

Virtual Governance: Monitoring and board reporting amid a global pandemic

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Purpose of the session

The webinar will explore what is different about governance monitoring and reporting at this time and consider:

- 1. Immediate priorities for this term and beyond***
- 2. Monitoring activity and board reporting***
- 3. Monitoring the plans for and implementation of remote education***

NGA Knowledge Centre

A guide to virtual governance: meetings, monitoring and induction - for those governing within schools and academy trusts - November 2020

- Virtual meetings & board dynamics
- The importance of chairing
- The importance of professional clerking
- Virtual monitoring and implementing a virtual monitoring programme
- Stakeholder engagement
- Virtual induction

Why monitoring? *Observe and check the progress or quality of (something) over a period of time; keep under systematic review.*

Here's the thing: If you're monitoring every single thing that goes on in a given culture, if you have all the information that is there to be had, then that is the equivalent of having none of it. How are you going to process that amount of information? Alan Moore

Learn to sit back and observe. Not everything needs a reaction.

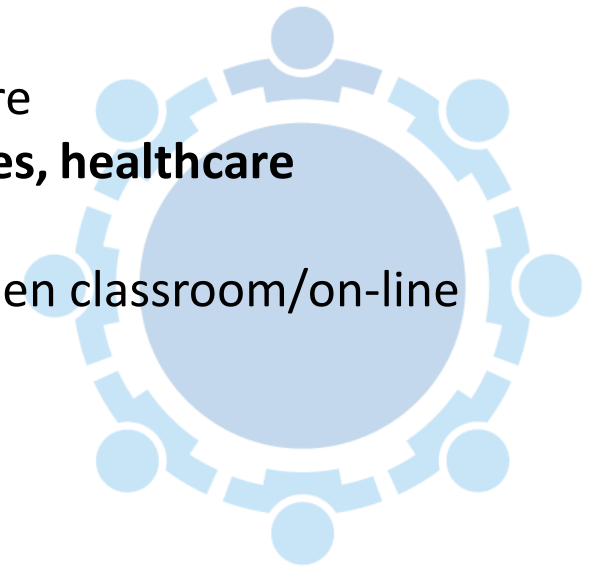
Virtual monitoring – a snapshot



- Maintaining a schedule and structure linked to the board's strategy
- Prioritise what is important right now
- The approach should be the same as if you were visiting
- Adapt rather than re-write protocols and feedback expectations

Monitoring: the 'what'

1. **barriers managing return to full education** for all pupils and attendance
2. how pupils are settling back into expected routines inc. **behaviour and wellbeing**
3. the school's **safeguarding** arrangements
4. how well are **infection controls** working; does **risk assessment** need to be returned to?
5. how leaders are ensuring pupils resume learning the **school's curriculum**
6. staff understanding the different effects of **missed education** on different children
7. how the school is approaching the needs of **disadvantaged** children
8. the use of **catch-up funding** and the use of evidence to inform its expenditure
9. identified and specific issues related to **special educational needs, disabilities, healthcare**
10. how **staffing cover** is being maintained in the light of COVID infections
11. contingency planning for use of **remote education/blending teaching** between classroom/on-line
12. the safe return of the **wider curriculum and activities**



Remote but not invisible...

- Give education professionals, parents, pupils and the wider public a greater understanding and appreciation
- Make clear what those governing do and do not do
- Strengthening the relationship between governance and stakeholders
- Raising the profile at school level to improve understanding in the school community
- Governors and trustees are champions of their schools and trusts who want to ensure the very best
- Making exciting decisions to develop but difficult choices when necessary



Visible
Governance
in schools

Visible in a remote landscape?

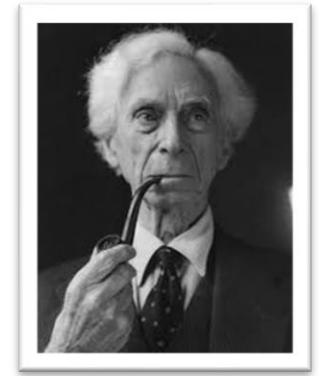
Communications channels between the board and stakeholders –

Q - What channels are open to help you think in different ways?

Q - what activities do you do to be visible?

- Strategic monitoring- school improvement
- Monitoring the vision and culture of school
- Monitoring compliance
- Staff views, pupil Voice, parental Voice
- Community engagement (including local business etc..)

The ten commandments that, as a teacher, I should wish to promulgate, might be set forth as follows ...



1. Do not feel absolutely certain of anything

Visible
Governance
in schools

Changing face of monitoring...a blended approach

- Transferred to virtual governance speedily
- Keep elements of governing remotely which work
- Remaining completely virtual limits opportunity
- The future - a blended approach

What is virtual governance?

