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Governing bodies and headteacher performance and pay: the role of external advisers

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the role of the external adviser to school governing bodies in relation to headteacher performance management (HTPM) in England. School leaders are crucially important for the effective functioning of schools and there is an ever-growing body of inspection and research evidence which shows this to be the case – leadership matters, in particular principal or headteacher leadership. Oversight of the performance of school leaders is therefore crucial in the English educational system due to current initiatives promoting school autonomy coupled with tight, centralised accountability. Researchers in other countries have noted the lack of systematic understanding of the performance management of senior school leaders (OECD 2013; Radinger 2014). The same applies to England; however, current changes to the educational system, including increased school autonomy and the centrality of school improvement, linked to inspection, make the stakes much higher than elsewhere.

Understanding HTPM, especially the role of the external adviser or school improvement partner, is crucial given the evolving structure of the educational system and the shifting relationship between the state and schools. The role of the external adviser is especially pronounced in helping the governing body set objectives for its head and make decisions about remuneration and salary increases. The paper considers the degree to which outside assistance enables governing bodies to complete their key role in relation to managing the performance of headteachers and it outlines the main constraints under which external assistance and support operates. The paper considers the role of external advisers as critical friends and concludes that good governing is at the heart of effective HTPM; the two are complementary. Governing bodies and boards of trustees will play a key role in the future, a role which can be made easier with the help of effective external advisers.

1. Introduction

This account of the role of the external adviser (EA) in working with the governing body in relation to headteacher performance management (HTPM) draws upon evidence from research carried out for the Department for Education (DfE) and

published in 2014 (Eddy-Spicer et al 2014). This major study employed multiple methods encompassing: a systematic review of literature; quantitative data derived from two national surveys (headteachers, n=200; governors responsible for HTPM, n=1,088); and qualitative data from 15 expert interviews and a set of 20 case studies of schools and school groups.¹ The paper draws upon this extensive data set to consider governing bodies and HTPM with particular reference to critical friendship and the role of external advisers. The latter are employed by the majority of governing bodies to advise on the performance of their headteacher and the extent to which they have reached their objectives. Issues concerning the appropriate balance of challenge and support provided by governors will be discussed as well as concerns around external advisers and their deployment. The links between pay and performance are also discussed before a number of conclusions offered and the notion of performance leadership introduced. However, in order to understand the role of the external adviser it is necessary to begin with a brief overview of the governing body's role in the management of their headteacher's performance.

2. Governing body's role in HTPM

Schools and governing bodies in England are operating in a constantly changing and challenging environment. Although this appears to be an on-going and perennial scenario (Earley 2013) the 2015 Conservative administration has continued on a path of major education reform. Reforms and challenges facing schools and governing bodies in the mid-2010s include: funding pressures, teacher and headteacher recruitment, rapid growth in pupil numbers, curriculum and assessment changes, greater cultural diversity, increased child poverty, a new inspection framework, the continued drive to academisation, the associated growth of clustering, multi-academy trusts and chains, and the related decline in the role of the local authority or municipality. All these reforms and challenges must be seen against a backdrop of Teaching Schools and their alliances which are rapidly becoming the norm in a self-improving or school-led system (Greany 2015; Hill 2015). This system is expected to continue to raise standards and operate within a 'high stakes accountability culture' where failure to reach rising floor standards or benchmarks and close attainment gaps may lead to forced academisation, the imposition of new leadership and the replacement of governors with an interim advisory body (IAB) (DfE 2015).²

The report of the Academies Commission highlights the importance of external advice when it noted that 'the role of governors is more important than ever in an academised system, and their scrutiny and challenge should ensure effective accountability (Academies Commission, 2013, p. 5). Strategy, scrutiny, accountability, challenge and critical friendship are terms often associated with school governing bodies and although the demands on governors continue to grow

¹ Further details of the research and the methods deployed can be found in Eddy-Spicer et al (2014).

² At the time of writing a Bill – the Education and Adoption Bill, 2015 - was in the process of being passed by the British Parliament which would enable 'coasting' schools to be identified and action taken (e.g. taken over by a multi-academy trust) to enable them to improve.

their main functions have remained relatively unchanged since the major education reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Their three core functions are, namely:

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

It could be argued that effective oversight of the headteacher is the most important part played by the governing body in the overall governance of the school and this will include acting as a critical friend. It is here that the external adviser can add most value as a fundamental part of the scrutiny and accountability role is to be responsible for managing the performance of the headteacher. As such the governing body is also responsible for setting objectives and determining the headteacher's salary and remuneration package, both responsibilities where the external adviser's support is crucial.

Headteacher performance management is among the most important yet least understood aspects of the school governing body's role. Evidence about the diverse ways governing bodies in the different types of school in England carry out HTPM is lacking. The DfE-funded study was an attempt to shed light on the operation of governing bodies in relation to this key function and the role of the external adviser was an integral part of this process.

The review of headteachers' performance is normally conducted by a committee of governors drawn from the main governing body, often known as the appraisal or review panel. It is this committee which interacts with the external adviser. Data from the survey of chairs of governing bodies from the DfE-funded study show that with the exception of some multi-academy trusts, an appraisal panel was appointed by the full governing body which annually reviewed the headteacher's performance. The typical panel included three members - the chair of the full governing body, the chair of the committee that oversees staffing and/or finance; and one other governor who has particular expertise in performance management and/or education. The vast majority (96%) appointed a panel to oversee the process and two-thirds of the panels consisted of three governors. Exactly one-quarter reported that there were only two governors on the committee. Very many (92%) reported that some members of the review panel or committee had experience in appraising staff from their current or previous working lives.

