



# HR competence in schools: the role of school governance

**Emma Knights**  
**Chief Executive**  
**National Governors' Association**

The independent  
organisation for school  
governors and trustees

# NGA is a membership organisation

- NGA is an independent charity representing and supporting governors and trustees in maintained schools and academies in England
- Our aim is to improve the effectiveness of governing boards by providing expert and tailored information, guidance and advice, and challenge when appropriate

n|g|a | **GOLDline**  
The NGA Advice Service

- STANDARD governing board £79
- GOLD governing board £260



## Guidance and advice

- Information and guidance via the website and magazine
- Advice – bespoke for GOLDline members
  - Advice to the governing body
  - Any function of the governing body
    - Including HR advice.

## HR -Key focus for NGA in the coming year

- Quality of teaching is essential – but all organisations require good management
- Considerable anecdotal evidence that this is not done well in schools
  - Lack of understanding of ‘management HR’
  - Serious failings/weaknesses in some recruitment practices



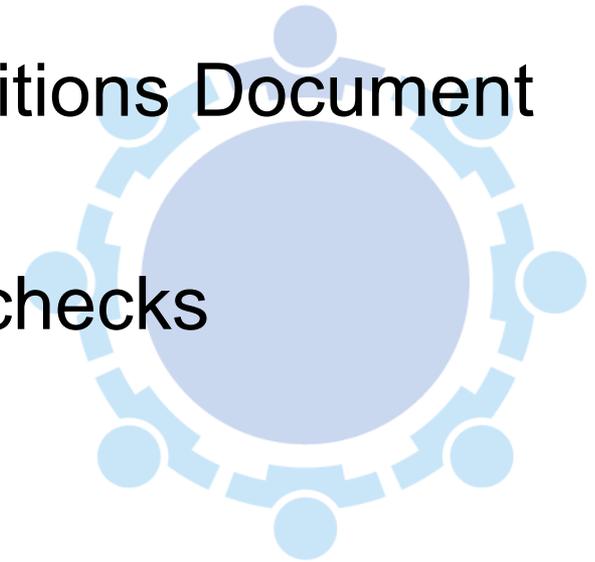
# Governors' role is strategic

- Ensure the appropriate policies and procedures are in place
  - Bespoke to the school
- If there is a formal role for governors it needs to be clearly set out
- Sit on recruitment panels only for senior leadership positions
- Monitor the implementation of policies and procedures



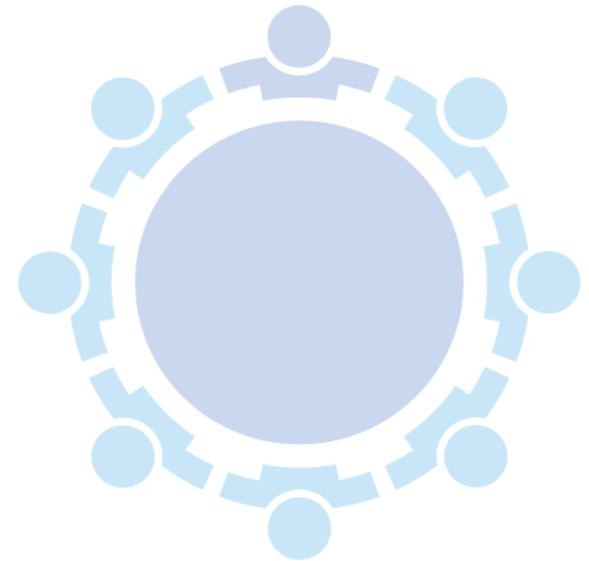
# Compliance - Legal Duties

- Employment legislation
- LA maintained schools – School Staffing Regulations
- School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document
- Safeguarding and employment checks



# Policies and procedures

- Pay
- Appraisal/Performance Management
- Grievance
- Disciplinary
- Recruitment
- Whistleblowing
- Staff/sickness absence
- Code of Conduct
- Teachers' Standards



# Multi-academy trusts (MATs)

- Specific issues
- Lack of clarity in the scheme of delegation (SoD) for governance functions
- What is delegation to the chief executive
- What is retained by the MAT trustee board
- What is delegated to the local governing committee (LGC) (often called local governing body)
  - Is this clear
  - Particularly role of LGC compared to chief executive/executive principal



