is created and conducts termly visits in accordance with policy and assists in the completion of a new Healthcheck

SEND provision, and the performance of SEND pupils, are features of all Ofsted Healthchecks; however, given the importance of the SEND agenda (and the removal of other Healthchecks from LGC responsibility), there was general agreement on this

13. Stakeholder feedback from parents and pupils is received on an annual basis from an external agency.

There was strong agreement on this. It was considered too burdensome and unnecessary to have termly surveys. (Staff feedback is discussed at Board level)

14. Number of LGC members is between 6 and 8

There was general agreement that this is an appropriate and manageable number, which allows each governor to have a link role

- There will be 6 Healthchecks, so 6 link governor roles
- If the LGC has 7 members, it would be appropriate to allocate 2 link governors to the Quality of Education Healthcheck, which is long and which constitutes 50% of an Ofsted judgment
- If the LGC has 8 members, it may be appropriate for the Chair to maintain an oversight role

15. Full Training to be provided to Governors in the lead up to the changes

There was general agreement on this, which begins in this session. There will be subsequent training for the new Safeguarding and SEND link governors before the completion of the first of those Healthchecks.

Part 2: The way LGCs will operate

Given all of the above, how will local governance now work?

1. Healthchecks; What will stay the same?

- The 4 “Ofsted” Healthchecks will remain largely unchanged
- They will continue to have an associated link governor

2. Healthchecks; What will change?

- The LGC will no longer be responsible for Healthchecks related to finance, premises and HR. These will be reported to the LGC by Trust staff (which allows the LGC to focus on educational standards in the school)
- New, briefer, Healthchecks will be introduced for Safeguarding and SEND, with associated link governors.
- The Director of Standards will no longer intervene in the drafting of Healthchecks or quality assure the documents before they go to governors.
- **All governors**, and not simply the link governor, should scrutinise **all Healthchecks**
- This will bring about greater scrutiny and challenge at LGC level.

3. How to manage the Healthcheck system

- The Headteacher or designated senior leader will write the first draft of the Healthcheck.
- SLTs will be given further training to ensure the Ofsted questions in the Healthchecks are correctly answered and to ensure greater consistency.
- The link governor will read the draft Healthcheck in detail and have a meeting to interrogate the document (asking questions and scrutinising the evidence base that supports the school’s statements and its rag rating).
- An agreed draft will be circulated to governors in advance of their LGC meeting, which all governors should read (there will be fewer Healthchecks to scrutinise)
- Although it is the link governor who will present a **brief summary** of the document’s key points at the meeting, it will be the responsibility of all governors to scrutinise and challenge its content and judgments

4. The role of the LGC and the SDP

- The decision about which objectives to prioritise for the next year’s SDP is a **strategic** one, so therefore sits within the local governance remit. (The objectives should reflect evidence-based self-evaluation, which includes the Healthchecks).
- The decision about what actions the school should take to deliver the strategic objectives (ie writing the Plan itself) is an **operational** matter, so does not sit within the local governance remit.
- The monitoring of the school’s progress in delivering the actions of the SDP, and its progress in terms of the impact of those actions in achieving the strategic objectives, is a part of the **scrutiny** role of local governance.
- To carry out that remit, governors need to be presented with a termly progress review which **focuses on impact**, and not simply on the completion of tasks and actions

5. How the LGCs review parent and pupil surveys

- Surveys will be conducted annually between June and September

- An external agency will be used to enable us to benchmark data against other schools
- A school leader will provide a summary on a standard template which highlights the areas of strength and any areas for development
- Governors will scrutinise the data and ensure that the school's actions address the issues
- The school will work to address the issues and consider integrating any appropriate actions into the SDP

6. How the LGCs review internal and external reports/reviews

- LGCs will receive notes in a standard format from the termly meeting of the school leader and the Director of Standards. This will include a summary of any subject specific reports in the Rural Primaries.
- LGCs will receive Ofsted and SIAMS reports and ensure that the school is addressing all key actions either by creating a separate action plan or by integrating any necessary actions into the current or next SDP.
- LGCs will receive other external reviews relating to educational standards.

7. The LGCs role in Finance, HR and Premises

- The Board delegates responsibility for the leadership and management of these areas to the Executive and holds them to account through their Committee structure.
- LGCs will receive termly reports in a standard format from the Trust specialists in these areas.
- Questions from the LGC regarding these areas will be answered either at the meeting or in writing as soon as is practical.
- LGCs are not expected to monitor, review or interrogate these areas in detail, as this function is monitored by the Board and its respective functional committees.