The chair's role on the appraisal or review panel was a source of debate for some governing bodies, with a few schools explicitly excluding the chair. The choice of the third member of the panel also varied, with some schools carefully selecting a governing body member with appropriate expertise and others thinking about succession planning. The external adviser's advice may be sought. In some case the review group included four members, the chair and the chairs of each of the governing body committees who oversaw the work of the head (e.g. staffing, finance, and teaching and learning). In some instances, the review panel's remit was wider in scope than the headteacher alone and includes other senior staff or the senior team.

Regardless of the size or composition of the panel a similar process involving the external adviser was followed in nearly all cases, namely: the setting of objectives; monitoring progress in meeting those objectives; a review process where evidence that the objectives had been achieved was presented, new objectives set, and decisions about pay awards and incremental rises made. There was a standard rhythm or chronology to the interactions:

- An external adviser (EA) was commissioned
- The appraisal panel met to discuss points to raise
- The external adviser met with the headteacher
- The EA, headteacher and appraisal panel met together
- The headteacher and appraisal panel met
- The external adviser summarises the results of the meetings in a review document
- The appraisal panel makes recommendations about headteacher pay for other governors to make a decision about.

Performance management continues throughout the year with ongoing monitoring. This typically occurs as part of regular interaction between the headteacher and chair of governors as well as committee meetings that have oversight of aspects of the school (e.g. standards, finance, staffing) that relate to the headteacher's objectives. In addition to these meetings that typically focus on school performance, at least one formal mid-year review meeting of the appraisal panel and headteacher is recommended to check specific progress against the objectives. At this mid-year review, objectives may be recalibrated or revised to take into consideration the changing needs of the school and the headteacher. The external adviser is not usually involved in the monitoring process but can be if the school decides to purchase their services.

The review or appraisal process at one of the case study schools involved in the research was typical of many.

- It was initiated early in the autumn term with the annual external adviser visit (in some schools, the process was started in the summer term)
- In advance of the external adviser visit, the headteacher prepared a self-assessment and evidence which would be forwarded to the EA and the review panel
- There was then a series of meetings: between the external adviser and headteacher; the EA and panel; and between the EA, headteacher and the panel; culminating with the headteacher and the panel
- The outcomes of the meetings were then written up by the external adviser and sent to the panel for finalising. (Eddy-Spicer et al 2014, 49-50)

In this school the matter of pay was considered by a separate pay committee. However, for most schools - 86% according to the governors' survey – appraisal panels or review committees also made decisions about pay with just under one-third of these performing this as a separate part of the review process. Two-thirds of

governing bodies with separate processes regarding awarding pay reported that some members of the appraisal panel were involved in decisions about pay, but the pay process involved other governors as well. Thus, even when the process was separate the membership of the committees might substantially overlap. The issue of external advisers and pay and how it is related to the head's performance is discussed in a later section.

The surveys sought views about the effectiveness of HTPM and produced some interesting differences between respondents. The national surveys of chairs of governors and headteachers differed markedly with the former much more likely to judge the process as 'highly effective' than were headteachers. Figure 1 shows that one third of chair respondents but only about one sixth of headteachers judged HTPM in their schools to be 'highly effective'. This may be because the sample of headteachers was a small one, and both were opportunity samples. Unfortunately, as the vast majority of schools employed external advisers it was not possible to tease out their relationship or association with effectiveness.

(Insert Figures 1 & 2 here)

Similarly when asked whether they thought their HTPM process was 'fit for purpose' there were considerable differences, with headteachers far more likely to disagree that this was the case (see Figure 2). There were, however, no real differences in response between primary and secondary schools.

A crucial component is the headteacher's commitment to the process and the external adviser can be key here in shaping attitudes. If the headteacher does not view the process as something useful the governing body is not likely to either and the HTPM processes will be undermined. The inverse is also true and experienced headteachers may, with the help of external advisers, use their own PM as a means of tightening up the functioning of the governing body as a whole.

Views were also sought of the governing body's expertise for managing the process. As can be seen from Figure 3 there were again important differences. There were also some differences between primary and secondary school respondents, with the latter more likely to 'strongly agree' that they had the necessary expertise. To improve the overall quality of HTPM reference was made to time, pay, data, overall rigour, training and support and external advisors. A variety of organisations offer governor training, but only half offer it on HTPM. As *The State of School Governing in 2014* reported, take up of governor training is variable: it is limited in schools serving relatively disadvantaged areas and where attainment is below average (James and Goodall 2014, 15). The isolated and inward-facing nature of many governing bodies brings a risk to finding an external adviser who can ensure effective HTPM.

The DfE-funded research found that the relationships between the headteacher, the external adviser and the appraisal panel, particularly the chair, were crucial. Effective HTPM was found to hinge on mutual respect, trust, candour and a willingness to challenge and to be challenged (Eddy Spicer et al 2014, 62). The key role of the external adviser in the process, especially in providing challenge, is further discussed in the next section.

(Insert Figure 3 here)

3. The role of the external adviser

The deployment of an external adviser or consultant with appropriate expertise and knowledge of the school, which the governing body will typically employ for a short period (1-3 days), can bring considerable benefit. They combine several roles, helping to make clear the process as well as clarifying the links between accountability (both internal and external), headteacher development and governing. They often acting as brokers and the vast majority of schools use them.

a) Mediating and adding value

External advisers can play an important role in mediating between the individual needs of the headteacher and the school's goals, as well as working to help the governing body develop its capacity to carry out effective performance management. Typically the external adviser ensures that the process is underpinned by sound data and appropriate data use.

