

Supporting Chairs of Governing Bodies

A Framework for Action

- a leaflet to motivate and recruit potential mentors

Supporting Chairs of Governing Bodies

Xshire's Recruitment Leaflet

We need mentors – do you fit the bill?

How would you like to take on a new role which will not only help improve our schools, but is also personally rewarding? Becoming a mentor in [Xshire LA/Governors' Association/Diocesan Board] could be just what you are looking for. Too often the skills and knowledge of experienced governors are not fully appreciated or utilised, but we want to change all that. Our scheme supports Chairs of Governors who want some extra help - generally because they are new to the post or because they are facing some problems they have not encountered before. We need people just like you to act as their mentors: knowledgeable, willing and ready to provide support when called on. Interested? - read on!"

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a process in which a more skilled or experienced person supports a less skilled or experienced person in developing confidence and expertise in a role. Support is offered in a non-judgemental way in the context of an on-going supportive relationship. Mentoring usually takes place face-to-face, although telephone and email can also be used.

"Mentoring concerns activities that give people the tools and confidence to take control of their own pathway. It is about empowering people to plan their own future and capitalise on their own potential."

(European Community)

Mentoring activities include:

- listening
- exploring problems
- discussing current issues
- acting as a sounding board
- identifying options
- comparing experiences
- looking ahead
- focusing on priorities

(Thurrock Governor Services)

What mentoring is not

- Coaching
- Providing professional or legal advice
- Appointment as an additional governor by the local authority
- Counselling
- Directional

Experience, skills and qualities needed by mentors

A range of skills, and qualities and experiences are needed to be an effective mentor.

These might include:

- empathy
- enthusiasm
- tact
- sensitivity
- listening skills
- ability to develop a relationship
- ability to maintain confidentiality
- a non-judgemental approach
- ability to ask open questions
- ability to build confidence in the mentee
- recent positive experience of chairing a governing body
- recent experience of dealing effectively with challenging issues as a chair
- undertaken leadership training – e.g. Taking the Chair

Situations where you may be required to provide mentoring

Mentoring can be a useful tool for supporting all chairs in a range of situations. It may be particularly useful to:

- a new chair
- a chair of a new school or fresh start school.
- where the chair is supporting a new headteacher who has little experience of working with a governing body

Mentoring can also be useful in certain new or challenging situations, such as:

- where a chair is asked to take over from an Interim Executive Board
- where chairs are leading the governance of extended services
- where the chair is attempting to implement training or change within the governing body.

In addition, there may be difficult situations where a range of support services may be appropriate, one of which may be mentoring. These may include:

- support for chairs in schools which have been identified as a local authority cause for concern or have been placed in an Ofsted category
 - where there is potential breakdown of relationships between the chair and the headteacher
 - where there is potential breakdown of relationships between the chair and other members of the governing body
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What will we do for you?

We will provide training and support:

- training courses for new mentors
- refresher training for experienced mentors
- sessions where mentors can come together to share practice and experience.
- a named co-ordinator who you can contact with your queries.

You can decide at any time that you do not wish to continue as a mentor

Mentoring in practice

How do you pick a mentor for someone, is it just the next person on the list?

No, an important part of mentoring is ensuring that the right mentor is matched with the right mentee.

When scheme organisers are approached for mentoring assistance we will look at a number of factors. These may include:

- geography and accessibility
- experience of a similar type of school e.g. primary, special, fresh start, faith school etc.
- experience of challenges similar to those faced by the mentee
- any potential conflict of interest that might exist between a mentor and mentee
- whether it may be desirable to provide a mentor who is outside the immediate geographical area of the chair's school

The mentee will also be consulted about the proposed mentor.

What will I have to do?

Agree to undertake the training – it is important that all mentors have a shared understanding of what is required.

Agree to abide by a Scheme's Code of Practice, which is set out below:-

- the initial contact between the chair of governors and the mentor should take place as soon as possible after a link is agreed
- the nature or frequency of contact will be mutually agreed
- chair and mentor will maintain total confidentiality in all matters.
- should either partner feel that there is a mismatch, an alternative mentor can be found
- mentors cannot provide professional or legal advice
- in exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to provide a mentor outside the mentee's immediate geographical area
- should a mentor behave in a way contrary to this Code of Practice, Xshire LA/Association/Diocesan Board reserves the right to withdraw that mentor from the scheme.

[Based on Essex School Governors' Association's Code of Practice.]

What will I get out of the scheme?

Benefits frequently reported by mentors include:

- increased self-confidence
- increased motivation
- sense of satisfaction from helping others and seeing them progress
- greater understanding of their own role
- the chance to build networks with other governors

How do we know if the scheme is working well?

At regular intervals we will ask you for feedback on how you think the scheme is working. We will seek feedback about:

- whether you think the scheme is effective
- the organisation of the scheme:
 - is the training sufficient?
 - do you need more support?
 - would you like additional sessions with the other mentors?

We will also seek feedback from mentees.

Any information provided in this way will be treated in confidence.

In this way we will constantly seek to improve and refine the scheme so as to provide the best service possible for mentees and mentors.

Still interested?

Contact xxxx to express an interest and find out more.
