

# wellcome trust

## Evaluation Report



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# Executive summary

## Introduction

In 2012, the Wellcome Trust developed its Recommended Code of Governance for Schools. The Code was developed through a series of workshops bringing together school governors, headteachers, and representatives of the Department for Education, Ofsted, the National Governors' Association, the National College for School Leadership and the School Governors' One-Stop Shop, along with other stakeholders.

The Code is divided into three component parts, or Elements. Element A focuses on the formulation of a shared vision and long-term strategic plan for the school. Element B sets out a governance framework, detailing the governing body's key roles and responsibilities. Element C is concerned with data management and high-level school performance indicators.

In November 2012, the Wellcome Trust began a pilot of the Code in 21 schools. The pilot ran for two years to November 2014 with schools in England and Wales. Alongside the pilot, a qualitative evaluation of the Code ran from November 2012 to September 2014. The evaluation was intended to observe and collect information from each school and evaluate the outcomes of the Code in each school. Its specific objectives were:

- to understand the extent to which the pilot schools have used the Recommended Code and explore the different ways in which they have used it
- to assess the usefulness of the Code to schools
- to examine whether the schools have added to or adapted the Code to meet their needs
- to find out whether the Recommended Code would benefit from further development
- to understand whether the Code has driven positive improvements in school governance and the performance of the school more widely
- to assess the potential for wider roll-out of the Code.

A total of 21 schools participated in the pilot. As shown in the table below, a range of schools from the primary and secondary sectors were included, including special schools, academies and partnerships.

### *Summary of schools participating in the pilot*

Type	TOTAL*	Special	Academy	Partnership	Other
Primary	9	0	3	2	5
Secondary	10	1	6	2	3
Primary and secondary	2	1	1	1	0
<b>TOTAL*</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>

*\* Rows may add up to more than the total provided when schools fall into more than one category.*

Schools came to the pilot with a variety of Ofsted grades. In November 2012, a total of seven schools were rated as 'requires improvement', ten were rated 'good' and four were rated 'outstanding'. By the end of the pilot in September 2014, four were rated as 'requires improvement', ten were rated 'good' and seven were rated 'outstanding'. This improvement in the overall grading is consistent with the desire of pilot schools to improve their performance and Ofsted grading.

## Starting positions

At the outset of the pilot, it was evident that schools came from very different starting positions. As well as having different Ofsted grades, they had different approaches to governance and more or less well developed governance structures. Opinion Leader investigated whether each school had a strategic plan and governance framework in place and classified schools accordingly. Three 'starting positions' were identified, and these are shown in the table below.

### *Starting positions of the pilot schools*

Starting position	No. schools	Definition
Advanced	6	<p>Advanced schools had both a strategic plan and a governance framework in place at the start of the pilot and were seeking to review these (but not necessarily to replace them).</p> <p>These schools had a legacy of 'outstanding' or 'good' Ofsted attainment and often showed a desire to support other schools in the local area with strategy and governance. Three were in formal partnerships with other schools.</p>
Transitional	11	<p>Transitional schools had either a strategic plan or a governance framework in place at the start of the pilot (but not both), or had both in place but needed to overhaul them (e.g. owing to structural change at the school).</p> <p>Some schools were in the process of moving towards academy status or were considering this for the future, which caused them to review their approach to strategy and governance. Many schools in this category were actively seeking to improve their Ofsted rating by enhancing their governance.</p>
Latent	4	<p>Latent schools did not have a strategic plan or governance framework in place at the start of the pilot.</p> <p>They tended to have lower Ofsted grades and many lacked a clear strategic direction. They often had a high turnover of governors or said they did not have governors with the right skills on the board.</p>

This classification enabled Opinion Leader to keep track of and measure levels of engagement with the Code in relation to the starting position of each school. Different levels of engagement would result in different kinds of progress and outcomes for advanced, transitional and latent schools.

## Levels of engagement

By July 2014, Opinion Leader was able to make a judgment about the level of engagement shown by each school. Schools were classified as having exhibited full engagement where they had taken positive action on Elements A, B and C. Partial engagement was demonstrated where the school had taken positive action on one or two elements of the Code but not all of them. Where the school did not complete the evaluation, it was judged that engagement was not sustained.

Of the 21 schools involved in the pilot, 17 sustained their engagement with the Code over the pilot and four did not. A total of six schools exhibited full engagement with the Code, and 11 exhibited partial engagement. Typically, partially engaged schools had not taken action on Element C (high-level performance indicators).

### *Levels of engagement with the Code*

Engagement	TOTAL	Starting position		
		Advanced	Transitional	Latent
<b>Full</b>	<b>6</b>	3	2	1
<b>Partial</b>	<b>11</b>	3	6	2
<b>Not sustained</b>	<b>4</b>	0	3	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>

Schools that had engaged fully with the Code said it had been a genuine catalyst for action and change across the three Elements. Not only had it stimulated thinking within the governing body and senior leadership team, it had also resulted in positive action.

Schools showing full engagement had taken action on Element A (e.g. reviewing an existing strategic plan or developing a new one) and on Element B (e.g. using it to help reconstitute the governing body or to carry out a skills audit that informed the subsequent recruitment of governors). Unlike most partially engaged schools, all had also taken action on Element C. They had gone beyond the approach to data they had taken before the pilot and, as a result of the Code, were now measuring performance and distributing data in different ways.

Some fully engaged schools (particularly those that were not classed as advanced) also pointed out that the Code had provided a structure for their governance activities, which had not been available to them before, and said this had helped focus their thinking and performance.