- The use of video or teleconferencing technology for governing board, committee and other governance meetings (rather than meeting face to face)
- Monitoring school operations and supporting school leaders without visiting school sites in person

Governing virtually

Opportunities and issues

Opportunities

- Increased attendance
- Increased scope for recruiting board members
- More focused meetings

Issues

- Board dynamics
- Connection with the community
- Lack of scrutiny, meaningful discussion

Board reporting

- Help boards fulfil their core aims functions
- Demonstrate organisation is on track to fulfil the vision
- Strategic use of data - report format reflects this
- Agreed by the board with the executive
- Regularly reviewed as circumstances change
- **Format** enables board to stay **strategic**
- Don't get **overwhelmed** by info of secondary importance
- Boards **review** the data requests
- Avoid creating **unnecessarily workload**

But

1. Executive leaders should not be the only source of information
2. Boards see objective national data at least once a year
3. Empowered to ask pertinent and searching questions



Board reporting - the minimum requirements

- Information you get enables you to know your school/s
- Alert you to changes affecting the organisation
- Alert you to changes impacting strategic aims
- Focus on progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance
- High level reporting which RAG rated milestones
- Significant changes to risk register impact prioritisation!!!
- Understanding which strategies are going well/not well
- Resourcing the organisation -specifically the strategic plan
- Assurance re compliance - reports from external experts

Common challenges

- Format variety, too much paper / information before a meeting
- Reporting does not relate to strategic aims and agreed plan
- Stagnant board culture hampered by lack of face to face discussion
- Lack of commonalities in the information boards receive to do the job
- Discerning right amount of info - board can do job well, but not overloaded with unnecessary detail



Triangulation

Website	Newsletters	Attendance at events	Training and networking events e.g. conferences
Social media and relevant publications	Policies	Strategy documents and plans	Reports from senior executive leader
Reports from external experts and advisors	Publicly available data	Data dashboards – FFT, Ofsted ISDR	Internal data
Survey data – pupils, staff, parents	Presentations to board meetings	Answers to questions at board meetings	Visits to school(s)

Remote learning – questions you have been asking

- How to approach assessment of what pupils **learned during lockdown**?
- What is school doing to encourage **vulnerable children** to attend and protect them?
- How should we meet the needs of **disadvantaged pupils**?
- How do we ensure **safeguarding** arrangements and policies keep the school safe place for all?
- How are our **staff coping** – what support is available to them?
- How are **parents/carers** supported to educate children at home?
- How can teachers maintain **contact with pupils**?
- How can teachers **support pupils** in their work and manage issues relating to on-line learning?
- The assessment of the **physical/mental health** and **wellbeing**
- Building/maintaining powerful **welfare** and **pastoral systems**;
- Engaging **wider support/collaboration** with parents and the wider community.



Recommended monitoring priorities – NGA information sheet

Safeguarding and risk management

- Updated safeguarding measures, policies and staff briefed on changes
- Concerns emerging from attendance data
- Internal welfare/pastoral systems/ utilization of external support
- Assurance that the control measures have been implemented and are working

Wellbeing across the school community

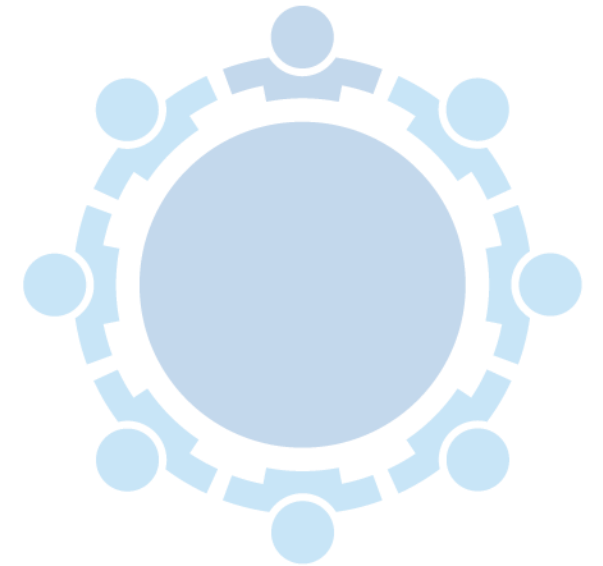
- Staff and pupil absence data – what is it telling us? Overall assessment of wellbeing
- School routine/remaining challenges and communications with parents, pupils and staff
- Concerns about the wellbeing of pupils from particular groups (such as disadvantaged or SEND)
- Staff work-life balance

Continuity of education

- Rich and engaging learning experience for all / curriculum approach -in school and remote
- Catch-up premium and how will the impact be measured
- Support for pupils, their families and staff
- Access to learning, resources and staff CPD

Resource management

- How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on the school(s) budget?



