

A Trusted Governance Improvement Organisation

Shaping Governance: A-Z of Governance

Breaking down key governance concepts into clear, digestible insights

M is for Meaningful Engagement: The Importance of Stakeholder Engagement for School Governing Boards

Su Turner, our CEO shares her thinking...

Effective school governance goes beyond compliance and oversight; it is about ensuring that the school genuinely delivers on its promises to pupils, parents, and the wider community. One of the most powerful ways to achieve this is through meaningful stakeholder engagement. By actively listening to and incorporating the perspectives of key groups; particularly pupils and parents, governing boards can make more informed, strategic decisions that reflect the real experiences and needs of the school community.

Why Stakeholder Engagement Matters

School governing boards play a crucial role in ensuring accountability and transparency. However, without regular and structured engagement with stakeholders, governance can become disconnected from the realities of school life. Yet analysis from our work with 1000s of schools shows that 69% of governing boards are not confident at working with stakeholders or seeking their views when monitoring the school. This highlights a significant gap in governance practice which needs to be addressed to ensure effective decision-making and accountability. Here's why engaging with stakeholders is essential:

- **Enhancing Accountability**: Schools must do more than just set goals; they must demonstrate that they are achieving them. Stakeholder feedback provides valuable insights into whether policies and initiatives are truly making a difference.
- **Strengthening Trust and Relationships**: When pupils, parents, and staff feel heard, they are more likely to trust the governing board's decisions.
- **Improving Decision-Making**: A governing board that actively engages with stakeholders can make better-informed decisions, using real experiences to shape policies and practice.
- **Aligning Governance with School Values**: Effective engagement ensures governance decisions reflect school principles like inclusivity, respect, and excellence, keeping them connected to daily school life.

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Making Pupil and Parent Voice More Strategic

Governing boards can benefit from embed structured mechanisms for ongoing engagement, ensuring that stakeholder voice informs strategy rather than just operational matters. Here are some ways to make pupil and parent engagement more strategic:

- **Understand how stakeholders feel about the school:** Ensure that the school undertakes surveys and reports these to the board. Learning from regular surveys is a vital tool
- **Involvement in Policy Development**: Ensure that the school takes account of stakeholder voice in developing policies that directly affect them.
- **Pupil voice:** Consider how as a board you can directly hear from pupils about the school. Is pupil voice an agenda item?
- **Clear Communication Channels**: Ensure that stakeholders understand how their feedback is being used and where it has influenced decision-making.

How Shaping Governance Can Help

Shaping Governance works with school and trust governing boards to enhance stakeholder engagement, and in particular pupil voice; helping them transition from consultation to co-production. By supporting boards in creating structured engagement approaches, we help ensure that pupil and parent voices are not only heard but actively shape the school. For governing boards looking to strengthen their stakeholder engagement strategies, partner with us and we can support you to develop more effective, transparent, and community-driven leadership.

Final Thoughts

Governance should never be a distant function; it should be deeply rooted in the lived experiences of those it serves. Stakeholder engagement is not just a 'nice-to-have'; it is fundamental to a school's success. By committing to meaningful engagement, governing boards can ensure they are truly delivering on their promises, fostering a culture of trust, and making decisions that genuinely benefit the entire school community.

Contact us: Get in touch if you want to find out more: office@shapinggovernance.co.uk

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