Schools showing partial engagement had typically taken action on Elements A and B but had not taken positive action on Element C. Opinion Leader took 'positive action' to mean that the school had in some way changed its practices in response to the Code over the course of the pilot – for instance, by introducing new indicators or changing the way data was disseminated. Use of the Fischer Family Trust's Data Dashboard alone was not considered 'positive action' for the purposes of the evaluation.<sup>1</sup>

There were three main reasons why these schools had not taken positive action on Element C:

- They could not see the benefit of introducing new indicators around aspirations, relationships, employability, etc. This was often because schools were unclear how these would impact on their Ofsted grade. Better alignment between Element C and Ofsted requirements was requested here.

<sup>1</sup> The FFT Data Dashboard (or Governor Dashboard), developed in partnership with the National Governors' Association and the Wellcome Trust in 2013, provides a range of information to help governors support and challenge the school leadership team. The Dashboard was supplied to all 21 schools during the pilot.

- They did not understand how they would go about measuring the new and different indicators suggested by Element C. In this case, schools requested guidance and support alongside the Code.
- They did not have time to take action on Element C within the two-year pilot period. Some schools intended to move on to Element C in the 2014–15 academic year.

A total of four schools did not sustain their engagement with the Code over the course of the pilot. In one case, this was because the Code was not effectively disseminated at the start of the pilot and did not receive attention. In other cases the school either did not feel the Code offered anything new or felt unable to implement it without support.

## Developing the Code

Most schools did intend to continue using the Code beyond the pilot period. This evaluation suggests that full roll-out of the Code would be enhanced by the improvements listed below. Improvements are listed in order of priority based on the weight and veracity of opinion expressed during the pilot evaluation.

### *Improvements to the Code*

Improvement	Requirement	Relaunch
<b>Provide support and guidance</b>	There were frequent requests for more practical support for schools in implementing the provisions of the Code. Schools variously thought this should be provided via case studies, tutorials (online and face-to-face), networking opportunities, conferences, and the involvement of organisations such as the National Governors' Association (NGA) and local authorities.	Lack of support was a reason why some schools had not fully engaged with Element C and also why at least one school had dropped out of the pilot. Consider provision of support and guidance, especially for less advanced schools.
<b>Align more closely with Ofsted</b>	There were complaints that the Code (particularly Element C) was not aligned with Ofsted requirements. Many schools could not see how the indicators suggested in Element C would enable them to achieve a better Ofsted grading. For this reason, engagement with Element C was lower than A and B.	Redraft Element C so that it is better aligned with Ofsted requirements. Make this alignment clearer to schools. If schools do not feel Element C is well aligned with Ofsted, they will not engage fully with it.
<b>Redraft Element C</b>	As suggested above, Element C was often seen as the weakest area of the Code. Comprehension of some of the indicators suggested (levels of inspiration, aspiration, and so on) was low.	Redraft Element C to make its requirements simpler and its benefits clearer to schools. Provide practical guidance on how new indicators might be implemented.
<b>Encourage better dissemination</b>	While the Wellcome Trust's role was valued, schools felt wider take-up might be achieved if the Code were disseminated through organisations and networks such as the NGA, national leaders of governance and local authorities.	Promote the Code to the NGA, local authorities and other relevant bodies. Involve them in its dissemination.

Improvement	Requirement	Relaunch
<b>Tailor for partnerships</b>	Several pilot schools were part of formal or informal partnerships. During the pilot, an increase in partnerships was reported, with partnerships being actively promoted by the Department for Education (DfE) and certain local authorities. Although a radical overhaul of the Code was not required in response to this, some schools felt that reference to partnership schools and guidance on appropriate governance structures for them were required.	Refer to partnership schools and include any additional considerations (e.g. the advantages of single versus multiple boards).
<b>Amend name</b>	A few participants commented that the name 'Code of Governance' was not appropriate. These schools saw the Code as providing a checklist or framework for governance. Other schools did believe that 'Code of Governance' was the right name.	Consider giving the Code a different name, such as 'Governance Framework'.
<b>Encourage cyclical use</b>	Some schools challenged the linear application of Elements A, B and C and felt this should be reframed as a cyclical process. These participants felt there was no need for schools to start at Element A if they already had a viable strategic plan.	The introduction to the Code could promote a cyclical process of referral and use by making the Code's application within the annual governance cycle more explicit.

# 1. Introduction and methodology

## 1.1 Background and introduction

The Wellcome Trust's vision is to achieve extraordinary improvements in human and animal health by supporting the brightest minds in biomedical research and the medical humanities. One area which it aims to achieve this is by working to improve science education in UK schools.

The Recommended Code of Governance was developed by the Wellcome Trust in 2012, reflecting the importance of school governance to improve education in general, as well as science education. It was developed through a series of workshops bringing together a range of school governors, headteachers, representatives of the Department for Education, Ofsted, the National Governors' Association, the National College for School Leadership, School Governors' One-Stop Shop and other stakeholders.

The Recommended Code of Governance is intended to improve how school governing bodies work, including how they set strategic direction, develop performance indicators, evaluate school performance and hold senior leaders to account. As there are many different types of school, the Recommended Code has been designed to provide a robust and flexible framework so that a governing body from any type of school may use it to help support and challenge the school leaders to provide a first class education.

The Code is divided into three elements. Element A focuses on the formulation of a shared vision and long-term strategic plan for the school, from which annual school development plans can be derived. Element B sets out a governance framework, using the document "Twenty key questions for a school governing body to ask itself".<sup>2</sup> Element C is concerned with data management and high-level school key performance indicators (KPIs), developing outcomes for an effective school and how to measure these within the school.

