

# Succession planning

## Scenario 1 – effective chairing transcript

You are the chair of a maintained primary school in Oldham and you have held this post for four years. The school is a two-form entry school with a pre-school, which is run by the governing board under community powers. Both the school and the pre-school are oversubscribed and have been consistently good with outstanding features for its last three inspections.

You are a recently appointed co-opted governor at a local secondary academy, having been recruited partly for your business acumen and financial management skills, but also because of your previous experience of governance at another school. During your recruitment process, you met the chair of the board and the principal and were impressed by their cohesive working relationship and level of professionalism and are looking forward to your first board meeting.

Seven days before the meeting, you receive by email the agenda and papers pertaining to most of the agenda items. The agenda appears to focus on relevant strategic issues, although a note alongside the agenda item for the principal's report states that this attachment will follow, but does not indicate when, and it has not arrived by the time of the meeting.

At the meeting you are warmly welcomed and introduced to your fellow governors, the clerk and attending members of the senior leadership team.

The meeting starts promptly, and the chair highlights the need to keep to the agenda and the desire for the meeting to last no longer than two hours. He also reminds governors of the three core responsibilities of the governing board and that discussions need to focus on the interests of the pupils.

As the meeting progresses, you notice that the chair and principal seem to do most of the talking, with contributions from some governors, while other governors remain silent throughout. It becomes clear that governors have been previously tasked with specific actions and are held to account for reporting back to the board.

The discussions involve many questions to the principal, from the chair and other governors, and the chair summarises each agenda item with action points, which are allocated to individual governors or members of the senior leadership team. The discussions are very positive and constructive, giving you the perception that the school is well led and managed.

When the agenda item for the principal's report is reached, the principal hands out printed copies to each governor, with an apology for not circulating the report in advance due to his enormous workload. An awkward silence falls as the principal delivers a verbal summary of his 40-page report. The chair thanks the principal for his report and wants to move onto the next agenda item to keep the meeting on schedule.

Another governor asks a challenging question about the progress data presented in the report, to which the principal provides a comprehensive response and invites further questions. The chair states that there is no time for further debate and tries to initiate the next agenda item. A governor who has not previously spoken points out that if the

# Succession planning

## Scenario 1 – effective chairing transcript

principal's report had been circulated with the agenda for advance reading, the time allocated for the agenda item could have been used for questions rather than a verbal summary. The chair appears not to hear this comment and moves on to the next agenda item.

The meeting progresses and gradually returns to the positive and constructive dynamic that existed at the beginning of the meeting.

The chair concludes the business of the meeting on time after two hours and closes the meeting with thanks to everyone for their contributions.