



governance, leadership and management

...achieving excellence in schools

# Governor Mark

**Guidance for Schools and Academies:**

**The Accreditation and Application Process**

# Guidance for Schools and Academies

Thank you for your interest in achieving the Governor Mark. This document will guide you through the process and help you understand what the assessor will be looking for.

It may be that you are not yet ready to put in an application. You will nevertheless find useful guidance here as to how to go forward with the right sort of evidence that will strengthen your application when it is ready to be submitted.

## Contents

### Step by Step Guide

	<i>Page</i>
Step 1: Preparing to apply for a Governor Mark assessment	3
Step 2: Application	5
Step 3: Acknowledgement	6
Step 4: Assessor Contact	7
Step 5: School/Academy Visit	8
Step 6: Outcome	10

# Step by Step Guide

## Step 1      **Preparing to apply for a Governor Mark assessment**

Welcome to Governor Mark, which aims to celebrate good governance in schools and academies. The Governor Mark Standards Document introduces the Governor Quality Mark and describes the benefits and principles. It then explains the Framework Criteria and the evidence that is required. We recommend that you take some time to read carefully the Standards Document.

This is a rigorous assessment process and we would want governing boards to know in advance that they will be asked to show evidence of school/academy improvement, impact on pupil outcomes, records of the governing board supporting and challenging the school/academy and evidence of shared strategic leadership.

Good governance does not exist in isolation. If governance is good there will be evidence of demonstrable impact of the governing board on school/academy performance and outcomes for pupils. Your main objective in a successful Governor Mark application is to show this impact.

Schools and academies with a clear agenda for development may well find they are not quite ready to submit a Governor Mark application. This is because real impact on outcomes for pupils needs to be demonstrated and we know this takes some time.

A number of schools/academies who have enquired about development opportunities have commissioned an external review of governance. There are many agencies who provide these and if you contact us we have links with National Leaders of Governance and other agencies who can provide external reviews. These reviews will help you to identify areas for improvement and the effectiveness of your board's impact on school/academy improvement. Once you are ready to apply for Governor Mark, follow the steps below.

## Who can apply?

Governor Mark quality standards can be applied in governance for any type of school educational setting. We welcome applications from maintained schools/academy trusts (MATs and single)/free schools/federations/PRU's, sixth form colleges and independent schools that can demonstrate how they meet the quality standards.

We would expect any local governing body (LGB) in a MAT to have delegated responsibility for setting the local vision, contributing to performance management and for holding the school leadership to account. The trustees/directors must actively engage with the assessment process and we expect to see evidence of how the MAT board has worked collaboratively with local governance to secure improved outcomes for children. See the document 'How to Succeed' for more information.

**Governor Mark** has 3 strands:

1. The ground rules and standards for behaviour and good organisation which underpin good governance (**Standards Document** and Evidence Grid, Criteria 1 and 2). This section is intended for your self-assessment only. The criteria underpin the board's core role and purpose; governance is unlikely to be effective if your board is not compliant in these areas, but there is no need to submit this part of the Evidence Grid with your application.
2. The Assessment Framework – aspects of good governance (**Standards Document** and Evidence Grid, Criteria 3-5)
3. Impact on outcomes (**Standards Document** and Evidence Grid - Criterion 6, **Impact Statements**), three areas where the governing board has influenced and had an impact on achievement in:
  - a. School improvement
  - b. Partnerships and community engagement
  - c. Pupil well-being.

The Governor Mark assessment is based on 2 and 3 above, the Assessment Framework and Impact Statements. A Governor Mark assessor will be allocated to your organisation once the application is received and will visit your setting to ask questions of the board (see Step 5 below) and ensure that there is an audit trail between the information submitted and what happens in practise.

## **Step 2            Application**

There are six sets of documents you need to provide/complete as a minimum, and an assessment cannot be arranged until all of these have been received:

- Application/contact details
- Evidence Grid (Sections 3-5)
- 3 Impact Statements (Section 6)
- School performance data report (ASP/External Data report/IDSR)
- Self-Evaluation documentation
- School Development/Improvement Plan
- Ofsted report (or date of inspection)

### **How to complete the Evidence Grid**

Read the criteria carefully. Refer to the 'Standards Document' for ideas of the evidence required to meet each criterion and read 'How to Succeed' for ideas on how to secure your setting's chance of success. Keep relevant evidence in a portfolio folder (electronic or hardcopy), readily available for the assessor to review.

Complete your Evidence Grid (available as a Word document), referencing the documents (e.g. minutes of meetings, visit reports, data reports) that should be available for the assessor to review.

See 'How to Succeed' for further guidance.

The key to good evidence is that it shows the impact of the governing board on the work of the school/academy/organisation.

Complete your Impact Statements, following the guidance in the template.

### **Submitting your Governor Mark Application**

When you have completed the Evidence Grid (Sections 3-5) and Impact Statements you need to submit them together with the other documents listed on the Application Form to [info@glmpartnership.org](mailto:info@glmpartnership.org). All documentation should be provided electronically, and this will help the process happen more quickly.

The documentation will be shared with the Governor Mark Team, including the assessor. Everyone who has access to your documentation is bound by a strict code of conduct, including confidentiality. We use Governor Hub as a portal for sharing information between the Governor Mark Team.