Data from the surveys and the case study interviews highlight the very important role played by the external adviser. Nearly three-quarters of governor respondents 'strongly agree' with the statement that 'the external advisor provides valuable input into the appraisal process' with a further 19% 'agreeing'. This compared with figures of 58% and 27% respectively for headteacher survey respondents. About one-in-ten headteachers disagreed with the statement. Where examples of the previous failure of HTPM were given, inadequacies or weaknesses of the external adviser were prominent, alongside those of the chair, which highlights the importance of both roles in providing critical friendship.

The case studies from the DfE research made clear many important facets of the external adviser role. They are, summarised neatly in this account of a discussion with the headteacher of a primary school:

The headteacher was keen to employ the services of someone who had a strong understanding of primary schools i.e. curriculum, attainment data, could relate to an astute governing body and had Ofsted experience. Moreover, as a highly experienced and successful headteacher himself, he was anxious to work alongside a professional colleague who could support, question and challenge.

The research found that external advisers deemed effective in helping governors with HTPM offered the following. They:

- produced a data-digest for the appraisal or review panel so they had a clear understanding of how the school was performing
- supported the governing body in interpreting information and pupil performance data
- had broad experience working with a number of governing bodies

- supported, questioned and challenged the headteacher
- were knowledgeable about the headteacher appraisal process and performance management generally
- had specific knowledge of the school, its history and its context.

They had respectful and trusting relationships with both the headteacher and the governing body/appraisal panel.

b) Delineating roles

An issue for the external adviser was to ensure the clear delineation of roles - between an adviser to the governing body and a mentor to the headteacher. This was important and related to the potential lack of clarity about the role of the external adviser and divided allegiances. The external adviser was employed by the governing body to provide a service to them and not their headteacher.

In one of the multi-academy trusts (MAT) involved in the research there was a clear delineation between the accountability and development functions of the external adviser in supporting the governing body to interpret evidence and to challenge the headteacher. The external adviser had a developmental focus acting as mentor to the headteacher, discerning appropriate learning objectives and goals for personal and professional development. The director of education within the MAT served more of an accountability role, line-managing the headteacher and working with local governors around understanding school data and delineating areas that demanded attention or raised questions. However, the academy trust also engaged external advisers - experienced headteachers, principally national leaders of education (NLEs) - to facilitate headteacher development, following a model of mentoring initially established in the London Challenge (Earley and Weindling 2006). The external advisers in this MAT were challenge partners, who served not as evaluators of performance but as a coach/mentor in discerning appropriate challenge and the kinds of support that would enable the headteacher to develop effectively. Both the external adviser and the trust's director of education were involved in the headteacher's performance appraisal, along with a representative of the local governing body of the school. Both the director of education and the national leader of education worked with the headteacher and the local governing body on HTPM. However, it is not known how typical this model was across MATs and further research is needed on HTPM in academies, free schools and other non-Local Authority maintained schools.

c) Avoiding role conflict

The adviser is an agent of the governing body; however, a number of respondents noted that the external adviser, often identified or selected by the headteacher, had a closer allegiance to the headteacher than the governing body. In some cases neither the governing body nor the school was well served by the arrangement and the deployment of new external advisers enabled the governing bodies to understand for the first time how disadvantaged and ill-served they had been by the previous arrangements, which favoured poorly performing headteachers. A counter-example in the research was that of a converter academy that had decided to dispense with an external adviser, the services of which are not mandated for academies (or other non-Local Authority maintained schools). In the past, the school used an external

adviser /school improvement partner who knew the school and its context. However, more recently they found that the external advisers they had employed had added little. Since becoming a converter academy, they decided not to use one. (The 2012 appraisal regulations do not apply in academies, free schools, other independent schools, or sixth-form colleges although they are free to use them if they wish.) This was an experienced and confident governing body who decided that it could not warrant the expense of employing an external adviser for so little 'additionality' or added value. The depth of experience and expertise of school governors played a large part in this decision. However, the governing body is now reviewing this policy as they feel the need to provide their headteacher, who they consider to be outstanding, with someone who can avoid role conflict and provide critical challenge, alongside that of the governors, and professional peer review.

d) Finding the right external adviser

Where to locate external advisers who can demonstrate the above qualities was an issue for some schools. The survey of governors found that 13% agreed that 'it was a challenge to identify an appropriate external adviser' and when deployed the vast majority came from the local authority and/or were school improvement partners. Just under one-third made use of 'independent consultants'. The availability of appropriately qualified external advisers and enabling ready access to them was a concern. Very rarely were they employed from outside the education sector.

Also there was no standard cost for external advisers and it was hard to discover the market price for 1-2 days of their time. The survey of chairs of governors found that fewer than one in 50 reported not making use of the services of an external adviser. Some schools' resources were already too stretched to meet their cost and even where schools appeared to have sufficient funding, governors were often reluctant to spend school funds on themselves (or external advisers) that could otherwise be spent on the pupils (Bubb 2015).

However, the extent and depth of the external adviser's knowledge of the school was important. Some schools, especially those undergoing rapid development and change following an unsatisfactory Ofsted report noted how important it was for the external adviser to have deep knowledge of the history of the school, its pupils and the community it served. They needed to know the school well and be able to ask probing questions based on analysis of the full range of information provided. Swaffield (2015 68) in her research into school improvement partners (SIPs) found, for heads, that individual qualities and skills were more important than particular expertise. However, external advisers unlike SIPs, were more likely to be trusted and not seen as "operated in and agents of, the essentially managerial and bureaucratic context of English schooling" (ibid, 72).

