



## Values Based Leadership *Developing Inspirational Leaders*

# Case Study – Governor Reviews



### Background

Since 2013 Karen Frost, of Values Based Leadership, has been accredited as a National Leader of Governance (NLG). She was able to apply to the National College for Teaching and Leadership to gain the qualification to become an NLG because she has been Chair of Governors at a large high school for a number of years and because the school is graded outstanding for leadership and management. NLG's go through additional training to develop their skills as school governor reviewers and this has resulted in Karen undertaking a number of Governor Reviews requested by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services & Skills).

Karen recently worked with a rural Primary School set in the heart of the Herefordshire countryside in England. The school received a very challenging Ofsted report following a full inspection in June 2013. Leadership and management were graded as 'requires improvement' and the report recommended that the school undertake a full review of governance because governance of the school was found to be weak. The subsequent Section 8 visit in October 2013 identified that not enough progress had been made by governors and again a governor review was recommended.

In November 2013 the Executive Headteacher asked Karen Frost to undertake a full review as part of the Post Ofsted Action Plan. There was a clear recognition that the existing practices of the governing body were not adequate for the current leadership challenges and the on-going scrutiny of Ofsted.

## **Solution**

There is a set format for how an NLG should facilitate a governor review, however, there are significant differences between schools and the range of challenges they face. So, although there were specific requirements included in the review and the subsequent report, Karen was able to offer her extensive knowledge and understanding of governance, running Boards and leadership development to the situation at the Primary School. Once there was an agreement to run a review by the Chair of Governors, Karen's next step was to meet all the governors to explain the current requirements of school governance and how effective governance is defined. She also ran a governor self-review, as part of a full governor meeting, using a 20 minute technique and process she has developed for this sort of review. This raised awareness and gave the governors a clear insight into what was working and more importantly, what was not.

The next stage in the process was to review all aspects of governor activity by going through minutes, reports and national data for the school, to review the current position, make observations and include recommendations for change in the final report.

Karen made additional visits to the school to talk to staff and to meet governors to understand what was possible and what may need to change. Her final visit to the school was to present the governor review report and to make the recommendations that she felt were required to improve overall effective governance. Once the findings and recommendations had been accepted, the governing body moved quickly to implement the changes and Karen was able to offer well tried and tested approaches that the governors could adopt and adapt. Within two terms they were well on track and ready for the imminent Ofsted inspection.

## **Outcomes**

Ofsted came to the school again in July 2014. They graded the school 'good' overall and they also found leadership and management had improved to 'good'. They commented 'Governance has improved significantly and governors now play an effective role in holding the school to account for the quality of education it provides'.

In addition to the hard measurement of an Ofsted inspection, governors also reported that they had much more confidence in the way they behaved as a whole team and have continued to develop since the 2014 inspection.

Karen has stayed in contact with the Chair of Governors since the second inspection and continues to offer advice and support so that the school governors can continue to develop their skills and hold senior leaders to account.

*The school detailed in this case study would be happy to provide a reference to any school interested in or requiring an external review of governance.*