# Board Development Activities

These activities could be undertaken as a range of exercises during a facilitated away day for leaders and their governing board, or as short exercises pre- and post- board meetings.

It is for each school or trust to identify which approach or combination of approaches works best for them, but NGA have a range of consultants and facilitators available to support, for a reasonable fee, should you feel the facilitated approach is appropriate; please get in touch to arrange this: consultancy@nga.org.uk or contact Nina Sharma at nina.sharma@nga.org.uk

**You might like to undertake these activities before or as you complete each section of the audit – OR simply move straight into conducting the audit and focus on those activities where you have the most work to develop.**

## 1. Using the language of values and virtues

i. Read the *Framework*. What questions arise when you think about the values and the virtues?

ii. On post-its ask leaders and governors to give examples of how they demonstrate each of the 14 words. It is best to divide the words up between pairs or threes. Discuss what you have thought about.

iii. In groups of 4 or 5 think of 5 key tasks leaders perform during a year. Which of the words best fit those tasks? Discuss what you have thought about.

iv. In the whole group talk about which of the principles and virtues might be the easiest to show evidence of? Which ones provoke you to think '*It's all very well but….*'?

v. Now look at your plan for this year or the next year. Now that you're more familiar with the words, assign a key principle and a key virtue to each key task. What will you plan to do?

## 2. Building values and virtues into leadership working practices

i. What principles underpin the way leadership is exercised in this school or trust? Are they linked to a motto or vision statement? Are they the same every year or do they change according to circumstance or accountability measures? Should they?

ii. Remind yourselves of the *Framework.* In smaller groups united by particular tasks (committee members, people with shared responsibilities) think about the ways in which tasks are completed in your organisation. For example, how do recruitment panels demonstrate wisdom? How does budget-setting demonstrate justice? How does an inclusion committee show service?

iii. How might the way you work show your commitment to ethical leadership more clearly? Using a current agenda or task, assign values and virtues to the items. How will you protect that value or virtue in the decisions you take and the way you work?

iv. In the whole group discuss any changes or challenges that you foresee when you try to demonstrate an ethical standard through a practical piece of work.

## 2a. Management styles 1

i. What is the 'feel' of your school or trust? What kind of leadership style best suits your needs and context? What are the alternatives?

ii. How does that style fit with the Framework? Try to agree a sentence or two for each value and virtue which explains the kind of leadership you want.

iii. When you review leaders' performance, what weight will you give to the Framework?

iv. When you recruit leaders, how might you assess them in the light of the explanation of the framework you have use produced?

## 2b. Management styles 2

i. Practical ethical leadership and management requires working practices which build up the ethos of the school and the values and virtues you have espoused. Your school will have written and unwritten rules for staff about all sorts of things from timekeeping and dress, through to the way people are managed and the monitoring of teaching standards. Should governors be concerned about working practices?

ii. What do you know about working practices in your school or schools?

iii. Recent research (Cass Business School) offers 'overwhelming evidence' that colleagues in a workplace value the following approach to working practices:

| Fairness | Rules are applied equally to all |
|---|---|
| Clarity | Rules are simple and as clear as possible |
| Discretion | Rules allow for the appropriate expression of discretion |
| Agreement | Rules are widely shared so that their purpose is clear |
| Workability | Rules can be realistically followed and enforced |
| Authority | Rules are based on the legitimate exercise of authority |

Choose one simple and one complicated working practice or rule from your school or trust and complete the tables on the sheet provided. How does your approach match up to the valued working practises?

| Working practice (e.g. break duty rota, staff meeting procedure): | | Example/Evidence |
|---|---|---|
| Fairness | Rules are applied equally to all | |
| Clarity | Rules are simple and as clear as possible | |
| Discretion | Rules allow for the appropriate expression of discretion | |
| Agreement | Rules are widely shared so that their purpose is clear | |
| Workability | Rules can be realistically followed and enforced | |
| Authority | Rules are based on the legitimate exercise of authority | |

| Working practice (e.g. Flexible working, staff management of attendance policy, professional development): | | Example/Evidence |
|---|---|---|
| Fairness | Rules are applied equally to all | |
| Clarity | Rules are simple and as clear as possible | |
| Discretion | Rules allow for the appropriate expression of discretion | |
| Agreement | Rules are widely shared so that their purpose is clear | |
| Workability | Rules can be realistically followed and enforced | |

| Authority | Rules are based on the legitimate exercise of authority | |
|---|---|---|