A recap - the reality of monitoring in COVID 19

Seek assurance plans provide continuity of education and are flexible enough to account for:

- multiple scenarios (restricted numbers, off and on-site provision, full reopening)
- local circumstances and advice
- consultation with staff, their representatives and wider stakeholders on health and safety matters
- the protective measures needed to reduce the risk of all/more pupils returning
- Possibly the on-going need for prioritising provision for the pupils who need it most; and,
- blending classroom provision and remote education.

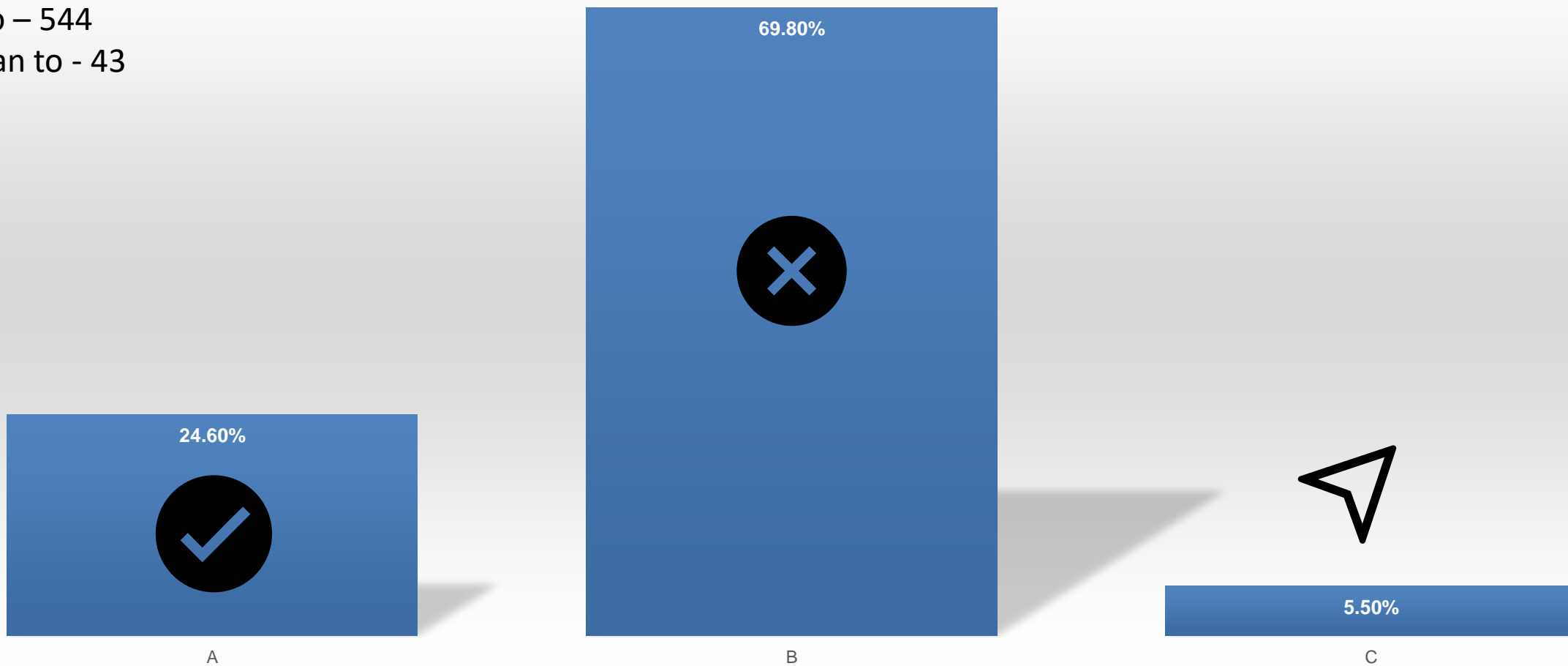
Possible recovery priorities to monitor

- the assessment of what pupils have learned during lockdown.
- the support needed for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils;
- the assessment of the physical, mental health and wellbeing throughout the school;
- building/maintaining powerful welfare and pastoral systems;
- engaging wider support where necessary, and
- collaboration with parents, carers and the wider community.

Has your board been into school for visits/meetings this term?

779 total respondents:

- ❖ Yes – 192
- ❖ No – 544
- ❖ Plan to - 43



Summary of monitoring challenges during the pandemic

1. Maintaining oversight of plans and risk assessments for wider opening
2. Defining the “recovery phase”
3. Priority actions and how these are assessed
4. Level of reporting from senior leaders - reasonable and proportionate
5. Data available to triangulate with executive reports/sources
6. Accounting for statutory compliance/annual tasks that still need to be undertaken
7. Financial/resource implications and considerations

Tips that may help

1. Consider approaching monitoring differently/ appoint different link roles
2. Reconsider frequency and length of meetings
3. Maintain or adapt existing committee structure during the recovery phase
4. Don't forget board's own development needs during this period

