

# **School Governor Support Service Evaluation Report**

**Summer 2016**

## Introduction

At the beginning of the Summer Term 2016, the Governor Support Service circulated a questionnaire to all governors and trustees of governing bodies and academies in the town. We wanted to know what you thought of the Service and how we could improve. In all, 440 questionnaires were sent out and 111 were returned. A huge thank you to all who responded.

The aims of the questionnaire were:

- *To evaluate the effectiveness of the Service in terms of support and advice provided within and outside of meetings and at briefings and training events*
- *To help us improve communication with governors and trustees*
- *To gather views on how we can help governors and trustees to develop and improve their effectiveness in their role*
- *To ensure that the Service continues to provide value for money in responding to the ever changing face of school and academy governance.*

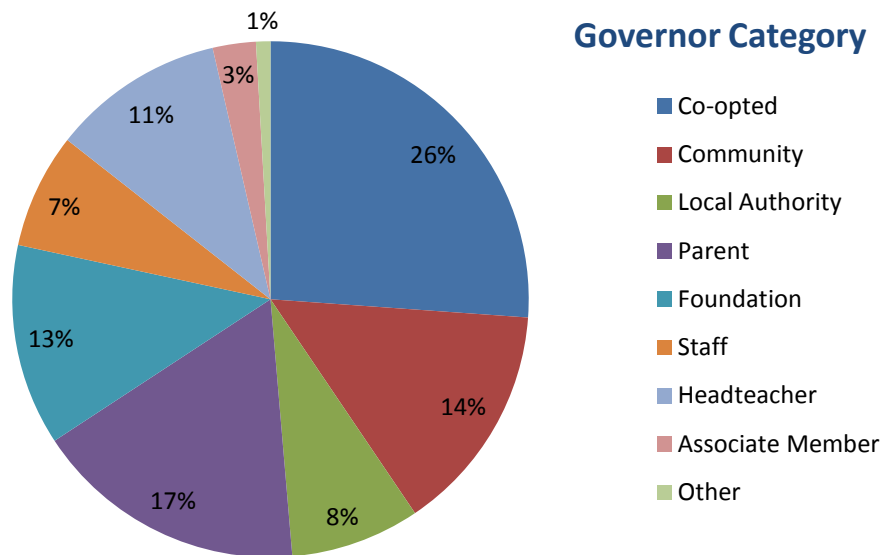
As a team we have considered carefully your responses which are summarised in this report. We are reassured by the many positive comments received but are determined in our commitment towards continual improvement of the Service. We have already started to address some of the issues raised as indicated in our responses in the following pages. Any further comments or suggestions would be most welcome.

Ann Turner  
Governor Support Service Manager  
September 2016

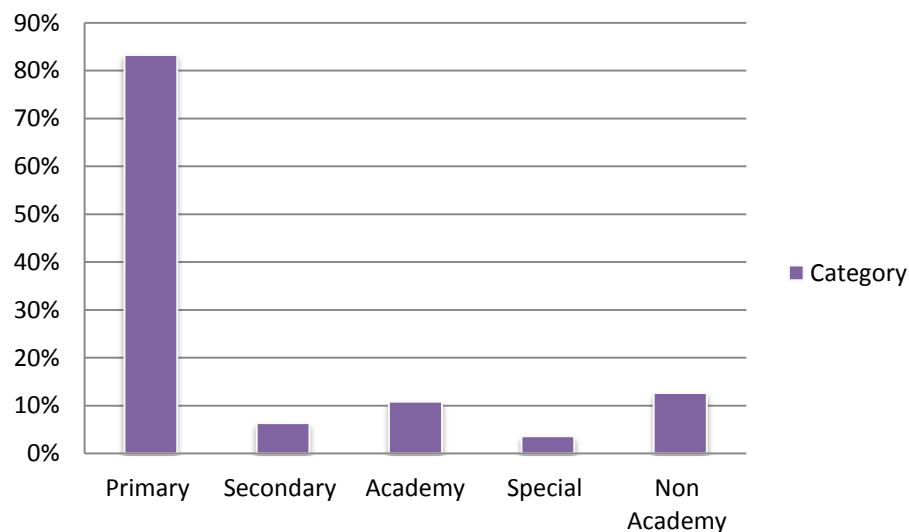
*“In my experience the support that has been given both in meetings and outside has been excellent. The team are always available and able to answer any queries, or to provide pointers to other areas of interest.”*

## Governor Details

### Responses by category of governor



### Responses by school category



Figures may not add up to 100% as some respondents indicated more than one category.