Although external adviser continuity was deemed important, some governing bodies deliberately replaced them every two years, for example to bring independence, rigour and a fresh eye to the process and to avoid any risk of complacency or cosiness. One of the case study heads remarked of his governing body that 'they know how to probe, but the external adviser shows them exactly where to probe'. In examples where there had been previous failure of HTPM, the quality of advice from the external adviser had also been shown to be inadequate.

Effective HTPM hinges on a willingness to challenge and to be challenged and external advisers were crucial to the process. One interviewee recalled that in his first term as governor, he realised how rarely the headteacher was questioned: 'Nobody would act as a critical friend and question the head'. The first time the chair raised a question he 'was rounded on by other governors and told not to ask those questions'. The external adviser can help here through working with the appraisal panel or more generally with the governing body to encourage a more critical approach. This is especially the case with objective setting.

e) Objective-setting

The external adviser played a crucial role in helping set objectives. At the most basic level, the external adviser introduced the use of pro-formas for documenting and clarifying objectives. Often, these were or had been developed by the local authority for use in all schools in an area. But a wider mediational role was also very important for the prioritisation and calibration of school goals with individual objectives. The external adviser served as a fulcrum in many instances, helping the headteacher and the review panel to find the right balance of challenge and support, precision and flexibility in setting objectives.

However, on occasions the external adviser could serve as a barrier to governing body involvement with objective setting. In the headteacher questionnaire survey over one-half reported that they themselves were most involved in the setting of their own objectives, and several comments attested to heads' frustrations with the inability of their governing bodies to understand how to establish appropriate objectives.

The research noted many instances of the use of objectives for addressing difficult circumstances within the school due to issues such as low attainment, lagging pupil progress, unsatisfactory teaching, and the need to strengthen middle leadership. What was not found were many carefully-crafted instances of using objectives to promote personal development or clear articulation of individualised learning aims (see Seijts and Latham 2005). A MAT stood out as acknowledging the distinction between accountability and development in its procedures, including objective setting, but such close attention to personal development and even individualised learning goals for professional development was atypical in the case study data. Curiously, governing body survey responses indicated a wide range of types of objectives in use. However, headteacher respondents were much more apt to note an overemphasis on 'hard' objectives that emphasised accountability for improved school performance.

Individual developmental objectives, professional as well as personal, were less frequently mentioned as a focus of ongoing monitoring but the well-being of heads and the ensuring of an appropriate work-life balance were frequently on the agenda if not formally monitored. The survey of headteachers, for example, found about one-quarter disagreeing with the statement that 'the results from my appraisal are used to further my professional development'. However, just over one-half of headteacher respondents noted that their 'professional development and growth' were important objectives for their most recent appraisal.

Most schools did not make robust use of objectives for *personal* development in connection with professional and organisational or school development. The surveys revealed a disparity between headteachers and governing body members around the use of objectives for personal development in connection with professional and organisational development. The schools or groups of schools with the most developed forms of PM were far more likely to pay close attention to the headteachers' personal objectives. The lack of focus on personal development in relation to school development is a major reason why the literature advocates setting aside some time for interim review. This area is important for governing bodies to develop in order to reinforce trust and good relationships.

Overall, the research found that 'developmental' objectives were not given a high priority or feature prominently. A headteacher will of course develop by working on performance objectives but there is a case for development objectives being given a stronger profile. A previous national scheme which ran until the mid-2000s stated that one of the head's objectives set should relate to their own personal development. Other objectives were linked to organisational development and pupil attainment (Crawford and Earley 2004). According to interviewees and survey respondents this advice was still largely followed. However, the aspect of personal development was usually applied in an instrumental way and was not nearly as well developed as organisational objectives. It is vital that headteachers are explicitly given opportunities to develop their practice and refine their skills particularly in the current rapidly changing context.

The external adviser can play an important mediating role in ensuring the range and coherence not only of objectives but also of the wider organisational processes that connect objective setting with the SDP, and help the governing body understand what information to pay most attention to in its monitoring efforts. In schools or school groups that emphasised personal development, the external adviser also played a crucial role in calibrating the head's personal and professional objectives to the particular needs of the school.

In the English context of high stakes accountability, external advisers have a responsibility for ensuring that governors do not overburden headteachers with too many or inappropriately aggressive objectives. If they do, there may be a danger that 'unintelligent accountability' may result which in turn may well undermine the headteacher's motivation, their sense of creativity and their essential commitment to the task at hand. Of course such objectives may be deployed in an attempt to encourage the headteacher to move to pastures new but in the majority of the study's case studies the issue was more one of 'retention' – how to keep excellent headteachers and allow them to engage in activities which would ensure they were sufficiently motivated and did not wish to take up fresh challenges elsewhere.

f) Summary

It was clear from the research that the involvement of a highly competent external adviser was crucial to securing effective HTPM. All governing bodies should have someone from outside who is part of the process, otherwise the process might not be a fair and open to abuse if left to an internal governing body. They were keen to have someone who 'understood the territory' and who could question and challenge. External advisers were specifically selected for their relevant expertise and

experience seeing their role as 'acting as a lens', bringing knowledge and experience to the role to ensure that governors fully understood the information provided. Interestingly, one school said they used an external adviser in order to save the governors' time and energy in pulling together all the information and not because they did not understand the issues, or were unwilling to do so.

In summary, governing bodies were using external advisers to bring rigour to the HTPM process, changing the individuals regularly to avoid any risk of complacency and helping them to achieve the right balance between ongoing support and appropriate challenge. The external adviser was an agent of the governing body and should not therefore have a closer allegiance to the headteacher. Providing recommendations for pay decisions is an important outcome of the process that is among the most challenging, even for governing bodies and headteachers with well-developed HTPM processes and external advisers. It is to this that attention is now given.

