**Improving Governance**

High quality Governance in a PRU differs very little from that in mainstream schools. It is about; having an accurate understanding of key aspects of the school’s performance, rigorously holding leaders and managers to account and ensuring high standards resulting in good outcomes and excellent pupil achievement.

The key to high quality governance is how well the Governing Body holds the school and especially the headteacher, to account through asking challenging and searching questions and their (Governing Body) decision making being seen to have an impact on the provision for students – particularly students’ achievement. The principle areas that are reflected in OFSTED inspection commentaries in their inspection reports are:

* Knowledge and understanding of the PRU - in all its contexts and elements
* How well the senior leaders, in particular the headteacher, are held to account
* How well governors understand student achievement
* How well governors are aware of teacher’s performance and how this is related to pay progression and pay awards
* The effectiveness and impact of expenditure, particularly in improving students’ achievement

The evidence base for the evaluation of this aspect is:

* Minutes of governing body meetings, including relevant sub-committees – in particular a record of the questions asked by governors and their actions based on the answers
* Discussion with members of the Governing Body
* Discussion with staff and in particular the leadership team
* The triangulation of evidence from the above with what inspectors observe during the inspection in particular:
  + Quality of teaching and learning
  + Pupil progress
  + Pupil behaviour
  + Voice of key stakeholders: parents, local community and very importantly what the pupils say.
* External reviews or reports presented to governors
* Annual cycle of policy review
* Evaluation or records of CPD attended by members of the Governing Body e.g. Local Authority conferences for governors or bespoke training
* Evidence of compliance with statutory duties e.g. Safeguarding

In order to illustrate the findings of OFSTED inspectors in relation to governance the following two sections is commentary from OFSTED inspection report of PRUs which have been carried out in the Spring and Summer terms of 2013. The commentary focuses only on the aspect of governance. The first section gives examples from PRUs graded Outstanding, Good, Requiring Improvement and Inadequate – these are verbatim. The second section are sentences taken from the Leadership and Management section of the inspection reports.

Section 1

**Outstanding (real example)**

The management committee focuses closely on the needs of the unit. The primary headteacher representatives have asked searching questions and monitored the progress of pupils closely. They know what they want pupils to achieve and know how they can be involved in bringing this about.

**The governance of the school:**

The management has reconstituted recently and now meets the needs of the unit even better. It contributes well to the leadership of the school because each member has expert knowledge which they bring to bear on the improvement of the unit. This means that members are able to support the school well and ask searching questions of its leaders about its work. Members have a very clear picture of what is happening in school in terms of the quality of teaching and pupils’ performance compared with all schools nationally. They know that leadership roles and responsibilities are not well enough delegated. They manage the budget effectively and make sure that all safeguarding procedures are strong. They are clear about how the pupil premium is being spent and can identify the positive effect that this is having on eligible pupils. They are fully involved in performance management. They have a clear grasp of how the leadership of the school is driving improvement.

**Good (real example)**

The new management committee keeps the leadership team on its toes by asking searching questions, particularly about the quality of teaching and pupils’ achievements.

**The governance of the school:**

The governance of the school: Governance by the management committee is good. Though the committee has only managed the centre for a few months, it already has an accurate picture of its work. The committee is made up of educationalists, representatives of children’s services, and health professionals, all of whom have an in-depth knowledge of the needs of the pupils. As a consequence, it asks taxing questions of the head of centre about teachers’ performance and related pay, attendance and behaviour, and the effect this has on pupils’ achievement. The committee ensures funds are spent appropriately.

**Requires Improvement (real example)**

* The leadership team does not make it clear to staff and the Management Committee how well different groups are achieving.
* The Management Committee are not asking enough questions about how well pupils learn and how much progress they make.
* The leadership team and members of the Management Committee are not bringing about as much improvement as they could in teaching and pupils’ achievement at the Phoenix Centre.

**The governance of the school:**

* The Management Committee has a good understanding of the quality of teaching on both sites, and monitors the improvements through the school’s action plan and outcomes of lesson observations. Members have a clear understanding about how teachers who require improvement are both being supported and challenged. However, they have not ensured that teachers’ pay is linked to their performance.
* The Management Committee does not yet receive or seek enough detailed information about the progress made by groups of pupils, such as those in receipt of the pupil premium. As a result, members are unable to hold the school to account for ensuring that all groups of pupils make good progress.
* The Management Committee has ensured that procedures for safeguarding are effective and meet fully all requirements.