In November 2012, the Wellcome Trust commenced a pilot of the Recommended Code in 21 schools. Alongside this, a qualitative evaluation of the Recommended Code was commissioned to examine its impact in participating schools. The aims of the evaluation are set out below.

### *Research objectives*

- 1 Understand the extent to which the pilot schools have used the Recommended Code and explore the different ways in which they have used it.
- 2 Assess the usefulness of the Recommended Code to schools.
- 3 Examine whether the schools have added to or adapted the Code to meet their needs.
- 4 Find out whether the Recommended Code would benefit from further development.
- 5 Understand whether the Code has driven positive improvements in school governance and the performance of the school more widely.
- 6 Assess the potential for a wider roll-out of the Code.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.nga.org.uk/getattachment/Resources/Useful-Documents/Twenty-Key-Questions/20-questions-for-the-GB-v2-July-2012.pdf.aspx](http://www.nga.org.uk/getattachment/Resources/Useful-Documents/Twenty-Key-Questions/20-questions-for-the-GB-v2-July-2012.pdf.aspx)



## 1.2 Participating schools

The 21 schools selected for the pilot are detailed below.

### Overview of participating schools

(Coloured boxes indicate where a school was special, academy or partnership)

School no.	School type	Special	Academy	Partnership	Ofsted grade September 2014
1	Primary				Requires improvement
2	Primary				Good
3	Junior				Requires improvement
4	Primary and secondary				Outstanding
5	Primary				Requires improvement
6	Primary				Outstanding
7	Primary				Good
8	Secondary				Good
9	Primary				Good
10	Secondary				Good
11	Primary and secondary				Good
12	Secondary				Outstanding
13	Secondary				Good
14	Secondary				Requires improvement
15	Secondary				Outstanding
16	Primary				Outstanding
17	Secondary				Good
18	Secondary				Good
19	Secondary				Outstanding
20	Primary				Good
21	Secondary				Outstanding

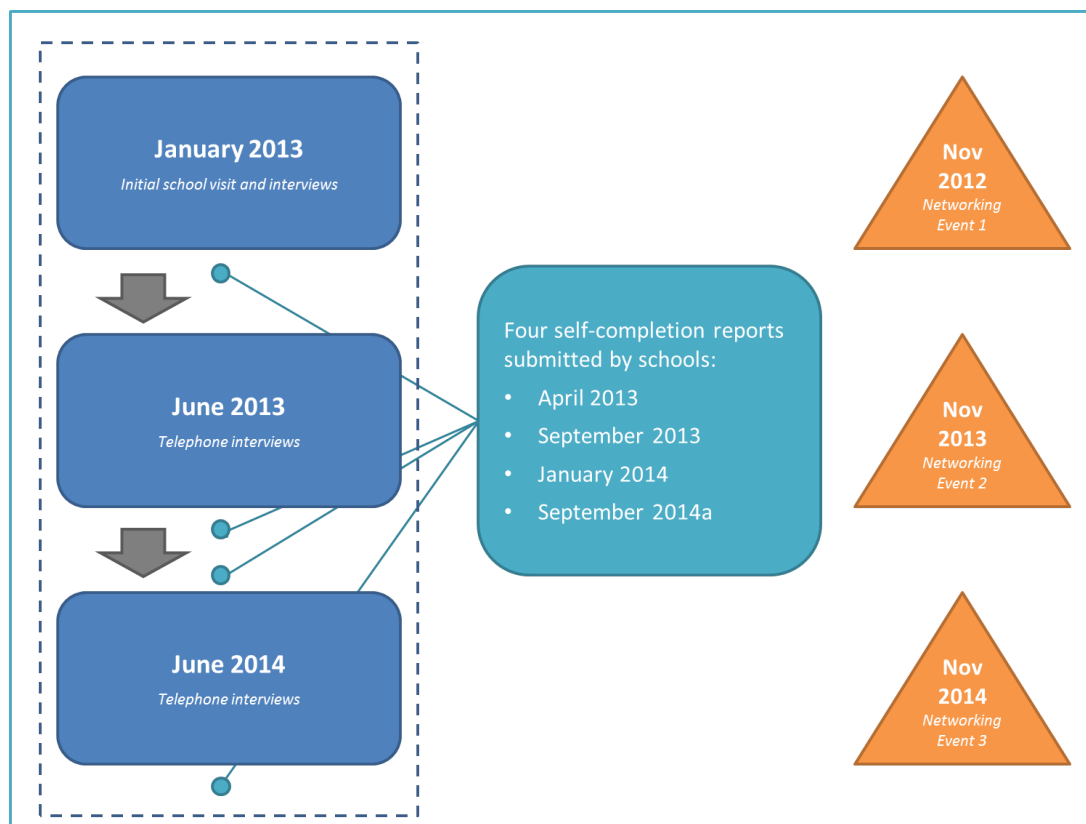
A key contact from each school was appointed, typically the person who submitted the original application to the Wellcome Trust. In most cases this was a governor or the chair of governors. They worked with Opinion Leader at each stage to arrange interviews with their schools and keep other stakeholders informed about the evaluation. To preserve anonymity, each school was assigned an identification number, which will be used throughout this report. As far as possible, any detail that could positively identify the school to the Wellcome Trust or other participating schools has been omitted from the research report. During the pilot, the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) collaborated with the Wellcome Trust to produce a Data Dashboard for governors. The Data Dashboard (or Governor Dashboard) provides a range of information to help governors support and challenge the school leadership team. The Dashboard was made available to all schools and training in its use was provided by FFT.