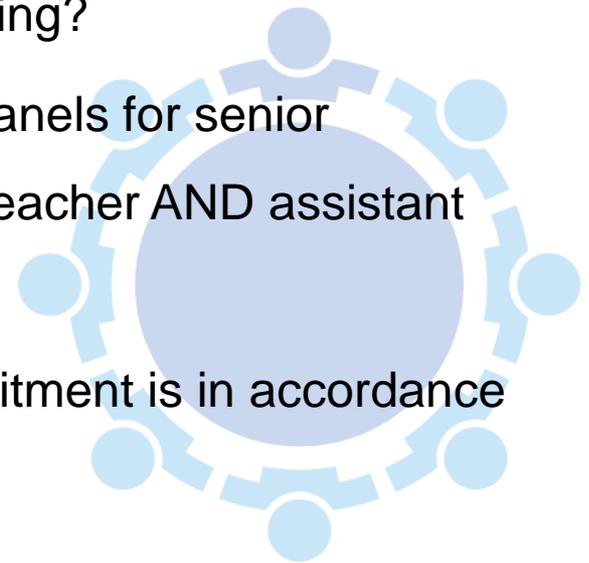
# Line management

- Is there a clear line management structure in the school?
  - Are all staff clear who they report to and are managed by
    - Including all support staff
    - The clerk to the governing body
- Is there a member of the Senior leadership team with responsibility for HR
- Have all the people with line-management responsibilities received training



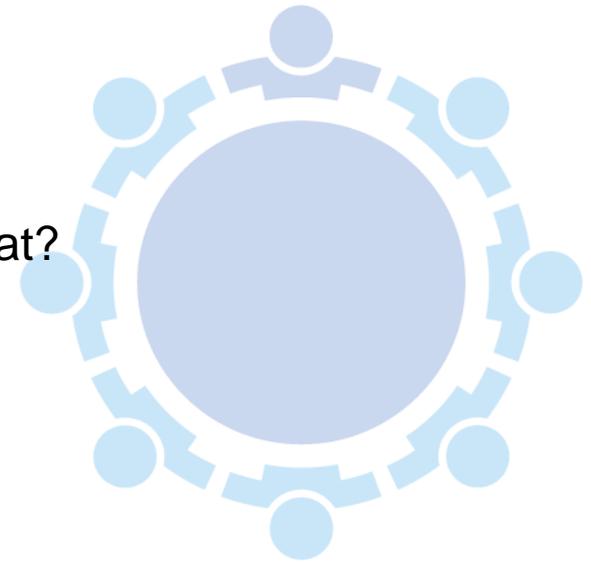
# Recruitment

- Has the governing board set expectations/adopted a recruitment policy?
- Does that require all posts to have job description and person specification?
- Are all roles advertised?
- What training do staff get in recruitment/interviewing?
- Does the governing board sit on all recruitment panels for senior leadership posts (i.e. Headteacher, deputy headteacher AND assistant headteacher , business manager)?
- How does the governing board monitor that recruitment is in accordance with its policies/procedures?



# Common issues

- Part-time staff –
  - appointment
  - line-management
  - performance and appraisal
- Headteacher –
  - Appointment process
  - salary on appointment
- Performance management
  - Lack of clarity about who is responsible for what?

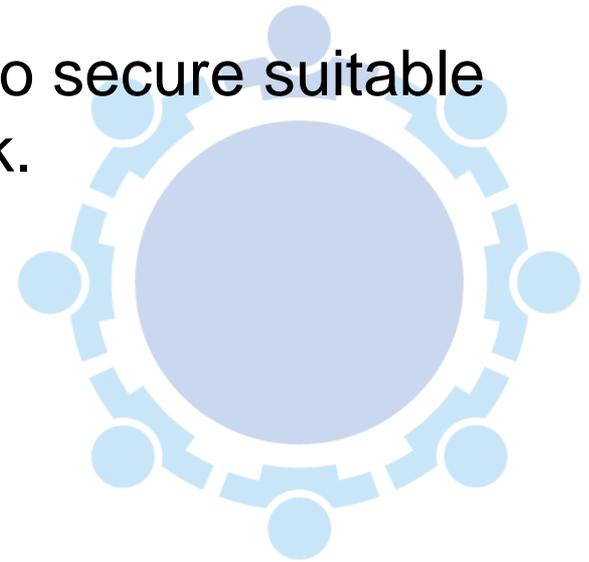


## The How not to!

Recruitment procedures are lax. A significant number of appointments have been made without undertaking a process of fair and open competition. Staff have been employed based on personal connections to existing members of staff or acquaintances from previous schools.

