

Local Academy Board Governor Challenge Questions

1. Safeguarding

Strategic Oversight

- How do we know safeguarding is effective in practice rather than just compliant on paper?
- What evidence demonstrates that pupils feel safe in school?
- What are the emerging safeguarding risks within our local community?
- How are safeguarding trends changing compared to previous years?

Monitoring

- What are the most common categories of safeguarding concern?
- Are referrals increasing or decreasing and why?
- What proportion of staff have completed safeguarding training?
- What assurance do governors receive regarding single central record compliance?
- How do safeguarding outcomes compare with similar schools?

Vulnerable Pupils

- How do we know vulnerable pupils receive timely support?
- What is the attendance of children with safeguarding plans?
- How quickly are concerns escalated?
- How do we evaluate the impact of early help interventions?

Culture

- Would pupils know how to report concerns?
- How do leaders test safeguarding culture?
- What have pupil voice activities told us?
- What learning has come from recent safeguarding incidents?

2. SEND

Leadership and Strategy

- How effective is SEND provision across the school?
- How does the school's SEND profile compare with national data?
- Are we meeting statutory duties under the SEND Code of Practice?

Outcomes

- What progress is made by pupils with SEND compared to their peers?
- Which SEND groups achieve least well and what is being done?
- What evidence demonstrates that interventions are effective?

Resources

- How is SEND funding allocated?
- Is staffing sufficient to meet pupil needs?
- What impact measures are used to evaluate interventions?

Parent Experience

- What feedback are we receiving from parents of SEND pupils?
- Have any complaints or tribunal cases arisen?
- How is co-production with families developing?

3. Standards and Achievement

Overall Performance

- What are our three greatest strengths?
- What are our three greatest weaknesses?
- How do outcomes compare to trust averages and national benchmarks?



Quality of Education

- How do leaders know curriculum intent is being implemented effectively?
- What evidence supports improving outcomes?
- Which subjects require most improvement?

Disadvantaged Pupils

- Is the attainment gap widening or narrowing?
- How does disadvantaged progress compare nationally?
- What specific action is having the greatest impact?

Attendance

- Which groups have the lowest attendance?
- What is causing persistent absence?
- How do attendance trends compare with previous years?

4. Pupil Premium

Funding Allocation

- How is pupil premium funding being spent?
- What evidence supported those decisions?

Impact

- Which interventions provide strongest impact?
- How is success evaluated?
- How do disadvantaged outcomes compare with non-disadvantaged pupils?

Accountability

- If funding ceased tomorrow, which interventions would remain because they work?
- Which interventions have been discontinued and why?

5. Academy Improvement Plan (AIP)

Progress Monitoring

- Which priorities are on track?
- Which priorities are causing concern?
- What evidence demonstrates successful implementation?

Risk

- What are the greatest risks to achieving planned outcomes?
- What mitigation actions are in place?
- Are improvement resources sufficient?

Impact

- How is impact measured?
- What milestones should governors expect next term?

6. SIAMS (Church School)

Christian Vision

- How does the Christian vision influence decision-making?
- How can leaders demonstrate impact beyond documentation?

Culture

- What evidence demonstrates the vision is lived daily?
- How do staff and pupils articulate the school's vision?

Collective Worship

- How is worship evaluated?

- How do pupils contribute to planning worship?

Religious Education

- How does RE performance compare with other subjects?
- How is RE quality assured?

Community

- How does the school serve its local community?
- How are disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils supported through the school's Christian vision?

7. Stakeholder Engagement

Parents

- What themes are emerging from parental feedback?
- How do we know parent communication is effective?
- What action has been taken following feedback?

Pupils

- What are pupils telling leaders?
- Which concerns have been raised most frequently?

Staff

- What does staff wellbeing data tell us?
- How confident are staff in leadership?

Community

- How are community relationships strengthening?
- What is the school's reputation locally?

8. Cyber Security and Digital Safety

Governance

- Who is responsible for cyber security?
- When was the last cyber risk assessment completed?
- What cyber risks are recorded in the risk register?

Assurance

- Has the school completed Cyber Essentials?
- Are backups tested regularly?
- What controls protect against ransomware?