## 1.3 Research design and methodology

Based on an understanding of the time pressures that schools and governors face, the research evaluation was designed to be 'light-touch' across the two years and to place minimal demands on schools, while still ensuring an in-depth and robust study.

The evaluation was divided into seven main stages, detailed below.

### *Evaluation timeline*



### *Networking day 1*

The pilot and the evaluation began with the Wellcome Trust Code of Governance networking and training day, held at the Wellcome Trust in London on 28 November 2012.

### *Stage one*

The first stage of the evaluation took the form of face-to-face visits to the 21 schools involved in the pilot. This was intended to reveal initial reactions to the Code, examine any action that had already been undertaken by the school and investigate how the school intended to progress with implementing the Code during the pilot scheme.

### *Stage two*

In April, schools were sent a self-completion evaluation form designed to identify any actions that had been undertaken by the schools or were planned before July 2013, as well as any support that the schools needed from the Wellcome Trust.

### *Stage three*

In June and July 2013, an in-depth review of the year was conducted via telephone. Each contact was interviewed for 30 minutes and discussion covered what progress had been made, what was planned for next year and an evaluation of the Code overall. In some cases key contacts had changed through the year, but in most cases both of the original contacts spoke to the Opinion Leader team.

### *Networking day 2*

In November 2013, schools were invited to the Wellcome Trust for a second networking event based around the Code. Findings from the pilot were presented by Opinion Leader, and schools discussed their progress with the Code with one another.

#### **Stage four**

A self-completion questionnaire was distributed to the key contact in each of the schools in December with a deadline for returning the forms in January. Eight schools did not return their responses. Of these, three schools did not participate in the evaluation again, remaining dormant until the end of the pilot.

#### **Stage five**

A self-completion questionnaire was administered in April 2014. This focused on the impact of Element C on school governance but also covered the influence of the Code on schools' ability to meet Ofsted requirements and suggestions for future dissemination of the Code (post-pilot). Fourteen schools returned their forms and seven did not, including the three dormant schools.

#### **Stage six**

Final telephone interviews were carried out with representatives of each school in July 2014. A total of 15 schools participated. By this stage, three schools had been dormant throughout Year 2. A further three schools did not complete a telephone interview. The final telephone interviews reviewed schools' overall perceptions of the impact and outcomes of the pilot; they also examined suggested improvements to the Code and considerations for its relaunch and wider roll-out in the second half of 2014.

#### **Stage seven**

At the end of the pilot period, schools were sent notification of the close of the evaluation and provided with a self-completion form to return with any final comments. Completion of the form was not mandatory and no forms were returned, suggesting that schools had been given sufficient opportunity to comment on the Code.

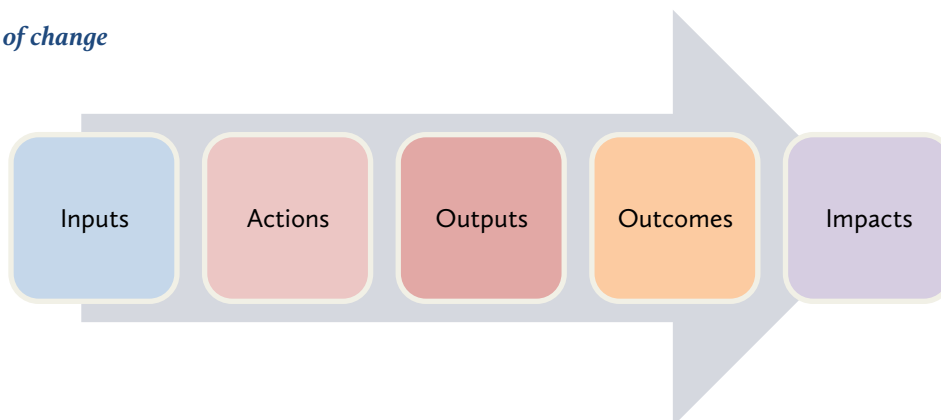
#### **Networking day 3**

A final networking day was held for schools at the end of the pilot period.

## **1.4 Theory of change**

The evaluation of the Wellcome Trust Recommended Code of Governance was intended to be more summative than formative. To ensure a robust evaluation under these conditions, it was decided that a 'theory of change' model should be used to structure the evaluation. A theory of change describes the types of inputs, activities and interventions that bring about the outcomes and impacts that are required or desired within a process. Using a theory of change allowed cause and effect to be inferred in the absence of a control group by hypothesising which links were crucial for successful implementation of the Code.

#### **The theory of change**



#### **Inputs**

Inputs are the items and considerations that feed into the process. These may be essential elements without which the scheme will fail; they may also be unavoidable but not strictly desirable considerations that are attached to the process and need to be taken into account. They may be practical or physical things, like the Code itself, or they may be more abstract (e.g. the identification of and need to change from schools).

#### **Actions**

Actions are all the activities and processes that need to happen in order to connect the inputs to the intended outcomes. In this instance, we have grouped these activities together into main categories that

provide broad terms for the essential processes that need to take place: receive and commit, decide, allocate, deliver, and evaluate.

### **Outputs**

Outputs are the tangible and usually concrete products of the actions that take place; in this instance they are generally the formulation of documents, the completion of away days and training, or the production of school resources.

### **Outcomes**

Outcomes are the immediate or short-term consequences of the production of outputs. Often they are the stated objectives of the participants going into the scheme, although sometimes unexpected outcomes occur. In this instance they are defined as changes in the immediate governing body.