**Inadequate (real example)**

The management committee and the interim executive board have not done enough to secure rapid improvement in pupils’ progress.

**The governance of the school:**

The governance of the school: The management committee, and subsequently the interim executive board, have been aware of the issues at the school and have contributed to strategic plans for improvement. The formation of the interim executive board has successfully increased the engagement of local secondary school headteachers. However, they have not challenged school leaders rigorously about inadequacies in pupils’ progress and, as a result the impact of their contribution is limited. They do not check that pupil premium funding is specifically helping those pupils for whom it is intended. They have not yet taken action to ensure that teachers’ salary progression is linked to their performance.

**Section 2**

One of the OFSTED Inspectors, probably the Lead Inspector, will have looked at the minutes of the governing body. They will then meet with representatives of the governing body for a discussion. Along with each of the sections below are the types of questions that might be asked – although not necessarily the way in which would be asked! The vast majority of the examples of OFSTED commentary have been taken from PRUs graded as Good.

**Challenge & Support**

**OFSTED type questions**

* Tell me about a situation where you challenged the Headteacher? How was it answered and what decisions did you make based on their answer.
* Tell me about an important decision that the Governing body has made recently?
* How do governors pursue an issue where no action has been taken by the Headteacher despite a formal agreement noted in minutes of a previous meeting?

**OFSTED Commentary in the inspection report**

* They are able to challenge and support the centre very strongly and ask probing questions of its leaders about its work.
* The management committee has a clear grasp of how the centre’s leaders are driving improvement.
* They ask taxing questions of the headteacher about the quality of teaching, performance management and rewards for good teaching, attendance and behaviour, and the effect this has on students’ achievement.
* Members have ensured that the acting headteacher has been set appropriate targets for improvement and that the use of performance management with staff is linked to the way they are paid.

**Student Achievement**

**OFSTED type questions**

* Tell me about student achievement in the school?
* Tell me which students are making greater than expected progress. How is the school managing to achieve this?
* Tell me about which students are not achieving well. Why do you think this is and what are you doing about it?
* How is Pupil Premium funding used to raise achievement at your school?

**OFSTED Commentary in the inspection report**

* They understand the detail of students’ performance in qualifications compared with that of students nationally.
* The centre manager regularly reports on progress of the centre to the management committee and they are well placed to challenge as well as support the centre’s leaders.
* They receive reports from the executive headteacher, head of school and the local authority’s adviser, and ask probing questions so that they fully understand the issues facing the provision, particularly information on students’ progress and how it compares with similar settings.
* The committee has a clear understanding of the students’ progress and personal development and how these compare to mainstream schools.

**Budget**

**OFSTED type question**

* How do you decide on the priorities for expenditure? What factors do you take into account when making that decision?
* How do you monitor the impact of expenditure? What key indicators have you selected to evaluate the effectiveness of expenditure?
* How do you ensure value for money against your allocated budget?

**OFSTED Commentary in the inspection report**

* They manage the budget effectively and make sure that all safeguarding procedures are strong.
* The committee maintains stringent supervision of the centre’s finances.

**Performance Management**

**OFSTED type question**

* Tell me about the staffing structure in the school. Has it recently been discussed in a meeting? How does the staffing structure ensure good progress for pupils?
* How does the school set performance management objectives for staff? How are these objectives linked to school improvement priorities?
* How is the Governing body involved in the school’s performance management process? Has anyone in the governing body attended training for performance management and if so when?
* Have there been instances when staff recently not gone through threshold as a result of performance management review?
* How are staff supported in improving their performance at this school?

**OFSTED Commentary in the inspection report**

* They are fully involved in performance management and know how this influences staff pay.
* The management committee supports the centre’s leaders in promoting rigorous performance management and in improving the quality of teaching and learning.
* Members of the management committee provide excellent support and challenge for the executive headteacher and head of school to ensure that the performance and salary progression of staff are checked and endorsed accurately and effectively.
* Members are fully aware of teaching standards, what is done to remedy under- performance and exactly how performance management procedures are used to reward staff.
* Performance management systems are used to set appropriate targets for leaders and teachers and the management committee know about the link between the quality of teachers' work and arrangements for pay.
* Members are establishing a detailed, clear picture of what is happening in the centre in terms of the quality of teaching.