## How do you rate the Governor Support Service?

What do you think of our overall meeting performance?

	Excellent	Very Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very Poor	No response
Efficiency of circulation of meeting papers	56%	37%	2%	0%	0%	5%
Quality and accuracy of minutes	55%	40%	2%	0%	0%	3%
Attitude/professionalism/helpfulness of clerk	67%	28%	2%	0%	0%	3%
Quality of advice, guidance and support at meetings	60%	28%	3%	0%	0%	9%
Speed and quality of follow-up actions	48%	43%	4%	0%	0%	5%

### Summary of Comments

Governors indicated that the overall support provided in relation to meetings was very good or better. They valued the consistency and quality of the service and the Team's readiness to respond to governor requests, although comments were made about its capacity to clerk a growing number of meetings.

Governors commented on ways of improving the service including, more use of emails to circulate meeting papers to improve efficiency and reduce costs and making minutes of meetings available to governors sooner.

Other comments included schools not having papers available for distribution in time and more sharing of good practice and guidance on governors' role and involvement.

### Our Response

The LA is looking at capacity issues within the Team. This year the Team has agreed yearly plans with most schools to reduce meeting clashes.

Draft minutes are sent to chairs and heads for provisional agreement. Schools can then make these available to governors for information.

Some schools have set up password protected areas on their website for governors' access to minutes, policies and agenda items.

The Team works with schools to produce standard committee structures and focussed agendas to meet Ofsted's requirements to aid effective governance.

## How do you rate the Governor Support Service?

What do you think of our general day to day support?

	Excellent	Very Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very Poor	No response
Attitude/professionalism/helpfulness of Team	66%	23%	4%	1%	0%	6%
Quality of advice, guidance and support	55%	36%	3%	0%	0%	6%
Speed of response to queries and requests	51%	37%	5%	0%	0%	7%
Efficiency of support for Parent/Staff Governors elections	47%	34%	4%	0%	0%	15%
Effectiveness at maintaining accurate governor elections	50%	32%	4%	0%	0%	14%

### Summary of Comments

Governors indicated high regard for the support provided outside of meetings including the positive attitude of the Team in responding to requests and queries.

Governors commented on a need for more support and training, particularly for new governors and new headteachers, in clarifying roles and responsibilities and discussing issues and concerns.

Other comments included providing more clarity around DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) requirements and processes, the sharing of good practice and models used in other schools and, specific training focussing on 'new' responsibilities and expectations of the Governing Body, Ofsted and DfE.

### Our Response

Induction meetings are held with new heads and chairs to discuss their specific roles relating to governance and the support they can expect from the Team. Induction packs and training are provided for new governors and additional follow-up sessions are being introduced from 2016/17. Thought will also be given to further ways of supporting new governors in their role. The Governor Support section of the Council website is being developed and a new termly newsletter will help improve communication and provide further advice and key information links.

Suggestions for new training topics are welcomed and we will look to respond to these in forthcoming sessions. The Council's Contact Centre is working to improve guidance around DBS processes.