### **Impacts**

Impacts are defined as the longer-term effects of the actions and outputs. In this case, they are the effects on the wider school as a result of changes in the governing body. There were few impacts seen by the end of the first academic year of the pilot.

The theory of change was developed over the course of the year as each research stage was completed, and the full theory of change constructed for this project is presented in the table below.

*The Recommended Code of Governance theory of change*

<b>Inputs</b>					
The Wellcome Trust Recommended Code of Governance	Training Day (November 2012)	Fischer Family Trust Data Dashboard	Incentive	Opinion Leader evaluation	Identification of a need to change
<b>Actions</b>					
<b>Receive and commit</b>					
Receive the Code	Read and understand it	Disseminate it to all stakeholders		Engage in the pilot	
<b>Allocate</b>					
Time and resource		Responsibility		Delegation	
<b>Decide</b>					
Deadlines		Prioritisation		How to implement	
<b>Deliver</b>					
Training to governors		Documents (e.g. plans and policies)		Agreement of governing body	
<b>Evaluate</b>					
Audit progress			Document results		
<b>Outputs</b>					
<b>Element A</b>		<b>Element B</b>		<b>Element C</b>	
Clear strategic vision documented		Best practice documents (remit of governors, make up of governing body)		Robust self-assessment plan developed	
School improvement plan		Internal checks and balances – regular evaluation of chair and whole body		Governor visits into schools	
		New recruits based on skills gaps		Data committee established	
		Skills audit			
		Committees set			
<b>Outcomes</b>					
Increased involvement and activity of governors					
Increased confidence of governors					
More challenge to senior leadership team					
<b>Element A</b>		<b>Element B</b>		<b>Element C</b>	
Common purpose for all stakeholders		Clear sense of responsibility and remit		Clear understanding of data	
Governors can clearly identify key objectives of school		Governor confidence in senior leadership team and vice versa		Ability to challenge data	
		Balanced governing body that reflects make-up of the school			
		Governors trained, sure of skills			
<b>Impacts</b>					
Thought leadership and teaching others					
Standardised practice across local authorities and nationwide					

## 2. Engagement with the Code

### 2.1 Reception and aspirations

The Recommended Code was well received. Although some of its provisions (such as the 20 Questions) were available elsewhere, it was seen as unique in providing a unified guide to school governance. The Code was seen as being appropriately broad in its coverage and flexible in its application.

The fact that the Wellcome Trust had developed the Code and committed itself to the pilot scheme was appreciated. The Trust was seen as authoritative and its involvement gave weight to the Code. The Wellcome Trust was seen as a respected and competent organisation that was expected to provide objectivity and act as a 'critical friend' to the pilot schools.

Schools' aspirations for the Code were broadly consistent. Many schools were focused on data management and were looking to improve their collection and use of data, making better data available to governors so they could challenge the senior leadership team and guide school development more effectively. Others showed a strong desire to ensure their governing bodies were composed of the right governors with the right skills. In addition, these schools were often looking to define the remit of their governing body more clearly and to provide more appropriate and effective training to governors. Finally, a few schools were looking to review and adapt their approach to governance in the broadest sense, following downgrading by Ofsted or with a view to obtaining academy status.

### 2.2 Initial classification

The 21 schools started the pilot in very different positions. They had different Ofsted gradings (from 'outstanding' to 'requires improvement') and very different histories. Some had stable senior leadership teams and governing bodies, whereas others had been through periods of change because they had converted to academy status, or because they had reconstituted their senior leadership team and/or governing body following downgrading by Ofsted. Some had demonstrably improved their performance in the years running up to the pilot, and others had seen their performance decline.

At the outset of the evaluation, schools were classified into three categories based on their starting position. Opinion Leader investigated whether each school had a strategic plan and governance framework in place and based its classification on schools' responses. The three categories established were 'advanced', 'transitional' and 'latent', and these are described in the table on the following page.

### *Initial classification: starting positions for the 21 schools*

Starting position	School no.	Definition
Advanced	6	<p>Advanced schools had both a strategic plan and a governance framework in place at the start of the pilot and were seeking to review these (but not necessarily to replace them).</p> <p>These schools had a legacy of 'outstanding' or 'good' Ofsted attainment and often showed a desire to support other schools in the local area with strategy and governance. Three were in formal partnerships with other schools.</p>
Transitional	11	<p>Transitional schools had either a strategic plan or a governance framework in place at the start of the pilot (but not both), or had both in place but needed to overhaul them (e.g. because of structural change at the school).</p> <p>Some schools were in the process of moving towards academy status or were considering this for the future, which had caused them to review their approach to strategy and governance. Many schools in this category were actively seeking to improve their Ofsted rating by enhancing their governance.</p>
Latent	4	<p>Latent schools did not have a strategic plan or governance framework in place at the start of the pilot.</p> <p>They tended to have lower Ofsted grades, and many did not have a clear strategic direction. They often had a high turnover of governors or claimed they did not have governors with the right skills on the board.</p>

This classification enabled Opinion Leader to track and measure levels of engagement with the Code. In this way, the application of the Code could be judged on a case-by-case basis and engagement judged in relation to the starting position of each school. A high level of engagement would result in different kinds of progress and have very different outcomes for advanced, transitional and latent schools.

#### ***Latent schools***

Four primary schools fell into the latent category, including one academy. Latent schools tended to have lower Ofsted grades; three were graded 'requires improvement' (or 'satisfactory').<sup>3</sup> All schools strongly identified a need to change and improve their governance at the outset of the pilot scheme. Latent schools were the least confident with governance.