4. Pay and performance

a) Decisions about pay

As noted earlier, in most school governing bodies the matter of the headteacher's pay was considered by the review panel, only a minority deployed a separate pay (or other) committee but even these often contained panel members. The committee makes a recommendation to the full governing body about whether they think the head's performance merits a pay increase and if so, how much. There is no automatic progression and the evaluation of performance serves as the basis for all determination of pay.

Headteachers were typically required to provide evidence, which was scrutinised by external advisors that they had met the objectives that had been previously set. As earlier noted, these objectives were typically linked – sometimes very closely - to school development plans and associated success criteria, and a clear link was thus established between the headteacher's performance and overall school performance, especially with reference to attainment or standards or being successful in external inspectors' (Ofsted) terms. Other, more rounded, performance measures such as pupil voice, enjoyment, self-esteem, confidence and resilience were uncommon.

To assess headteacher performance governing bodies used a variety of externally validated pupil performance data, such as RAISEonline or Ofsted data dashboards. If needed external advisers would assist with their interpretation. Collection of evidence from other stakeholders was also used, albeit less commonly, such as through the use of 360-degree feedback, exit interviews or governor visits which included discussion with teachers and pupils. The importance of accurate knowledge or evidence about, for example, the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress, was highlighted. External advisers were drawn upon to confirm the accuracy of the school's own assessment data and teaching observations. Their views on a pay award may be sought but this was not always the case.

The head's salary range and position on it will be determined by a number of factors, such as the location and size of school, the school's particular circumstances and

challenges faced. Salaries are based on the 'leadership group spine'. Every school is assigned to one of eight 'groups' according to the number, age and special needs status of pupils. There is a national formula for deciding which group a school is in (further details of group size and headteacher salary ranges are found in Appendix 1). Within the group, a seven-point 'individual school range' (ISR) is calculated with reference to the pay of other senior staff in the school. Heads move up the seven salary points subject to satisfactory performance assessment, i.e. any incremental rise is subject to annual review. In cases of outstanding performance, they may move up two points. Pay ranges should not *normally* exceed the maximum of the headteacher or school group size but there can be exceptions (e.g. recruitment, retention, system leadership roles, see DfE 2015). Again, external advisers' views on appropriate action may be sought but this was not always the case.

As with appraisal regulations, governing bodies of academies and free schools are not subject to the same national conditions as LA-maintained schools but as other DfE research has shown most do follow them (Cirin 2014). However data from the School Workforce Census show that Academy heads tend to be higher paid on average than do heads of local authority maintained schools (Earley 2013). Most of the highest earners are employed by Academies, which can deviate from national terms and conditions and have more freedom over pay than maintained schools.

b) How well paid are headteachers?

It is important for external advisers to have a broad understanding of pay levels. It has been suggested that salaries for headteachers in England are amongst the highest in the world as are those for teachers (Earley 2014, 2015). Figures published in October 2014 showed that more than 40 headteachers earned more than the British Prime Minister, up from 31 the previous year. In 2013-14 - 900 heads earned six-figure salaries, up on 700 in 2011-12 and 800 in 2012-13. The current Education Secretary has said that school leaders should rein in such large salaries although private sector leaders in comparable jobs attract higher rewards (ibid 2014). Exceptionally high earners make for good media copy. For example, a £200,000-a-year primary school head is to have her pay almost halved following an investigation (Daily Telegraph, 22 June 2015). The local authority "offered to support" the school's governing body carry out a 'further audit of its procedures' and 'bring her salary under control'.

Some governing bodies in the DfE-funded research gave their heads pay awards that might appear generous and there was a particular risk that the school might over-pay. Governors' lack of comparative knowledge about what heads in similar schools and contexts earned and what was reasonable given the current labour market conditions was an issue. External advisers were not always in a strong position to offer advice. There was also the issue of retention and some governing bodies were happy to award what might appear generous pay awards, especially at a time when teacher salaries were fairly static, in an attempt to retain the head's services. Local labour markets matter too. It may be the case that governing bodies have to pay over the market rate to secure an outstanding candidate or offer attractive annual increments to retain their head and prevent any 'headhunting' or poaching. Those external advisers that had such local labour market knowledge were invaluable.

Chairs identified the availability of suitable access to benchmarks as one of the changes most likely to improve the quality of HTPM. With the growth of academies and the diminution of the local authority role, governing bodies and external advisers do not have access to benchmarking data, which could have implications for pay, especially in regards to gender. The lack of comparative knowledge about what heads in similar schools and contexts earned and what was reasonable given the current labour market conditions was an issue. In the past many local authorities had provided such 'benchmark' data to school governing bodies and their advisers.

In some cases governors can feel pressurised into having a more positive view of the head's performance in order to make a pay award and that insufficiently challenging objectives are agreed, to avoid conflict over the head's appraisal; or the review is insufficiently candid, because the head does not want to put their pay at risk. One of the external advisers interviewed noted that 'the process is particularly effective at this school because 'governors are not afraid to say what they think, either to each other or to the headteacher' (Eddy-Spicer et al 2014, 14). In other schools, especially those with outstanding headteachers, the governing body was often said to be 'in their pockets', with implications for their salaries.

The research found that providing recommendations for pay decisions was among the most challenging, even for governing bodies with well-developed HTPM processes and effective external advisers. There has been a long period of relative flexibility on the part of governors as to how much to pay their head; performance-related pay has been in existence for headteachers in England since 2000 but the challenge may increase as performance related pay becomes the norm. Interestingly, as this becomes more commonplace across the education system, there is little evidence to show that for either heads or teachers pay is a strong motivator.

