

# How to question and challenge

## Using open and closed questions – some examples

Line of enquiry	Questions	Type	✓ or ✗	Why?
There have been some recent informal complaints about pupil behaviour; you want to find out what the true picture is and then depending on the response, if any action is needed.	How many pupils have been excluded this term?	Closed	✗	This closed question will only produce a figure for this year; it will not help build a useful picture of behaviour this year, enable useful challenge or prompt discussion of possible solutions.
	How would you describe pupil behaviour this term and have there been more exclusions than usual?	Open	✓	The open question prompts an explanation of pupil behaviour and a useful comparison of exclusions.
Your school is facing a deficit budget and benchmarking shows that spend on management is very high compared to other similar schools and you want to understand why.	Are you thinking of reducing your management team?	Closed and leading	✗	The closed question could be answered by a simple yes or no answer; its leading nature could be hostile and produce a defensive reaction.
	The management team salaries figure seems high compared to other similar schools – is there anything you think we need to do about this?	Open and leading	✓	The open question, although assertive, is more likely to produce an open response, allow for a candid discussion and if necessary, some actions.
An action from a previous board meeting two months ago was for the senior leader to ensure that the school's single central record was kept updated at all times.	Is the school's Single Central Record up to date?	Closed	✗	A closed question is needed but the first question doesn't effectively monitor the action; the answer yes may be given but it could be that the record was only updated once in the two months and there is no assurance as to the future.
	Are effective systems in place to ensure the continuous updating of the school's Single Central Record from the last board meeting and into the future?	Closed	✓	The second question is also closed but does effectively monitor and provides the assurance for the future.