

# GOVERNANCE AT ALPHA PLUS

## Principles, Structure, Process & Resources

### A. Introduction – Governance principles

The Alpha Plus Gold Standard is the Group’s vision of educational excellence. It informs individual school and college aims and objectives, and the standards to which Governors hold the Heads and Principals accountable. Governors are responsible for creating an ethos of high expectation and are expected to monitor, evaluate, support and challenge the Heads and Principals and their Senior Leadership Teams.

Good Governance is concerned with providing insight, wisdom and good judgement. It requires Governors to ‘know their schools’, and to promote the importance of good leadership. By knowing their schools and colleges, Governors should be able to ask and answer key questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- Is it good enough?
- What else do we need to do?

The Governors carry out the governance responsibilities required of the proprietor of every school and college. The three<sup>1</sup> key responsibilities of the Governors are:

1. to ensure that schools and colleges have clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction
2. to hold the Head/Principal to account for:
  - the educational performance of the school/college and its pupils
  - child welfare and protection
  - the performance management of staff
3. to oversee the financial performance of the school/college, and to ensure that resources are responsibly and effectively deployed.

Ensuring good management is a part of good governance, and in addition to its role as governing proprietor, Alpha Plus also provides some management and professional services to the schools and colleges. The following pages summarise the governance structure, processes and resources which are in place, distinguishing between *governance* and *management* responsibilities.

<sup>1</sup> These three key responsibilities listed are taken from the Department for Education *Governance Handbook 2015*.

## B. Governance structure

As described in more detail below, there are five components to the Alpha Plus governance structure for schools and colleges:

- i. Educational Governance
- ii. Line Management
- iii. Operational Management
- iv. Group Corporate Governance - overseeing i), ii) and iii) above
- v. The Alpha Plus Council – an educational advisory body

The interaction of these five dimensions is displayed graphically on the Portal [here](#), and the [Head Office Prospectus](#) sets out the vision of the Gold Standard and of the services provided by the Alpha Plus Group, and what it expects from schools and colleges in return.

Biographies of the Governors (who are also Directors of Alpha Plus Holdings plc) can be viewed on the Alpha Plus Group public website [here](#).

Biographies of the Alpha Plus Council members are also available on the website [here](#).

### i) Educational Governance

Educational Governance *process* is managed by the *Director of Education* who is responsible for:

- the quality assurance of the governance process, including the cycle of visits, the programme of review and checks, and ensuring follow-up of agreed actions. The termly programme of governance visits is described in Appendix 1.  
NB - Where Governors also have operational or line management responsibilities, and/or corporate governance duties (see below), the *Director of Education* ensures that any potential conflicts of interest are avoided/reconciled.
- the strategic development and quality assurance of teaching, curriculum, assessment, leadership and continuing professional development (CPD)
- promoting relationships with key educational bodies

The *Director of Education* is the nominated *Lead Governor for Safeguarding*, and the primary Governor contact for School Inspectors (e.g. ISI and Ofsted).

## ii) Line Management

The *Director of Schools and Colleges*<sup>2</sup> is the primary contact point for the Head of each school. Key duties include:

- Supporting and challenging Heads and Principals, mentoring and disciplining as required
- Recruitment and induction of new Heads and Principals; succession planning
- Objective-setting, annual review and appraisals
- Identification of CPD and other developmental needs
- Day-to-day guidance - e.g. on educational matters, incidents, parental relations, complaints
- Holding Heads and Principals to account for the 'inspection-readiness' of their schools and colleges
- Performance review of schools and colleges, and reporting to the Alpha Plus Board
- Agreeing first draft annual budgets of each school and college

The *Director of Schools and Colleges* is also a Governor. The *Director of Education* is responsible for ensuring that any potential conflicts between line management responsibilities and governance duties are avoided or reconciled.

## iii) Operational Management

One advantage of being part of a Group is the scale benefit it provides. Amongst other things, this enables the provision of expert resources across a number of professional areas, in particular:

- Finance
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Marketing and Sales
- Property (including Health & Safety)

Each of these areas is headed by a 'functional' operational Director who is responsible, within their domain of professional expertise, for operational efficiency and quality assurance, regulatory compliance, and the sharing of best practice where beneficial. These Directors are also Governors. The Director of Education is responsible for ensuring that any potential conflicts between line management responsibilities and governance duties are avoided or reconciled.

The Alpha Plus Group *Chief Executive Officer* (CEO) meets frequently (typically fortnightly) with the Senior Management Team, comprising these operational Directors, along with the Director of Schools and Colleges and Director of Education, and other senior resources as required, to consider strategic and operational matters.

<sup>2</sup> Nursery school Heads report to a Head of Nurseries who also oversees the EYFS provision by other schools, reporting to the *Director of Schools and Colleges*.

#### iv) **Group Corporate Governance**

The functions of Educational Governance, Operational and Line Management described above are all accountable to the Board of Alpha Plus Holdings plc.