## How do you rate the Governor Support Training?

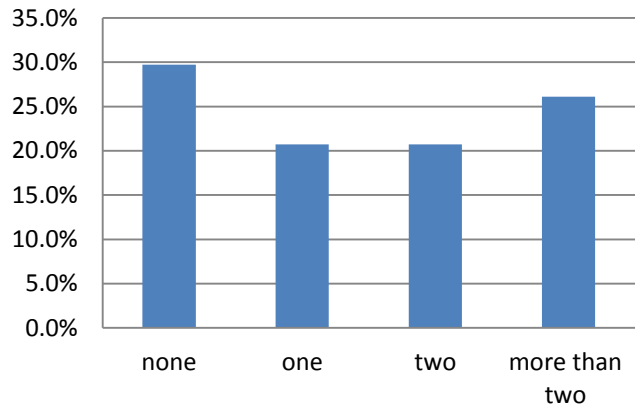
### Accessing Training

We asked whether you have attended any training sessions provided or facilitated by the Governor Support Service in the last 18 months. Around half of governors responding to the questionnaire have attended two or more training sessions. Almost a third had not accessed any training provided by the Service.

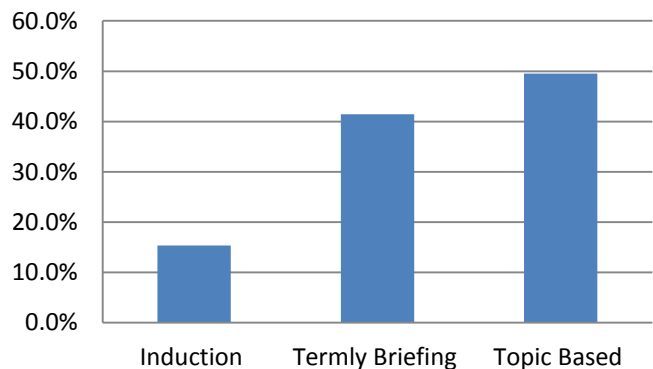
We asked if you have not attended a training session or have only attended occasionally, what are the reasons for this?

The main responses indicated timing and choice of sessions as being an issue. Also a number of governors indicated that they access alternative school-based or other training.

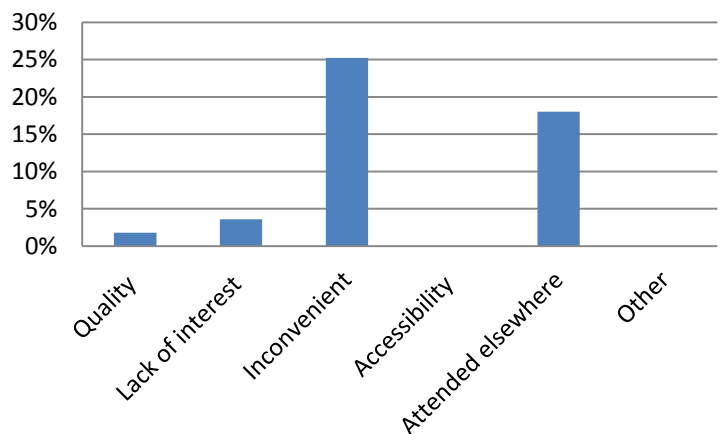
How many training sessions have you attended?



Type of training attended?



What are the reasons?



#### Our Response

We propose to arrange morning, twilight and evening sessions, wherever possible on different days, in order to improve opportunities for governors to attend training. We will also publish dates for all regular briefings and induction training for the whole year at the beginning of each school year.

## How do you rate the Governor Support Training?

How do you rate the quality of training?

	Excellent	Very Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very Poor	No Response
Overall Quality	23%	42%	2%	0%	0%	33%
Subject Matter	26%	40%	4%	0%	0%	30%
Relevance/topicality	27%	39%	3%	1%	0%	30%
Content	22%	42%	5%	0%	1%	30%
Length of Sessions	23%	35%	10%	1%	0%	30%
Timing of Sessions	22%	32%	9%	4%	2%	31%

### Summary of Comments

Most governors who have attended governor training and briefings found them to be very informative, of good quality and content, and relevant to their role as a governor.

A significant number of governors who responded to the questionnaire do not attend regularly. They have indicated a variety of reasons for this including time constraints, other commitments, lack of notice, timing of sessions, childcare and accessing training elsewhere e.g. through school. Some governors of secondary schools commented that training is geared mainly towards primary schools.

Governors made a range of suggestions for future improvements in training. These included varying views on the length, content and format of sessions as well as specific ideas for future topics.