For one of the case study schools involved in the research the issue of pay was relatively unproblematic and was reduced to a simple formula: 'If objectives have been met, one increment. If performance has been exceptional two increments'. However, arriving at a recommendation around pay was not straightforward, and in all of the case studies, the process involved substantial discernment, sometimes directly involving discussion with the headteacher and external adviser and at other times not.

5. Conclusion

The process of HTPM can be particularly challenging for governing bodies because it may involve thinking about themselves differently. The external adviser can have a key role here. For example, governors might move from a stewardship mode of governing, where the headteacher is trusted and seen as part of the collective that takes responsibility for the conduct of the school, to a principal-agent mode, where the headteacher is seen as the person employed by governors to manage the school. Stewardship and agency theory (James et al 2011) are useful lenses to consider and external advisers, amongst others, may help them to raise questions about their mode of operation in the changing educational landscape.

The external adviser can help governors make this transition in how they see their role. Also as discussed external advisers can offer advice, act as a critical friend to both the head and the governors, check the evidence of meeting objectives and proffer opinions about them in comparison to other headteachers. There is a risk however that external advisers can wield too much influence and that governing bodies abrogate their responsibility to the external adviser (Eddy-Spicer et al 2014, 92).

A strong conclusion from the DfE-funded study was that effective HTPM depends on mutual respect and trust in the relationship between the governing body and the headteacher. Trust and respect enabled governing bodies and headteachers to move beyond a sole focus on appraisal to more extensive and intensive uses of performance management as a coherent tool for internal accountability. The elements of mutual respect most frequently mentioned were openness, honesty, ability to be frank and to challenge and to accept challenge, with neither governors nor headteachers 'afraid to say what they think'.

Governing bodies will benefit from the deployment of an external adviser or consultant with knowledge of the school and appropriate expertise. As has been shown, the external adviser, as currently practiced, combines several roles, helping to make the process clear as well as clarifying the links between external accountability, internal accountability, headteacher development and governing (Eddy-Spicer et al 2014, 101). The central theme of this paper is that managing the head's performance is probably the most important role played by the governing body in the overall governance of the school and that the external adviser makes a valuable contribution, especially in helping governors to set appropriate objectives, provide challenge and become critical friends. Effective chairs generally talked about headteachers needing someone to challenge them and felt that good leaders valued that challenge. Some reported on previously ineffective approaches to HTPM that had been characterised by a 'too-cosy relationship' between the chair, external adviser and headteacher or a chair or external adviser unwilling to challenge the headteacher. The move from being primarily members of the head's supporter club to operating as critical friends was key (Crawford and Earley 2004; Swaffield 2015).

External advisers are crucial but the availability of appropriately qualified people and enabling ready access to them may be a concern in the future. However, increasing the provision and quality of external advisers is only one piece of the comprehensive solution required to develop governing body capacity to implement robust HTPM.

Governing the development of the school as an organisation and managing headteacher performance are ongoing and intertwined processes for intelligent accountability, both internal and external. The HTPM cycle should follow clear procedures and pay close attention to the ways that personal and professional goals mesh with school needs. Setting, monitoring and reviewing objectives should make use of appropriate information and evidence from a range of sources not just attainment data. Formal interim monitoring consists not only of monitoring progress against school performance objectives but provides a moment to take stock of the individual performance of the headteacher against the full range of their objectives.

As has been shown the external adviser can play an important role in all of the above and in mediating between individual needs of the headteacher and school goals, as well as working to help the governing body develop its capacity to challenge and provide critical friendship. Providing recommendations for pay decisions is an important outcome of the process that is among the most challenging, even for governing bodies with well-developed processes and effective external advisers.

The research study concluded that good governing is at the heart of effective HTPM; the two are complementary. Structural changes in England's system of schooling have strengthened the need for governing bodies and boards of MATs to put into place effective approaches to HTPM for both external accountability purposes and as an important tool in improving internal accountability within schools and academies. At the same time, these structural changes have added to stress and uncertainty, contributing to the burden of oversight for both governing bodies and headteachers. The role of the external adviser could be seen as more important than ever, particularly for schools that are not academies (still the majority) or part of multi-academy trusts or chains of schools. Effective oversight of the HTPM process and demonstrating 'performance leadership' is probably the most important role played by the governing body in the overall governance of the school (Eddy-Spicer et al, forthcoming). The challenge is to ensure that governing bodies are in a position to perform that role with appropriate support from external advisers.