The CEO, Executive Deputy Chairman, and non-executive Chairman of Alpha Plus Holdings are also Governors, and the Chairman is also Chair of the Governors. There are a number of other non-executive Directors who are not Governors.

The Board typically meets nine times a year to consider major operational and strategic matters. It reviews various reports, including the CEO's executive summary, a financial report, and summary progress reports prepared by each Director. These contain academic, pastoral, and operational performance data and commentary for each school and college, as well as safeguarding and compliance issues, and inspection outcomes.

Each Head/Principal is required to periodically attend a Board meeting to make a formal presentation regarding their school/college progress, performance, priorities and issues.

#### v) **The Alpha Plus Council (advisory only)<sup>3</sup>**

The Alpha Plus Council advises on the educational direction of the Group, and reviews the educational performance aspects of the schools and colleges. The Council meets once per term and its observations and advice are noted by the Board.

Council members offer a wide range of experience, and include a current parent. The Council considers latest developments in education and their implications for Alpha Plus schools and colleges. Such developments might include: curriculum and assessment; child welfare and protection; government policy; regulatory and inspection issues; independent sector market developments; and social issues such as trends in social media and technology.

Biographies of the Alpha Plus Council members are available on the Alpha Plus website [here](#).

### **C. Governance activities and processes**

Appendix 2 gives details of the wide range of activities and processes which are in place to fulfil the governance responsibilities of the Alpha Plus Group.

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<sup>3</sup> For the avoidance of doubt, the members of the Council (other than the Alpha Plus Holdings plc Chairman and Executive Deputy Chairman) **do not** have any Governance responsibilities for the Alpha Plus schools and colleges.

## Appendix 1

### THE ANNUAL CYCLE OF GOVERNANCE VISITS

#### Autumn Term

There are three focus areas for the autumn term visit:

1. Strategic planning
2. Quality of academic and other achievements
3. Quality of pupils' personal development, including the arrangements for actively promoting the **well-being** of children, defined by the Children Act 2004 to include:
  - ✓ Physical and mental health and emotional well-being
  - ✓ Protection from harm and neglect
  - ✓ Education training and recreation
  - ✓ The contribution made by them to society
  - ✓ Social and economic well-being

In relation to well-being, the governance visit will review compliance with statutory and non-statutory guidance e.g. KCSIE, Health & Safety, National Minimum Standards (where applicable).

Matters arising from the last governance visit and recent inspections are also reviewed.

In advance of the visit:

- Governors prepare by reviewing the annual progress and achievement report (APAR), the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF), and the School Development Plan (SDP), along with any other relevant reports and documentation.
- The Head/Principal self-evaluates against a comprehensive checklist of welfare and compliance questions, identifying **three** areas of strength, and **three** areas for further development.

#### Spring Term

The focus in the second term is the quality of teaching and learning, which typically includes lesson observations, conducted in conjunction with the Head/Principal.

The quality and impact of continuing professional development (CPD) is also reviewed, along with approaches to assessment, and progress on the SDP.

#### Summer Term

The main focus is a review of the year, including follow-up of previous visits, and plans for the following academic year. Governors also review approaches to appraisal, plans for curriculum review, and any other new initiatives.

## Appendix 2

### SUMMARY OF GOVERNANCE RELATED PROCESSES

- Regular Board meetings (typically nine per year)
- Termly meetings of the Alpha Plus Council
- Formal Governance visits to schools and colleges. See Appendix 2 for programme details
- Twice-yearly Health & Safety inspections at every site by independent professional experts
- Ad hoc school and college visits by Directors and senior specialist staff
- Annual appraisal of Heads and Principals
- Annual school/college budget and strategy meetings
- Standard planning and reporting documentation, including:
  - Annual Pupil Progress and Achievement report (APPAR),
  - Self-Evaluation Form (SEF)
  - School Development Plan (SDP)
  - Annual child protection report
- CPD and leadership training, supplementing the schools'/colleges' own programmes:
  - Centrally organised CPD (e.g. child protection, HR, health & safety, educational visits)
  - Middle/senior leadership CPD programme
  - Induction for new Heads and Principals
  - Inspection training for Governors
  - Safeguarding and Safer Recruitment training (for all levels)
- The intranet **Portal**, containing:
  - a wide range of policy and procedural guidelines and templates
  - electronic workflow, with review, status, and approval mechanisms
  - A-Z of Alpha Plus services and key contact information
  - A network of Portal administrators to establish quality assurance and peer-review
- Networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities
  - Head and Principal meetings (termly)
  - Specific meetings/forums, e.g. Deputy Heads; Heads of Department, subject-specific pedagogy; Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND)
  - Annual Leadership Conference for Senior Leadership Teams
- Governor attendance at a wide range of school and college functions – drama, art, prize giving, sporting, music performances etc.
- *A Code of Ethical and Professional Conduct*, with annual affirmation by all staff (including Governors)