There was often a history of turbulence in the senior leadership team or the governing body within these schools, which had had the effect of destabilising governance mechanisms. Some displayed a high turnover of governors or claimed they did not have governors with the right skills on the board. Latent schools often admitted that they had not had strong leadership on their governing bodies in the past. They also felt that the relationship between the senior leadership team and governors had not been clearly defined or well understood.

One of the most striking things about these schools was a lack of strategic direction. Because of insecurity in the past, many of the latent schools had not displayed a clear sense of common focus and shared goals. They often took a short-term view, with a piecemeal approach to strategy and a reactive rather than proactive outlook.

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<sup>3</sup> In January 2012, Ofsted changed its 'satisfactory' grading to 'requires improvement'.

“We had had two years of not really moving anywhere, just ticking along. There was no rigour there, there was no questioning, there was no push back; we just sat there and accepted everything that was being told.”

Headteacher, School 5 (primary, latent)

### *Transitional schools*

Three primary schools, six secondary schools and two secondary–primary partnerships were classed as transitional, including one special secondary. Three schools had academy status and two were working in partnerships. Ofsted grades (of the lead school in the case of partnerships) ranged from ‘requires improvement’ to ‘outstanding’.

In many cases, schools were already addressing several of the action points on the theory of change – they were all generally adept at allocating time and people, deciding on content and strategy and delivering good governance. All transitional schools had a strategic plan at the outset of the Code. For partnership schools, the coming together of different governing bodies had led to a reconsideration of priorities and practices. Similarly, the academies had gone through a recent reconsideration of their strategy and governance frameworks as they restructured to gain academy status.

Transitional schools were often characterised by a recent change in circumstance or shift in priorities that had led to them making some kind of change in their governing bodies or to their governance processes. This included conversion to academy status, change of leadership and poor Ofsted inspection prompting reconstitution of the governing body. Both School 6 (primary) and School 11 (secondary) had gone from special measures to ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ before the pilot, partly as a result of changes to their governing body and governance processes.

However, only three transitional schools said they had a clear governance framework, and this (rather than the strategic plan) was typically the area that schools wanted to develop through use of the Code. Transitional schools showed varying degrees of confidence in their governance: some schools were very self-assured on the commencement of the pilot, and others were less so and looking for support.

### *Advanced schools*

Six schools on the pilot were classed as advanced in February 2013 – four secondary schools and two primary schools. Six of these schools were academies, and three operated within partnerships. Ofsted grades of the lead schools were either ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’, apart from one school that came onto the pilot as ‘requires improvement’ but was inspected in March 2013 and found to be ‘outstanding’ at that point.

All of the advanced schools had a strategic plan at the outset of the Code and all had a governance framework. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the activity level as set out by the theory of change was strong in these schools – they were generally able to deliver effective governance and evaluate it successfully. As a result, outputs, outcomes and impacts were generally strong and positive, as seen in excellent Ofsted grades and, more qualitatively, in confidence and commitment to the school from staff and governors.

Most advanced schools were interested in Element C of the Code and hoped the pilot would give them a new method by which to check their progress and further develop their current ways of working. The Code was often referred to as a health check, or a way of refreshing practices. Most advanced schools wanted to participate in sharing best practice. Taking part in the pilot was not just about improving their own governance but also being part of the wider project and being able to contribute their knowledge and expertise to other schools.

“It’s all part of the school showing that we want to be at the forefront of things that are happening... I see this as another example of how we want to ensure that we are going to be the best in an area.”

Headteacher, School 17 (academy, partnership)



## 2.3 Levels of engagement with the Code

Of the 21 schools involved in the pilot, 17 sustained their engagement with the Code over the two-year period and four did not. Over the two years, 20 schools demonstrated that they had taken action as a result of the Code. Actions taken by schools varied widely, from reviewing the school's strategic plan and asking the 20 questions in Element B to overhauling the strategic plan, reconstituting the governing body, and improving data collection and dissemination methods. A total of six schools engaged fully with the Code, using it to take positive action in response to all three elements – A, B and C.

It should be noted that schools did not take action based solely on the requirements of the Code. Other pressures and motivations were always at play, from Ofsted requirements and conversion to academy status to the drive and ambition of headteachers and chairs of governors. Clearly, the Code can only be effective where schools have the will to review, adapt or change their governance practices.

### A) Levels of engagement

Three levels of engagement with the Code were observed. These are shown in the table below.

#### *Levels of engagement with the Code*

Starting position	Definition
Full engagement	The school took positive action on Elements A, B and C over the course of the pilot, and this resulted in concrete changes to strategy, governance and the use of data.
Partial engagement	The school took positive action on one or two elements of the Code but not all of them. Typically, action was not taken on Element C, and no changes to data collection or management were observed (aside from use of the Data Dashboard).
Engagement not sustained	The school did not complete the evaluation, and engagement with the Code was not sustained over the pilot period. Typically, there was little or no evidence of the Code having been used in Year 2.

Typically, those who had engaged fully with the Code said that it had been a genuine catalyst for change across the three elements. Not only had it stimulated thinking within the governing body and senior leadership team, it had also resulted in positive action.

All fully engaged schools had taken action on Element A (e.g. reviewing an existing strategic plan or developing a new one) and Element B (e.g. using it to help reconstitute the governing body or to carry out a skills audit that informed subsequent recruitment of governors). However, unlike most partially engaged schools, all had also taken action on Element C. They had gone beyond the approach to data taken before the pilot and, as a result of the Code, were now measuring performance in different ways and distributing data in different ways.

