

Review of school governing bodies in Wales – terms of reference

Purpose

School governing bodies in Wales have a wide and varied range of responsibilities set out in legislation and Welsh Government guidance. They play a pivotal role in the school system, supporting learners and school staff. The school system in Wales has seen vast reforms over the last decade, often with additional or amended duties imposed on governing bodies, but the role of school governing bodies has not altered in any fundamental way.

Calls for a review of governing bodies in Wales have come from local authorities and the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

A review of school governing bodies in Wales will be undertaken by Welsh Government officials. The review will be supported by a reference group to provide information, views and advice It will:

- consider the findings and recommendations from previous work conducted in this area, including the Estyn thematic review from 2023
- provide advice and challenge on scope, methodology and emerging findings and options
- act as a critical friend, ensuring the review is balanced, evidence-based and reflects the perspectives of key stakeholders
- ensure that members represent the perspectives of their sector/organisation while contributing to collective consensus
- support coherence and credibility of recommendations, considering alignment with wider education reform
- contribute to identifying risks, opportunities and practical implications for implementation.

The reference group will be representative of the school sector in Wales and will not make policy decisions or recommendations, but will provide input to inform potential options and actions for the work.

Scope

The review will focus primarily on examining the effectiveness, accountability, appropriateness and support mechanisms of school governing bodies in Wales, including how this is set out in legislation.

In doing so, and in exploring the full range of responsibilities conferred on governing bodies, the following themes will be covered:

- Structure and roles
 - Composition of governing bodies (representation of parents, staff, community, LA nominee, etc)

- Clarity and appropriateness of roles and responsibilities between governors, headteachers and local authorities
- Effectiveness and impact
 - How governing bodies contribute to raising educational standards
 - The quality of challenge and support provided to school leadership
 - Impact on school improvement and learner outcomes
- Support and training
 - Availability, accessibility and effectiveness of training and guidance for governors
 - Quality of clerking and administrative support
 - Consistency of support across different LAs and regions
- Accountability and oversight
 - Compliance with statutory duties (safeguarding, finance, curriculum, inclusion)
 - How governing bodies are held to account by LAs, Estyn and Welsh Government
- Recruitment and retention
 - Process for recruiting governors (including diversity and representation)
 - Retention, workload and barriers to effective participation
- Best practice and innovation.
 - Examples of high-performing governing bodies and innovative practices
 - Opportunities for collaboration between schools and governing bodies

Timeframe

It is envisaged that the review will take around 6-9 months with the aim of providing a report for the Welsh Ministers by summer 2026.