### Our Response

Whilst accepting that governors serve in a voluntary capacity, the Governor Support Service would stress that governors' have a responsibility to undertake training to help them carry out their role of supporting and challenging schools. It is acknowledged that governors access training in a variety of ways and the sessions that the Team help to provide are intended to supplement these opportunities.

In responding to governors' feedback, as well as varying the times and days of sessions, we will continue to publicise dates in advance through direct mailing, and also use the Council website and the newsletter to ensure that governors receive timely notice. We will also try to respond to requests for specific training topics.

The Team is also available to help arrange and deliver bespoke training sessions for individual schools.

## How do you rate the quality of information and guidance provided by the Governor Support Service?

### Sharing Information

The Governor Support Service regularly presents reports to Governing Body meetings e.g. on changes to legislation, governance updates, guidance, requests for comment or general information. We asked in general how useful do you find these reports?

Governors overall found the information provided by the Service to be very relevant, informative, well presented and to a high standard.

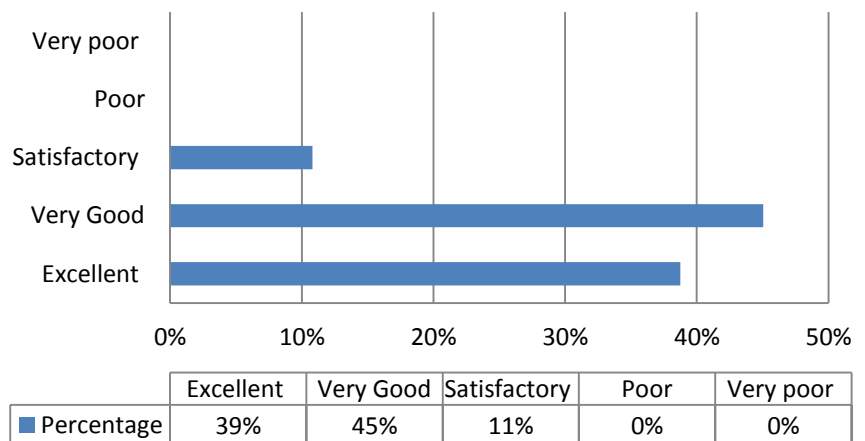
### Relevance



### Our Response

Sharing of information with governors is essential in helping them undertake their duties effectively. We will continue to present information that we believe is helpful and relevant. We will also regularly review and update our guidance and we will develop other methods of communicating information to governors through, for instance the Council website and newsletter as well as providing updates at briefing sessions. At the beginning of each academic year we will also provide updated information to heads and chairs on schools' membership, committee structures and attendance at LA training to help with planning.

### Format/Clarity



*Figures may not add up to 100% as some respondents did not provide a response.*



## Governor Support Newsletter

### Newsletter

As part of our aim of keeping governors informed and up-to-date on issues of relevance to you we asked for your views on the introduction of a termly newsletter. Of those who responded, there was an overwhelming vote in favour of this. Most respondents were also happy to receive the newsletter by email.

We also asked for suggestions on articles that you would like to see included in the newsletter. You gave us lots of ideas such as dates for key events and training, updates on governance, Ofsted and academies, sharing of best practice, local success stories and general advice to governors.

#### Our Response

We will introduce the first termly newsletter in September 2016. The publication will be called 'The Hartlepool Governor'. The feedback we have received has provided a good indication of the types of news that you would like to see. We will try to cover as many of these in future issues. We will also use the newsletter to signpost governors to other items which we think may be of interest through the use of website links.

In response to governor requests, and to help improve efficiency, we would prefer to distribute the newsletter to governors electronically. Whilst we would still send out copies to those who would rather receive it by post we would appreciate it if you could let us have your email details by contacting: [Governor.Support@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:Governor.Support@hartlepool.gov.uk)

**The School Governance Service is considering introducing a termly newsletter which would include short items of news and information relevant to governors.**

**“Do you think you would find this useful?”**

**99% Yes**

**“Would you be happy to receive the newsletter electronically (by email?)”**

**95% Yes**