Training

- What percentage of staff completed cyber awareness training?
- How are phishing simulations used?

Incident Management

- How would leaders respond to a cyber attack tomorrow?
- Has the incident response plan been tested?

Compliance

- How does the school comply with GDPR?
- Have there been any reportable breaches?

9. Behaviour and Attendance

Behaviour

- What are the key behaviour trends?
- Which pupil groups are disproportionately represented in behaviour incidents?

- How effective is the behaviour policy?

Suspensions

- Are suspension rates increasing?
- What are the main causes?
- How do rates compare nationally?

Attendance

- What are attendance trends?
- How effective are attendance interventions?

10. Health and Safety

Compliance

- Are all statutory checks current?
- What significant incidents have occurred?

Premises

- What are the highest premises risks?
- What investment is required?

Risk Management

- What assurance reports have been received?
- Are actions completed within timescales?

11. Governance Effectiveness

Board Effectiveness

- How do governors know they are making a difference?
- What assurances can governors provide the trust board?

Skills

- Does the LAB possess the right skills mix?
- What training has been completed?

Challenge

- Is sufficient challenge being provided?
- What evidence demonstrates challenge and support?

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- How is the school meeting Public Sector Equality Duty requirements?
- Are any pupil groups underachieving?
- What evidence demonstrates inclusivity?
- How is the curriculum promoting equality and respect?

13. Risk and Assurance

Strategic Risks

- What are the top five school risks?
- What changes have occurred this term?

Internal Scrutiny

- What assurance reports have been received?
- Have any high-risk findings been identified?

Risk Mitigation

- Are actions reducing risk exposure?
- What further assurances are required?



High-Impact "Governor Gold" Questions

These are the questions that often create the strongest strategic challenge:

1. **How do you know?**
2. **What evidence supports that conclusion?**
3. **Compared with whom?**
4. **What is the trend over three years?**
5. **What are the risks if this does not improve?**
6. **How do disadvantaged pupils experience this differently?**
7. **What independent assurance have we received?**
8. **What would Ofsted/SIAMS identify as our greatest vulnerability?**
9. **If we stopped this intervention tomorrow, what would be the impact?**
10. **What keeps you awake at night regarding this area?**

Recommended LAB Reporting Structure

For every report governors receive, require leaders to answer:

- What is working well?
- What is not working well?
- What evidence supports this?
- What are the risks?
- What action is being taken?
- What impact is expected?
- What assurance is governors' are being asked to provide?

This creates a powerful assurance-based governance model aligned with DfE Governance Handbook, CST governance principles, Ofsted expectations and SIAMS inspection frameworks.



If the approval of a request for a Wellbeing Day could be deemed to cause a detriment to pupils' academic progress or be a risk to Health & Safety and the day-to-day operation of a school, the Headteacher reserves the right to decline the request. Additionally, should there be an unacceptable increase in the workload of staff colleagues who may have to provide cover, the request will not be approved. The Headteacher/Line Manager will use their professional judgment when approving requests and their decision is final.

In the event that an Ofsted or SIAMS inspection or any other significant event occurs on an approved Wellbeing Day, the Headteacher reserves the right to revoke the entitlement to the Wellbeing Day at short notice, up to and including the day before. This provision ensures that the school is adequately staffed and fully prepared to meet the demands and requirements of such events. An alternative Wellbeing Day will be agreed with the affected staff member.

Where a Wellbeing Day has been approved, any subsequent short-notice school closure for staff and/or pupils will not result in the day being cancelled, revoked or recredited.

Should an employee be absent on their scheduled Wellbeing Day due to sickness or other approved special leave, any decision to reschedule the day will be at the discretion of the Headteacher.

RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher (Line Manager for Trust Central Team) to ensure that requests for Wellbeing Days are managed in a way that does not cause a detriment to pupils, the Health & Safety of the school or an unacceptable increase in the workload of staff colleagues who may have to provide cover.

The management of this procedure will be determined by individual Headteachers and may be different from school-to-school dependent on the size and context of the school.

It is the responsibility of the employee making a request for leave of absence for a Wellbeing Day to provide the necessary plans and resources with colleagues covering their absence.