Schools who had demonstrated partial engagement with the Code had typically taken action on Elements A and B but had not taken positive action on Element C. Opinion Leader took 'positive action' to mean that the school had in some way changed its practices over the course of the pilot, as a direct result of Element C. Actions here included the introduction of new indicators and changes to the way data was disseminated. Use of the Fischer Family Trust's Data Dashboard alone was not considered 'positive action'

for the purposes of the evaluation, as the Data Dashboard was separate from Element C and schools needed to take little action in order to start using it.

A total of four schools did not sustain their engagement with the Code over the course of the pilot. Reasons for this were:

- The Code was not effectively disseminated at the start of the pilot and did not receive attention.
- The Code was not seen as being effective (because the school felt it was already implementing most of the Code's provisions) and was abandoned at the end of Year 1.
- The school required support and guidance in implementing the Code and felt unable to progress beyond Year 1 without this.

## **B) Patterns of engagement**

Most schools approached the Code in order, addressing Elements A and B first and then (time permitting) moving on to Element C. The order of the Code made sense to participants, who recognised that development of strategy and the composition of the governing body needed to be addressed before more detailed decisions about data collection and management could be made. Some schools also had a pressing need to deal with Elements A and B, for instance, because they did not have a strategy in place or because they did not have appropriate skills on their governing body and were considering its reconstitution.

“We looked at Elements A and B [during the pilot] because there was a real need to review the strategy and focus on the governing body... We didn't have time to get on to Element C.”

School 17 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

However, some challenged this linear approach to the Code and suggested that the Element ABC model should be reframed as a cyclical process. These participants said there was not necessarily a need for schools to start at Element A if they already had a viable strategic plan. Engagement could start with Element C, if data collection was an immediate priority, and the Code was not always seen to make this explicit. In addition, many felt that Elements A, B and C should be addressed on an annual basis and the Code returned to each year, if only to review current practices (for instance, most schools had an annual strategy meeting or away day at which strategy was discussed – this provided an opportune moment to review Element A). The introduction to the Code might promote annual reference by making its role within the annual governance cycle more explicit.

“Not all schools want to go through it in that order [i.e. A, B, C], and it might be better framed as a cycle. You can start where you want and revisit the three Elements.”

School 16 (primary, advanced, full engagement)

“We decided that we would review every other year rather than every year. So we will repeat the process in January at the first January meeting next year and do another skills audit, which will feed into any future action.”

School 4 (primary and secondary, transitional, full engagement)

Whether the Code was used to take action or to review current practices depended to a great extent on the starting position and circumstances of the school. Advanced schools tended to have a sound strategic plan and governance framework already in place and used the Code to review these. In many cases this led to concrete changes; for instance, one advanced school introduced a formal review of the chair's performance as a direct result of reviewing Element B of the Code. Transitional and latent schools more often came to the Code intending to use it to drive forward change. They frequently recognised weaknesses in their governance structures and used the Code to address these.

One transitional school used Element B to overhaul its governance framework. Having addressed the 20 Questions, an annual plan was developed, the governing body completed a 360-degree evaluation of the chair of governors, new link governors were put in place, and a formalised agenda and minutes were provided for all governance meetings. Similarly, one latent school developed a completely new strategic plan using the Code. Teaching staff and governors attended an away day in April 2013 and had productive discussions about what the school's short- and long-term priorities ought to be. This was a success in getting all governors involved and making sure the governing body were united in their vision. The governors then discussed how to implement this vision and how its delivery should be measured. These considerations were set out in the new strategic plan.

## C) Impact of Element C

Overall, schools suggested (both explicitly and through inaction) that Element C was the weakest area of the Code. Where schools demonstrated partial engagement (rather than full) with the Code, it was typically because they had taken action on Elements A and B but not Element C.

There were three main reasons why these schools had not taken action on Element C:

- They could not see the benefit of introducing new indicators for aspirations, relationships, employability, etc. In particular, this was because schools were unclear how these would impact on their Ofsted grade. Better alignment between Element C and Ofsted requirements was requested here.
- Some schools did not understand how they would go about measuring the new and different indicators suggested by Element C. These schools requested guidance and support alongside the Code to help them with this.
- Others simply did not have time to take action on Element C within the two-year pilot period. Some schools, who had taken action on Elements A and B, intended to move on to Element C in the 2014–15 academic year.

Schools were often unclear about the benefits of introducing new indicators for aspirations, relationships, employability and so on, and needed guidance on this. Some did not understand how they would go about measuring these new and different indicators and wanted the Code to make this clear.

“Many of the Element C KPIs are unsuitable for the primary sector. How can we measure, related to our Vision Statement, a ‘love of learning’, ‘enthusing pupils’ or ‘celebrating the uniqueness and successes of all’ and so on?”

School 16 (primary, advanced, full engagement)

In addition, Element C was not always seen to be aligned with Ofsted requirements. Many schools could not see how the indicators suggested in Element C would enable them to achieve a better Ofsted grading. For this reason, engagement with Element C was lower than Elements A and B.

“Element C wasn't as clear as the other sections. It's not obvious how to implement these indicators.”