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Figures

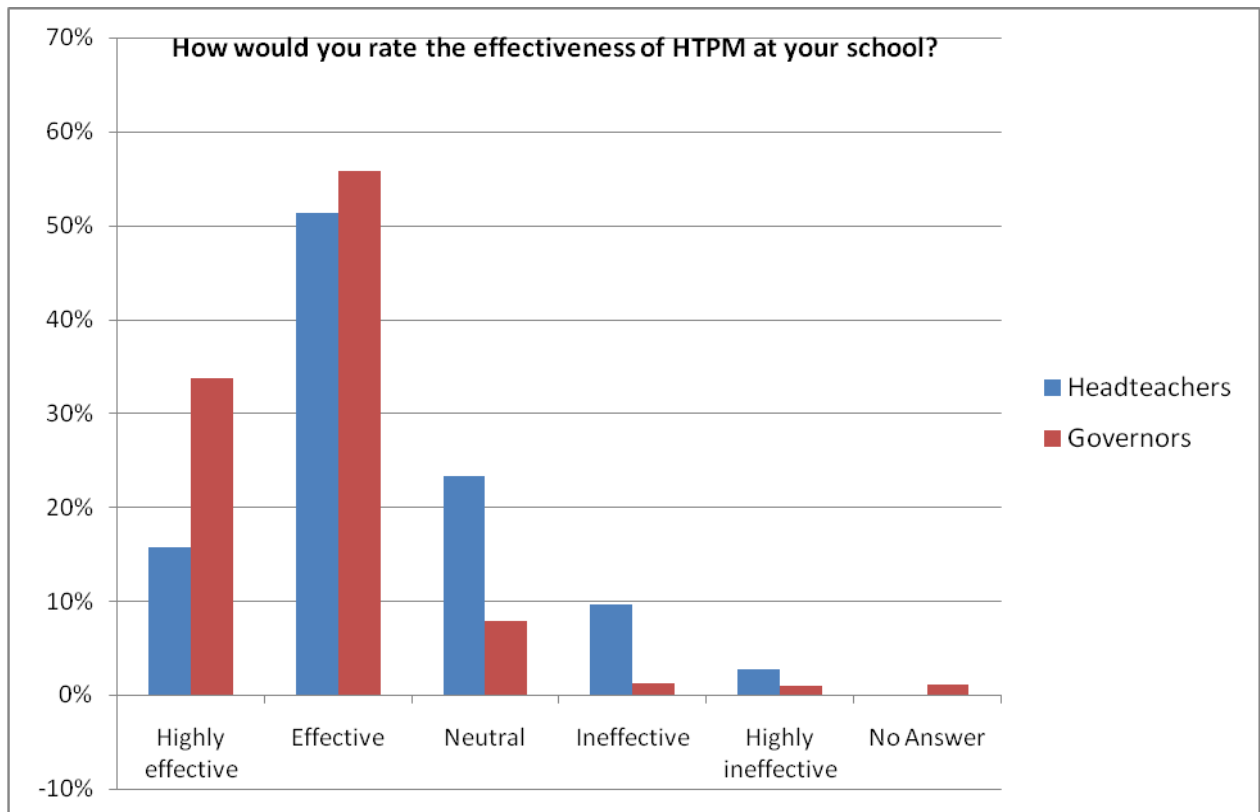


Figure 1: Governors' (n=1069) and Headteachers' (n=147) views on effectiveness of headteacher performance management

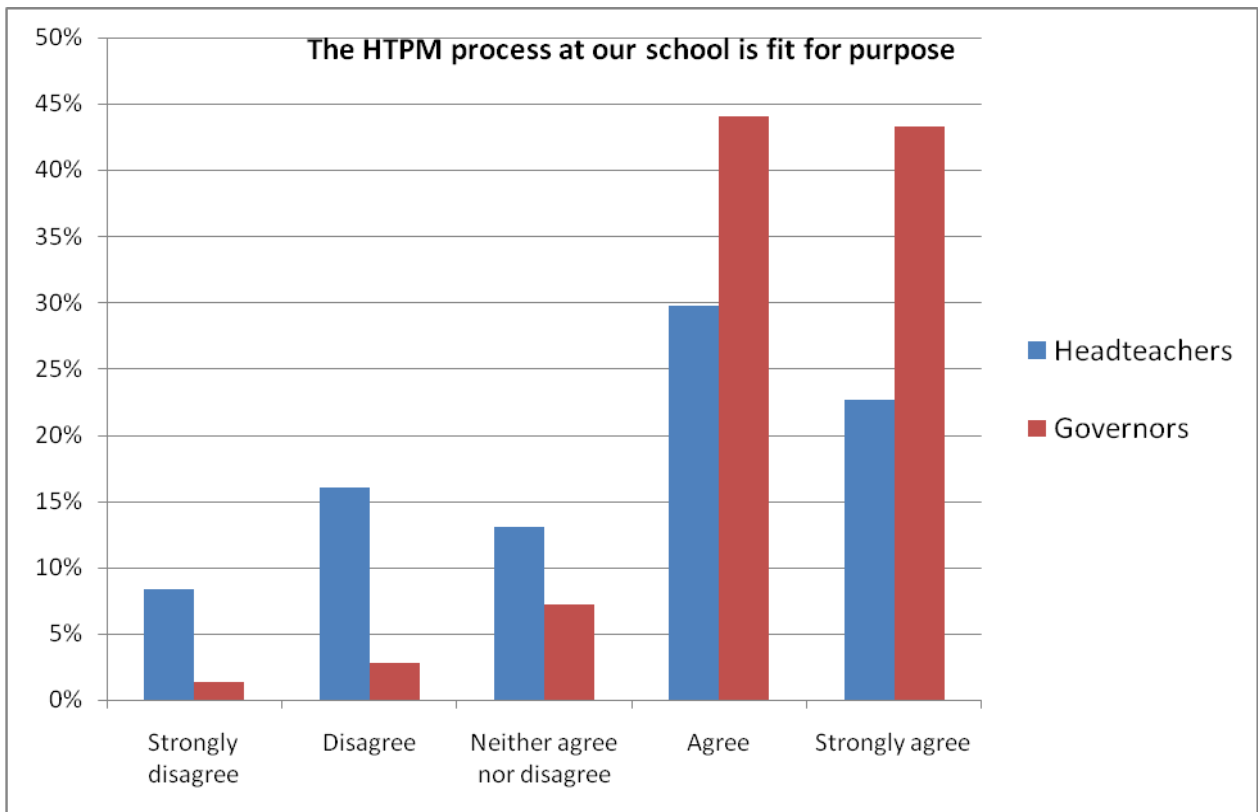


Figure 2: Governors' (n=1069) and Headteachers' (n=147) views on whether the HTPM process at their school is fit for purpose