## 3. Safeguarding values and virtues

   i.  It is relatively easy for boards to adopt fine words. How would you know if values and virtues are being flouted in your schools?

   ii.  Consider your HR, complaints and whistleblowing procedures. If a junior member of staff uncovered bad practice, what is the path to alerting governors? What risks and pitfalls are in that path? Could a genuine and righteous complaint be stifled before it reached governors? What protection do whistle-blowers get?

   iii.  Consider a statement to publicise your commitment to ethical practice to staff. How will you arrive at it? How might you evaluate its effectiveness? How might you deter or deal with malicious or vexations complaints?

## 4a. A model community: Pupil Engagement

   i.  Consider the way in which the framework's values and virtues are modelled to the children and young people in your setting. Does your school or trust have a set of character traits or virtues *for students* that are explicitly valued and modelled?

   ii.  Arrange a focus group with students of all ages. Ask them how well these characteristics or virtues are known, valued and reinforced in school. Ask them if there is anything about their school's behaviour that confuses or worries them. (For younger children you might want to start with something like 'are children treated fairly here?' And 'is there anything about school that is unfair?', moving on to 'what kind of person does your school want you to be?'

   iii.  Be mindful of the ways in which children are chosen for this focus group. It is best if you get a representative group. Be mindful also of the staff put in the room to help you. Is frank-speaking make easier or harder by that choice?

   iv.  Meet with school leaders to discuss your findings. Come back to the next meeting with a report and any proposal for action you think might be helpful. (You might want to combine this with the next 2 sessions)

## 4b. A model community: Staff Engagement

   i.  Consider the way in which the values and virtues work in school. Does your school or trust have a staff code of conduct that addresses such things, or is it a list of rules?

   ii.  Arrange a focus group with staff at all levels. Ask them how well these characteristics or virtues are known, valued and reinforced in school. Ask them if there is anything about their school's behaviour that annoys or troubles them. Look at the Framework and discuss how well it is lived in school.

   iii.  Be mindful of the ways in which staff are chosen for this focus group. It is best if you get a representative group. Is frank-speaking make easier or harder by that choice?

   iv.  Meet with school leaders to discuss your findings. Come back to the next meeting with a report and any proposal for action you think might be helpful.

## 4c. A model community: Parental Engagement

   i.  Consider the way in which the values and virtues work in school. Do your parents recognise them as authentically part of the way your school works? Both as an institution and a place of formation of the young?

   ii.  Arrange a focus group with parents. Ask them how well these characteristics or virtues are known, valued and reinforced in school. Ask them if there is anything about the school's behaviour that annoys or troubles them. Look at the Framework and discuss how well it is lived in school.

   iii.  Be mindful of the way in which such a group comes together. You may need to find another way to canvass the views of hard-to-reach parents.

   iv.  Meet with school leaders to discuss your findings. Come back to the next meeting with a report and any proposal for action you think might be helpful.

## 5. An ethical stance

   i.  Combine all your findings into a short commitment statement with some clear aims. These should use the language of values and virtues from the framework. Agree this with the board. Put it on your website

> *Xxxx school/trust seeks to uphold the values and virtues of ethical education.*
> *[insert own statement at the end of the ethical audit]*
> *We try to use the Ethical Leadership Framework in everything we do.*

    ii.    Appoint a governor who will monitor this throughout the next year, and report regularly to board meetings. You might want to explain all this on the school website, and ask stakeholders for their opinions.

    iii.    Email the *ethics committee* with your commitment; ethicalschools@nga.org.uk

    iv.    Plan how you will evaluate your success as a school or trust that is explicitly and implicitly committed to upholding practice and behaviour that sets the best example to our children.