



Effective questioning and challenge

**28th March
2019**



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What governors and clerks need to know, when they need to know it.

Aims of today's session

By the end of the session you will:

- be aware of the Dept for Education view on where challenge and questioning sit within the role of governance
- have reflected on key opportunities where governors and trustees can exercise challenge
- Be equipped with tools and strategies to ensure questioning drives effective challenge

Core Functions of Governance:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff;
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Effective Governance (2019)



Governance handbook

For academies, multi-academy trusts
and maintained schools

March 2019

It should be driven by inquisitive, independent minds and through conversations focussed on the key strategic issues which are conducted with humility, good judgement, resilience and determination.



A Competency Framework for Governance

The knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for effective governance in maintained schools, academies and multi-academy trusts

January 2017

1

Principles and personal attributes


The principles and personal attributes that individuals bring to the board are as important as their skills and knowledge. These qualities enable board members to use their skills and knowledge to function well as part of a team and make an active contribution to effective governance.

All those elected or appointed to boards should fulfil their duties in line with the seven principles of public life (the [Nolan principles](#)). They should also be mindful of their responsibilities under equality legislation, recognising and encouraging diversity and inclusion. They should understand the impact of effective governance on the quality of education and on outcomes for all children and young people. In addition, all those involved in governance should be:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Committed | Devoting the required time and energy to the role and ambitious to achieve best possible outcomes for young people. Prepared to give time, skills and knowledge to developing themselves and others in order to create highly effective governance. |
| Confident | Of an independent mind, able to lead and contribute to courageous conversations, to express their opinion and to play an active role on the board. |
| Curious | Possessing an enquiring mind and an analytical approach and understanding the value of meaningful questioning. |
| Challenging | Providing appropriate challenge to the status quo, not taking information or data at face value and always driving for improvement. |
| Collaborative | Prepared to listen to and work in partnership with others and understanding the importance of building strong working relationships within the board and with executive leaders, staff, parents and carers, pupils/students, the local community and employers. |
| Critical | Understanding the value of critical friendship which enables both challenge and support, and self-reflective, pursuing learning and development opportunities to improve their own and whole board effectiveness. |
| Creative | Able to challenge conventional wisdom and be open-minded about new approaches to problem-solving; recognising the value of innovation and creative thinking to organisational development and success. |

What is meant by Challenge?

challenge

/ˈtʃælɪn(d)ʒ/ 

noun

1. a call to someone to participate in a competitive situation or fight to decide who is superior in terms of ability or strength.

"he accepted the challenge"

synonyms: [dare](#), [provocation](#), [summons](#)

"he accepted the challenge"

2. a call to prove or justify something.

"a challenge to the legality of the banning order"

synonyms: confrontation with, dispute with, stand against, test of, [opposition](#), disagreement with;

[More](#)

verb

1. dispute the truth or validity of.

"it is possible to challenge the report's assumptions"

synonyms: [question](#), disagree with, object to, take exception to, [confront](#), [dispute](#), take issue with, protest against, call into question; [More](#)

2. invite (someone) to engage in a contest.

"he challenged one of my men to a duel"

Effective Challenge?



Poll #1

How comfortably and confident are you to ask challenging questions in governing body meetings?

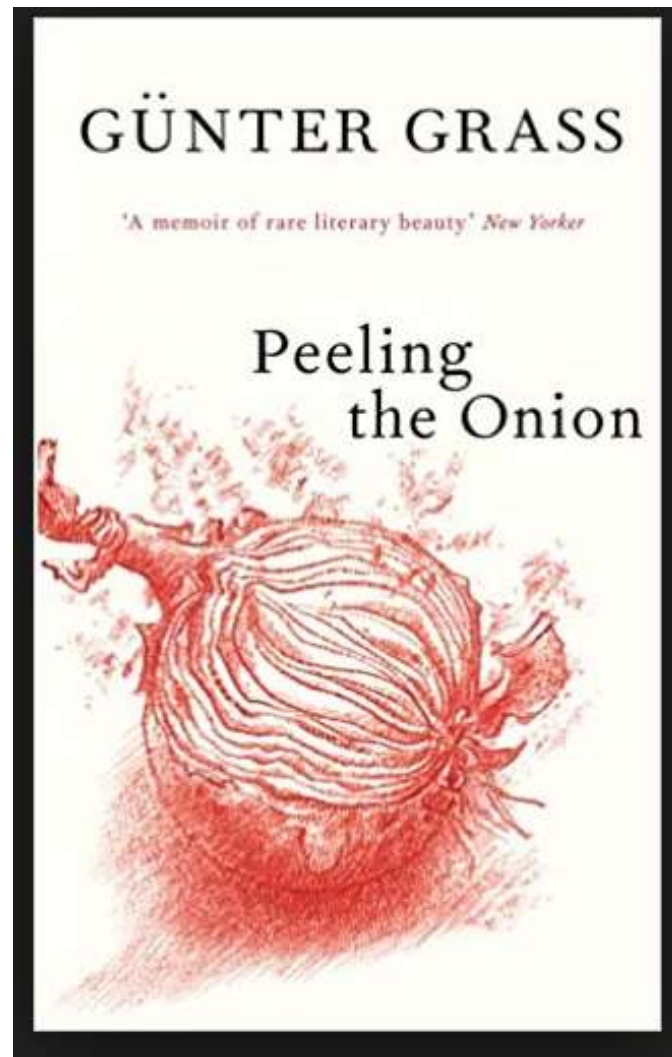
Opportunities to question

- Headteacher reports
- Subject leader reports
- School Development Plan
- Financial Monitoring Report
- Safeguarding review
- Health and Safety Reports
- and more.....

Effective questioning in 2019

- Question trails for true accountability
- Useful v *interesting*
- *What* not why

Trails - questioning for accountability



Evidence trail questioning



Evidence trail questioning

1. What prevents boys performing as well as girls in writing? *(Boys generally tend not to)*
2. Are there schools locally that buck the tendency? *(Not sure that we look at that)*
3. How could we investigate it? *(I could ask at the next local head's meeting)*
4. Are there any interventions in place aiming at improving boys writing now?



**KEEP
CALM
IT'S
YOUR
TURN NOW**

Evidence trail questioning

1. This years results show us broadly in line with the national average

What's your question?

Useful v *interesting*

- Our questions should inform:
 - Our knowledge of our school
 - Our ability to ask probing questions
 - The assurance we need as governors
- and *not* feed our salacious appetite

What not why

Any questions



What you need to know, when you need to know it



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