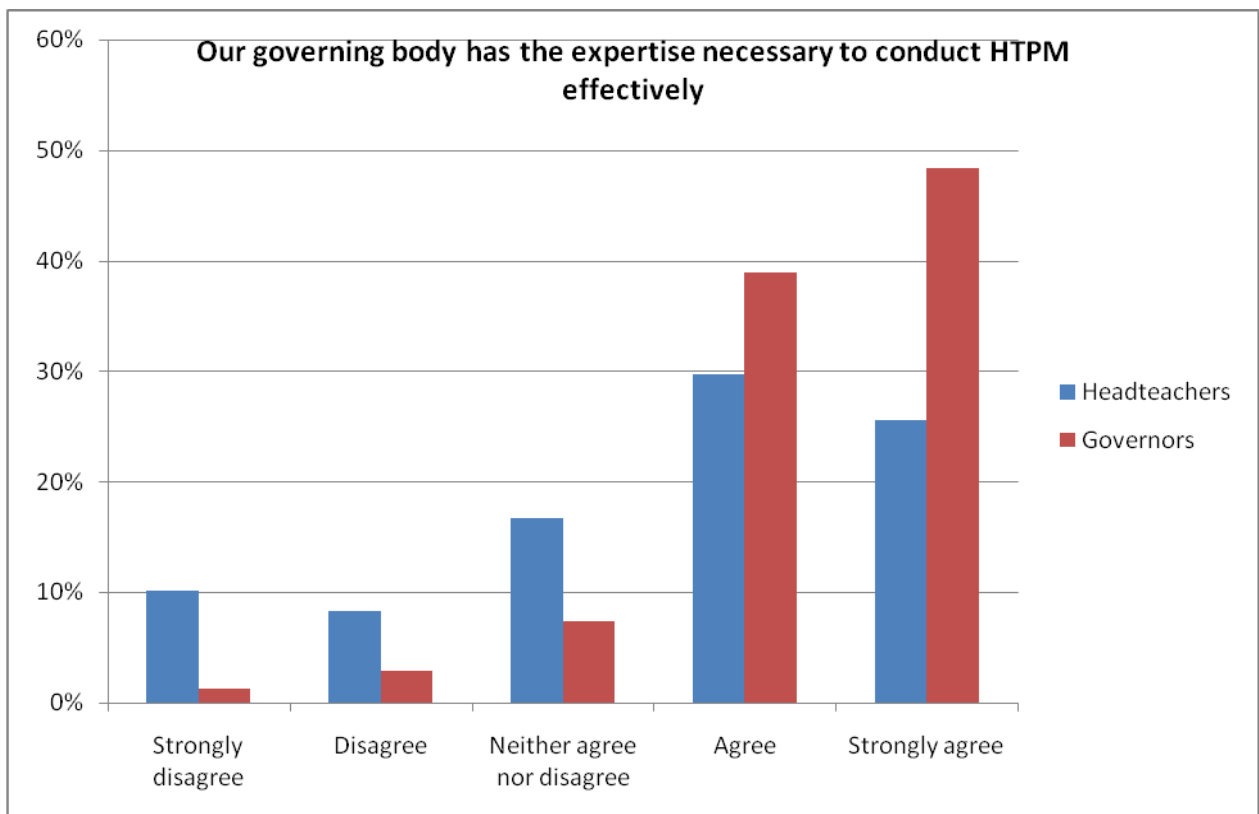


Figure 3: Governors' (n=1069) and Headteachers' (n=147) views on their governing bodies' expertise for HTPM

Appendix 1: Annual pay range for headteachers (DfE 2015, p12)

	England and Wales (excluding the London Area) £	Inner London Area £	Outer London Area £	Fringe Area £
Group 1	43,665 – 58,096	50,966 – 65,324	46,727 – 61,131	44,733 – 59,151
Group 2	45,876 – 62,521	53,177 – 69,750	48,939 – 65,557	46,939 – 63,585
Group 3	49,481 – 67,290	56,776 – 74,518	52,540 – 70,321	50,544 – 68,350
Group 4	53,180 – 72,419	60,479 – 79,642	56,238 – 75,450	54,247 – 73,474
Group 5	58,677 – 79,872	65,978 – 87,101	61,743 – 82,908	59,743 – 80,932
Group 6	63,147 – 88,102	70,448 – 95,330	66,213 – 91,134	64,221 – 89,162
Group 7	67,963 – 97,128	75,264 – 104,353	71,025 – 100,159	69,034 – 98,182
Group 8	74,958 – 107,210	82,256 – 114,437	78,021 – 110,243	76,022 – 108,271

There is a national formula for deciding which group a school is in: the number of pupils on roll multiplied by 7 for children up to the age of 11, by 9 for those pupils aged 11 to 14, by 11 for pupils aged 15 to 16 and by 13 for children older than 16. Where a headteacher has permanent responsibility for more than one school the same formula is used for the pupils of all the schools in order to determine the headteacher group.

- Up to 1,000 - Group 1
- 1,001 to 2,200 - Group 2
- 2,201 to 3,500 - Group 3
- 3,501 to 5,000 - Group 4
- 5,001 to 7,500 - Group 5
- 7,501 to 11,000 - Group 6
- 11,001 to 17,000 - Group 7
- 17,001 and over - Group 8 (DfE 2015, p12)