

# Governor Mark Assessor Newsletter



governance, leadership and management

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## Governor Mark Goes North

Beech Hill Primary School in Newcastle upon Tyne and Range High School in Sefton, are the latest successful Governor Mark Schools.

### **Beech Hill, Newcastle upon Tyne**

The assessor found this governing body to be a real part of the school. Highlights included:

- Annual review of governor roles and responsibilities every September, linking to the SEF;
- Governors high engagement with the whole school staff both formally through monitoring, and informally within meetings;
- Governor involvement with some tough decisions including staff reductions;
- All records of governor engagement with the senior leadership team were exemplary.

### **Range High School, Sefton**

The assessment took place on the first day of the school's Ofsted inspection, so people were pretty focused. The best practice found at Range High included:

- Excellent clerking - this is emerging as a common theme with Governor Mark schools;
- A Calendar of Self-Review, in which governor meetings are scheduled specifically to pick up key moments in the school development cycle;
- Routine practice of corroborating key information from within the school with external data and evidence;
- The commitment and confidence of the people involved, both governors and staff. The high levels of trust and the open and honest relationship between people are proving to be a great foundation for success.

## January Assessor Conference - change of venue

Our original venue for the 23<sup>rd</sup> January conference is no longer available to us, so we have moved half a mile up the road to the ECO Centre, right next to the George Eliot Hospital in Nuneaton.

The event will combine two elements - the Governor Mark Review, which is gathering pace, and secondly development for assessors in the light of real assessments that have been taking place. The timetable for the day was in the last newsletter and remains the same.

This event is free to Governor Mark assessors, but it is essential that you book a place through [info@glmpartnership.org](mailto:info@glmpartnership.org)

Full details and directions will be forwarded to those who have booked a place.

## It's All About Impact

Not all Governor Mark applications are successful. One question that arises from a weak application is whether it is the application or the governance itself that is weak. Examples of weaknesses in the crucial Impact Statement on School Improvement include:

- Activity by link governors with no connection to governing body priorities

- Too much focus on governing body structures and processes;
  - Governor activities that are not key improvement issues for the school
- There is little doubt that future Ofsted scrutiny will give little credit for supportive governors who do not make a difference. A good impact statement is all about proving that they do.

## The Governor Mark Review

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> January will see our review completed. Early work has been going on, and we are pleased that the standards framework is standing up to scrutiny, but also will benefit from some proposed adjustments.

These include:

- Cross-referencing the criteria with the FMSiS standard, so that governing bodies who have achieved FMSiS need only to cite this against a number of criteria;
- Inclusion of recent requirements regarding community cohesion and child welfare;
- Alignment with developments in scrutiny of governance by Ofsted;
- Alignment with the developing focus on the need for governing bodies to be more strategic.

Along with this there is consideration being given to the current pre-assessment threshold, enabling governing bodies from all schools, not just good or outstanding schools, to engage with Governor Mark. One of the early lessons for Governor Mark has been the developmental impact of an external assessment. A possible outcome is that schools who do not currently qualify, may go forward if they commit to two assessments, with impact and improvement between the two visits being the key focus.

These are early days, however, so watch this space!

## Training Tools

To help those of you involved in governor training to further encourage governing bodies to go forward with Governor Mark, a number of training tools have been developed and are being provided on the GLM website.

These are not 'paint by numbers' trainer scripts. Trainers will need to bring their own professional expertise to bear on any session they may be preparing. We are always willing to offer advice of course.

No trainer can 'do Governor Mark' in a two-hour session. These are therefore provided as a resource to be applied appropriately, depending on how well advanced the governors are.

All these sessions need to be used to help governors get beyond making assertions, to being able to answer the challenge 'so what?' or 'prove it', which are in many ways

the essence of a Governor Mark assessment. The following training tools are available:

- **Governor Mark - where do we start?**  
An introduction to the Mark
- **Section 5 - our strategic role:** the governing body's place in the planning cycle
- **Section 7 - strengths and weaknesses:** all about data and how agendas and minutes show governor engagement with school improvement
- **Section 8 - challenge and support:** this focuses on relationships - is the head doing everything?
- **How to write a good impact statement:** this should mainly focus on the school improvement statement
- **We've done the work - would we pass?**  
Here a governing body can have a check through their fully completed application

Website:

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**And finally...** thank you for your ongoing commitment and interest throughout 2008. Please continue to keep in touch with us, and as you support more governing bodies in preparing for Governor Mark in your own area or field of work, the flow of assessments will steadily increase.