

The role of the School Advisory Body (SAB)

One of the key elements of the SAB's strategic role is to agree statutory school policies, whilst a significant aspect of their monitoring/guidance role is to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of those policies.

School policies are concerned with key processes within the school and they address the practical implications of how to achieve the school's vision as expressed in its strategic plan. They are about ensuring highly effective teaching and learning, about safety, about interactions between pupils, staff and the wider community and about basic human rights. They should be used to guide the work of the headteacher/equivalent and staff and to provide a framework for the smooth running of the school. The proprietors have retained legal powers and have not delegated powers to the advisory board

Policies should be based on a shared understanding of:

- Why the school exists (its mission)
- What it believes to be right (its values)
- What it is trying to achieve (its vision)
- What it is going to do to make this a reality (its aims)
- The underpinning rules that will guide action (principles)
- The practicalities of implementation (policies and procedures)

Policy development

There are many other areas where it is desirable to have written policies in place to guide the work of the school. Periodically it will be necessary for the SAB to support with the development of new policies to deal with new responsibilities.

Headteachers/equivalents are responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school and for implementing the Young Foundations Ltd strategic framework.

Headteachers/equivalents need to formulate aims and objectives, policies and targets for Young Foundation Ltd to consider adopting. Generally the headteacher/equivalents and staff will do much of the detailed work on producing policies and will then present their ideas to the SAB for discussion, amendment and before Young Foundations Ltd final approval. Nevertheless, SAB can contribute ideas in the early stages of drafting and help to refine the proposals. In particular, SAB members with specific expertise in an area such as health and safety or personnel might join up with one or two members of staff to form a working party to draw up a policy with the Headteachers/equivalents approval.

To be effective, policies should reflect the unique context of the school. There are no statutory rules on how a policy should be presented but good practice suggests that a common format, style and font will unify a school's policies.

All policies should incorporate the following sections:

- Status – statutory, expected or recommended
- Purpose – a brief statement referring to relevant local guidelines, national regulations and the school's own values, vision and aims.
- Consultation – list which groups, individuals and documents were consulted. This is useful when the policy needs revising

- Cross-references to other documents – a more coherent approach can be achieved by linking with other policies
- Roles and responsibilities of headteacher/equivalent, staff and governors – the core and most detailed part of the policy
- Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation – what evidence would demonstrate success and how and when will it be brought to the attention of the governing body.
- Date established by governing body
- Date for review
- Signature of SAB Chair

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of Policies

The cycle of policy development, implementation and impact measurement clearly relates to the SAB's three key roles.

Working strategically – SAB will help to define the school's values, vision and aims and to support with establishing the policies that provide a framework for the day to day work of the headteacher/equivalent and staff. They should also contribute to the debate about which additional policies the school needs, beyond the statutory ones, to ensure coherence and clarity in the management process.

Critical friend – SAB will support with the monitoring and evaluating the implementation and impact of the school's plans and policies. In order to do this effectively they should have a list of what should be in place, when each policy was ratified and a rolling programme for reviewing the state of those policies over time.

Accountability - reports from the headteacher/equivalent should enable members of the SAB to answer to the school's stakeholders for the school's performance. This accountability will be discharged through the school profile and the prospectus.

Monitoring is about gathering evidence to show that plans and policies are being implemented, and to check that progress is being made.

What evidence will demonstrate success?

Who will collect it?

How and when will it be collected?

How and when will it be presented to governors?

Evaluation uses that evidence to make a judgement about the impact of the plans and policies on the school's performance. Rigorous evaluation of the implementation and impact of a policy may lead to changes in practice.

Reviewing and Updating Policies

Once written, policies need to be revisited regularly because schools, local authorities and national government are dynamic institutions subject to constant change. The executive should have mechanisms in place to regularly review and evaluate existing policies to ensure that they are still relevant in achieving their stated aims and objectives. This review process will often lead to

a need to amend existing policies or - in some cases to significantly re-write or produce new policies.

Some policies will need to be reviewed annually, others may be left for longer. Where governing bodies plan their meetings in advance for the full year ahead it is a straightforward task to ensure that policy reviews are added to agendas for the SAB meetings. The sab may decide to delegate responsibility for particular policies to committees or individuals.

When reviewing policies, the following factors should be considered:

- Are policies linked to a clear statement of values?
- Is there a consistent approach to the format?
- Are all the statutory policies in place?
- Where can policies be found?
- Would staff, SAB members and parents know how to access the policies?
- Do the policies provide a clear basis for the implementation of rules and procedures?
- Do the policies provide positive direction for staff?
- When were the policies last reviewed?
- How does the governing body know whether the policies are being implemented?
- Are the policies having the desired effect?

Step-by-step guide to managing your policies

- Compile a checklist of all your policies, statutory and non-statutory
- Assign responsibility for each policy to the full SAB, a committee or an individual
- Ensure that, where responsibility for policies is delegated to a committee, the terms of reference for that committee state clearly that this is the case
- Establish the required interval between policy reviews. Be flexible in response to changes in legislation.
- Extract and sequence all the review dates and put into place a rolling programme of policy reviews
- Assign each policy review to a scheduled meeting of the SAB or one of its committees
- Ensure that SAB minutes state which policies have been reviewed and show evidence of any discussion regarding policies
- Once a policy has been approved, one copy of it must be dated and signed off by the appropriate Executive and a new review date inserted
- A Policies Folder containing the checklist plus signed copies of the most up-to-date version of every policy should be kept in the school office for easy access by staff, parents and Ofsted.
- The list of statutory policies should be updated each time a new version of the Guide to the Law is published
- New policies should be developed in line with school's needs and local and national requirements and regulations