### **How Much Will Governor Mark Cost?**

The current cost to a single school or academy setting is set out on the Application Form. If you are looking for Governor Mark to cover a MAT board/federation or more than one setting, please contact us by email at [info@glmpartnership.org](mailto:info@glmpartnership.org) for a quote.

## **Step 3      Acknowledgement**

Once the application is received, we will acknowledge receipt and tell you the name of the assessor who will visit your governing board. We will also inform you of the date of the Assessment Panel meeting to which we plan to consider the report on your governing board(s) and whether Governor Mark is awarded.

We will invoice your organisation at this point and the invoice must be paid in advance of the assessor's visit.

We have sought to reduce the bureaucratic burden in the application process. We aim to complete the whole process in three months from receipt of the application and first set of evidence

## **Step 4            Assessor Contact**

The assessor will contact the school/organisation through the email address you provide and will arrange a date for the visit. They will almost certainly ask for further information. The precise list of further documents will vary from organisation to organisation, but you can expect to be asked for governing board minutes from the previous 12 months, reports from the Headteacher/CEO, and external professional reports, such as from a school improvement partner or equivalent.

If you use Governor Hub or electronic portals to store your documents, some board's find it helpful to provide the assessor with access to these. This will avoid having to email multiple additional documents to the assessor, but it is essential that the relevant documents are easily accessible and identifiable to the assessor. If documents cannot be easily located, the assessor reserves the right to ask for copies of documents to be emailed. There is no requirement to provide any confidential minutes.

All assessors abide by a code of conduct that includes a confidentiality agreement. Any documents provided are deleted from our records after the assessment in accordance with our document retention policy.

## Step 5 School/Academy Visit

The on-site visit should take place within three months of your application and lasts for approximately three hours. The assessor will indicate who they would like to speak to during the visit or Skype call (see below). This may include:

- Chair of governors/the board
- Headteacher/CEO or equivalent executive leader
- Chairs of any committees, particularly those who deal with school/academy improvement
- New governors/trustees/directors
- Clerk
- Governor/trustee/director (or a representative from the committee) linked to safeguarding
- **Where an application is from a local governing body in a MAT, the assessor will also want to speak to/meet at least one independent director of the academy trust.**

The assessor will be willing to meet any other governors/trustees/directors who would like to contribute.

Governors may meet the assessor individually, in pairs or in small groups. The assessor will not meet the whole board in a group. It is the responsibility of your organisation (person leading Governor Mark) to put together a programme for the assessor's visit.

Our preference is always for you to meet with an assessor face to face. However, on occasion, we may suggest conducting the assessment visit via a Skype session. This would only be necessary if we do not have any assessors available within a reasonable travelling distance. This approach helps to keep the costs of Governor Mark to reasonable levels for schools and academies. We would take into account the reliability of internet connections before setting up assessment in this way.



## What does the assessor look for?

- Assessors will be seeking to identify an evidence trail to ascertain that the governing board is **actively engaged** and not a passive beneficiary of very good school leadership.
- The assessor will focus on the impact of governance on outcomes for children and young people.
- The assessment process begins when the assessor has access to all your documentation. They are seeking to identify an **evidence trail**:
  - The assessor will begin with external information and your data to determine what the priorities for improvement in the organisation are
  - They then look at the self-evaluation to follow this through to leadership and management priorities in the organisation
  - They will then look at the impact statements to determine how the governing board engages with these issues
  - The assessor will then use questions during the assessment visit to validate the evidence trail, considering:

## The role of the assessor is to:

- Consider the application, both criteria and impact statements, in sufficient detail to make a confident recommendation to the Governor Mark Assessment Panel
- Make a recommendation to the Panel based on their decision as to whether the applicant has met Governor Mark Quality Standard
- To identify good ideas and practices that could be shared with others

The assessor may provide some feedback at the end of the visit, but **the assessor will not be able to confirm the outcome, nor their recommendation, on the day of the site visit/Skype call.**

**The award of Governor Mark is only made by the Governor Panel, a team of skilled governance professionals, appointed by GLM Partnership.**

## **Step 6 Outcome**

After the visit the assessor will report back to the Governor Mark Assessment Panel, which meets six times a year, towards the end of each half term.

**You will be notified of the outcome of the process by email, following the next meeting of the awarding panel, and you will know the date of this when the visit is arranged.**

### **Successful Achievement of Governor Mark**

Governor Mark is awarded to the school or academy to reflect the impact of good governance on the outcomes for children and young people.

Your organisation will then receive a Governor Mark Feedback report and a letter confirming the Governor Mark award. You will receive a certificate for display in your organisation's premises and the Governor Mark Logo which can be added to your website and stationery.

**The Governor Mark accreditation lasts for 3 years and is a public external validation and celebration of the effectiveness of your governing board.**

## **What happens if your governing board is not successful?**

We can provide some advice and guidance throughout the process and as long as the board can demonstrate that it has an impact on school improvement, provides sufficient evidence of compliance with the quality standards and the assessor can establish an audit trail and confirm the information in your submission, the majority of applications are successful.

On rare occasions, for example if the Impact Statements do not demonstrate the clear impact of the board on pupil outcomes and improvement and this cannot be validated with external data, the Governor Mark Panel may request additional information or defer an award until such data can be provided and your organisation's application will be reconsidered at a later Governor Mark Panel meeting.