

Presenting Information to Governors

The following sets out a couple of examples of how information can be presented to governors – one bad, one good. Typically this information is presented by the school’s leadership team and is associated with a decision or a request for comment by governors. Following the two examples is an autopsy of why the good is good and the bad is bad.

The Bad Example

Document presented to governors at a governors meeting.

Background

Mrs Fredrickson is leaving and we have 50 MFL units that need to be covered. We have discussed this at SMT and have come up with the following proposal (recommended below) although this does raise a number of issues. Please consider them and either ratify (or amend) the proposals provided.

As you know, in the last couple of years we have been 20 MFL units light and we’re trying to avoid that this year.

Recommendation

That we adopt the following to cover the 50 MFL units.

	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri
ADB	4	4		4	5
JHG	4		2		4
KJH	2	5	5	5	4
OIU		2	2	2	

We have to also consider that History needs 10 hours of ADB and French needs 5 hours of KJH so the above seems to make most sense. We can make up the shortfall by using APW.

Budget Impacts

The bottom line is that we simply can’t afford not to do this (so somehow we need to find the money).

On the plus side – the additional overtime costs should only amount to around £5000 with on costs. This is more than offset against the £6000 saving we will due to Mrs Fredrickson leaving (she’s on SL 53 so quite expensive!).

Goals and Measures

Success can be measured by finding the 50 MFL units and staff being “happy”.

The Good Example

Document sent to governors a week before a governors meeting and put on the agenda.

Background

We have a serious issue to address as Mrs Fredrickson (a fulltime German teacher) is leaving next month and we need to arrange cover in a department which is already quite tight on fulltime teachers.

Recommendation

We've looked at a number of alternatives.

- Hiring a fulltime replacement. This is always difficult at this time of year – we're much more likely to have success over the summer.
- Begging Mrs Fredrickson to stay. Not likely to work (she's moving to France and already has the tickets booked!)
- Backfilling with existing staff. This is what we're recommending – details below.

To backfill with existing teaching staff, we'll do the following.

- We have four staff that are qualified to teach German.
- We will free these staff up by increasing Fredrick Johnson's hours from 10 hours per week to full time. He is OK to do this up until the end of this academic year.

We've already sounded out all staff involved and they are okay with this proposal.

Budget Impacts

All good – we will actually save £1000 (from the Teaching Staff budget line).

Assuming we recruit a new replacement in September on around the same salary as Mrs Fredrickson then we will be back to where we are now in terms of the budget.

Goals and Measures

The goal is to maintain standards. The key worry in achieving this is maintaining teaching standards given that two of the four German teachers are a bit rusty. Our plan is for Judith Pearson to sit in on the relevant lessons and report back to the headteacher.

What's the difference?

As can be seen, both examples are about the same length and the "good" example probably took less time to write.

The differences are probably best illustrated by seeing what goes through the mind of a governor with the two examples.

With the "bad" example.

- "Oh no, I've got to absorb this now and make a decision. OK, thinking cap on.."
- "What one earth is an MFL unit? Probably the same as a lesson. Maybe I should ask. Well none of the other governors look bothered so I'll keep quiet."
- "Do I remember us being 20 MFL units short in the last couple of years? I don't think I do. Maybe if I knew what an MFL unit was I'd remember. Avoiding a shortfall's got to be good though."
- "Right, what does this recommendation mean? It looks like these are hours or lessons assigned to people. The numbers add up to 50 – yep, that must be right. Ah yes, KJH is probably Ken Hughes who I've heard of. That must be it."
- "I can see why we just need to do this. Hang on – it looks like that's not a problem as we should save money. Oh – what are on costs again? I wonder what SL 53 is? Must be some sort of teaching grade."
- "Is this a long term solution? If it is, why didn't we do it a long time ago – not least because it seems to be cheaper?"
- "Well hang on, if the only point of doing this is to find 50 MFL units and this solution is cheaper then I'm even more sure we should have done this years ago. There must be a catch. Is this going to lower standards? Why aren't we just replacing like for like?"
- "Why wouldn't staff be happy with this? Do I need to worry about that?"
- "Oh whatever. If I ask all the questions in my head I'll look like I'm questioning what is obviously a decision we have to take. Fine – let's put this through but I'm not happy."

For the "good" example, a governor would be left thinking.

- "Right got it. The leadership team have thought this through, considered options, know how they are going to check it works out. Fine. When I go to the meeting I'll just propose that we do exactly what's proposed."

So what are the actual differences?

- The key one is that in the bad example, the governors are not actually governing – they are simply agreeing because they have no other choice. It will also lead to a bad solution as there's nothing in place to check on standards (which is actually the key issue).
- The bad example includes a number of things which governors will not understand:
 - Terms and acronyms which are well understood within the school but meaningless to the layman.
 - Initials for staff.
- The bad example includes a superfluous level of detail (the table) and irrelevant information (the effects of the recommendation on History and French). The recommendation also is entirely indecipherable to someone who is not already familiar with what the recommendation is!
- The good example is given to governors early so it can be considered ahead of the meeting.
- The good example reads like a story – i.e. it has a beginning, a middle and an end so is easy to absorb.
- The good example does not assume any knowledge or background in the audience – it is all included in the proposal.
- The good example sets out other options that have been considered and rejected. This ensures that governors don't need to think of these options and ask.
- The bad example is short term and really judges success by governors giving approval. The good example summarises the key concern SMT have and proposes how to address it.