In such cases, there has been no effort to secure suitable references about the quality of their work.

(Taken from an Ofsted inspection report)



# How not to

- There are unclear staffing structures in place across all three academies in the Trust
- The lead practitioner in Science at X School (<redacted> <redacted>) is also the brother of X school's headteacher. Discussions with staff at the school revealed that his teaching had been rated as inadequate by the lead practitioner for Teaching and Learning at the academy, but no action had been taken as a result. A review of the lead practitioner in Science's personnel file revealed that his experience was not commensurate with his responsibility.
- the role was not given to the second in Science; instead, the day before our visit it was given to the sister of a deputy headteacher at X School whose substantive post was as a Science teacher at Y School. It became clear in discussions with staff and the HR manager at the school that they were unaware of the decision made to put this teacher in place.
- We concluded that the selection process had not been transparent for this role and have concerns that the same will apply to other positions at the other schools in the Trust.

(Taken from an Education Funding Agency Report)

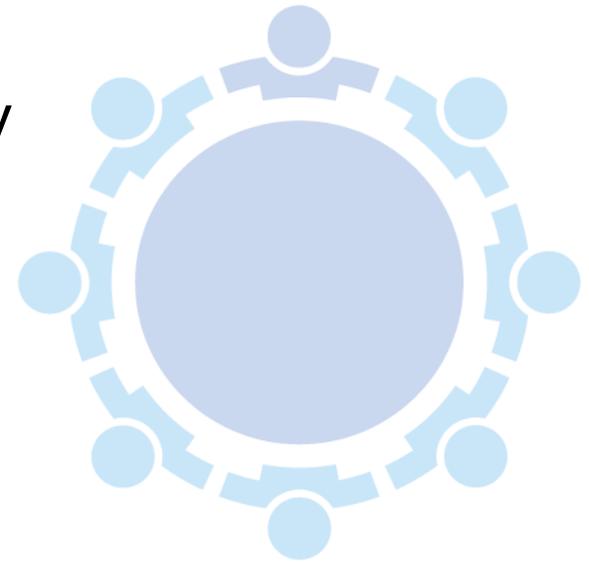
# Performance Management/Appraisal

- Performance management/appraisal – has there been training for those carrying out appraisals and those being appraised.?
- Headteachers' performance management panel – is this regularly changed?
  - One person changed in succession in each year
    - Do the panel have the skills/ been trained to carry out the appraisal
    - Are they familiar with both the Teachers' Standards and the National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers
- External Adviser
  - Is the governing board in charge of this appointment
  - Is there a job description/person specification for the role
    - Experience/expertise of Performance Management



# Performance management and pay

- Are the appraisal and pay policies aligned?
- How does the governing board monitor pay awards?
- What information does it receive
  - Objectives met?
  - Pay awards recommended?
  - Differences across subjects
  - Differences across gender/ethnicity



# How not to

- The Executive Headteacher has indirectly led and been closely involved with performance management, remuneration and appointment of family members with no apparent regard to the requirements of disclosure of interests. This has resulted in the loss of trust with staff and the public of a fair process and resulted in public concerns suggesting corruption.
- It is considered that the Executive Headteacher has not provided sufficient information from which governors could make sound decisions on senior leadership performance and pay. This has resulted in the significantly higher than normal pay structure of the senior leadership team and particularly that of the Executive Headteacher at the time of the review. (Taken from Devon CC audit report)
- There were no documented performance reviews in the Principal's personnel file after 2005 or any other documented independent scrutiny on his performance. Hence we were unable to find any documented basis for salary increases. (Taken from Education Funding Agency Report)

# Continuous Professional Development

- How much money is being spent on the full variety of CPD activities? What are the plans to increase this?
- How much time is allocated for staff to engage in professional learning? What are the plans to extend this?
- Is time allocated for all staff, including non-teaching staff?
- Does every member of staff feel supported and constructively challenged?
- Do they feel trusted and valued?
- How are school leaders ensuring that top-down quality assurance processes aren't hindering a culture of professional learning?.