School 13 (secondary, transitional, full engagement)

**Starting positions and levels of engagement**  
*(Coloured boxes indicate where a school was special, academy or partnership)*

School no.	Starting position	School type	Special	Academy	Partnership	Ofsted category at Sept 2014	Level of engagement
1	Latent	Primary				Requires improvement	Partial
2	Latent	Primary				Good	Partial
3	Latent	Primary				Requires improvement	Not sustained
5	Latent	Primary				Requires improvement	Full
6	Transitional	Primary				Outstanding	Full
7	Transitional	Primary				Good	Not sustained
8	Transitional	Secondary				Good	Not sustained
9	Transitional	Primary				Good	Partial
10	Transitional	Secondary				Good	Partial
11	Transitional	Primary and secondary				Good	Not sustained
12	Transitional	Secondary				Outstanding	Partial
13	Transitional	Secondary				Good	Partial
14	Transitional	Secondary				Requires improvement	Partial
17	Transitional	Secondary				Good	Partial
4	Transitional	Primary and secondary				Outstanding	Full
15	Advanced	Secondary				Outstanding	Partial
16	Advanced	Primary				Outstanding	Full
18	Advanced	Secondary				Good	Full
19	Advanced	Secondary				Outstanding	Partial
20	Advanced	Primary				Good	Partial
21	Advanced	Secondary				Outstanding	Full

## 3. Implementation and outcomes

### 3.1 Progress with Element A

Element A focuses on the formulation of a shared vision and long-term strategic plan for the school, from which annual school development plans can be derived.

Four schools did not have a strategic plan in place at the start of the pilot and aimed to use the Code to develop a plan. The remainder either used the Code to review and develop their strategic plan or to replace their strategic plan with a new document.

Most schools acknowledged that there was not a great deal of time to devote to strategic issues in the governance calendar. However, schools typically set aside one meeting or away day each year to discuss and develop the school's strategy. Following this, amendments to the strategy were typically made by members of the senior leadership team and submitted to the board for approval.

“We've had an away day with governors and the senior leadership team. It was very productive looking at formulating a three-year strategic plan. It's in its embryonic stages at the moment, but I think it was another example of how the staff and the governors are working a lot more closely together. It's something the school has never done before.”

Headteacher, School 5 (latent, full engagement)

Some advanced schools with fully formed strategic plans were prompted to reassess their strategy by the Code and had fresh discussions about the strategic aims of their schools.

“Our aims were set at a time when the school wasn't as academically successful as it is now, it wasn't as diverse as it is now and it didn't have the resources that we have now. This is probably the first time in 15 years that the governors wouldn't say [academic success is a priority]. And actually they were putting down much more inclusive values about each individual student's experience.”

Headteacher, School 21 (advanced, academy, full engagement)

Having reviewed their strategic plan, schools generally set about updating their school development or improvement plan, ensuring their short-term goals aligned with their overall strategy.

Most schools had taken the kinds of action described above within Year 1 of the pilot. Typically, schools took less action on Element A in Year 2. However, many did an annual review of strategy in Year 2, revisiting and reassessing the strategic plan and delivery/improvement plan that had been drawn up (or reviewed) in Year 1.

In three of the schools where engagement with the Code had not been sustained, no action had been taken in relation to Element A. This was either because the Code was not disseminated in the school at all or because the school believed it already had a strategic plan and could not see any need to review it.

### 3.2 Progress with Element B

Element B of the Code sets out a governance framework, detailing how the governing body is expected to function.

The 20 Questions generally served as the starting point for progress on Element B. Many schools were familiar with the questions, and they were seen as comprehensive way of engaging the entire governing body, establishing strengths and weaknesses and identifying areas on which to focus attention. Some schools already used the 20 Questions as derived by the National Governors' Association, while others had their own established methods of conducting skills audits.

Some schools modified the 20 Questions as presented in the Code of Governance to make them more suitable for their school and to help demonstrate effectiveness.

“We’ve added a couple more questions [and] modified it a bit, but the 20 Questions are still there... It’s also got a column for evidence, because it’s often hard for governors to know whether they’re doing something well.”

School 8 (secondary, transitional, engagement not sustained)

Transitional and latent schools were less likely to have a skills-based model of governance in place than advanced schools. They were more likely to use Element B to carry out a skills audit of the governing body. By the end of the pilot, more than half of schools had recruited new governors, having used Element B to develop a skills-based approach to the composition of the governing body.

Perhaps surprisingly, a total of seven schools reconstituted their governing bodies during the two-year pilot period (often in response to Ofsted gradings or pursuit of academy status), and Element B was used to help them define the skills required on the board. Even where they had not reconstituted, many schools restructured their governing body, setting up new working groups or committees in response to the Code.

“We have been much more proactive about ensuring that people know that they really need to use that training – they need to look at the training package available and go on the training that they feel they need.”

School 6 (primary, transitional, full engagement)

In some cases, Element B also led to smaller and more practical actions. Two schools mentioned that they had set up email addresses for the governing body, which parents and staff could use to contact governors. Another school had produced diary planners to help governors manage their workload over the course of the school year.

“I drafted an annual planner...that already the committees are finding useful... In that planner is each committee, the policies it’s looking at, the regular agenda items and the specific ones for each term.”

School 4 (latent, special, full engagement)

### 3.3 Progress with Element C

Element C of the Code is concerned with data management and high-level school KPIs, encompassing outcomes for an effective school and monitoring performance.

At the start of the pilot, confidence with data set schools apart. Advanced schools were generally more adept with data than latent and transitional schools. For this reason (but also because of the time they had invested in Elements A and B), few transitional and latent schools engaged with Element C during Year 1. In fact, only three of the 21 schools took action on Element C in the first year, and all of these were advanced.

Element C was the most problematic area of the Code and the one where engagement was lowest. Lack of comprehension of the benefits of Element C and poor understanding of how to apply it, as well as a lack of support, were all cited as reasons for this.

Some schools started collecting new kinds of data in response to Element C. These schools (advanced and transitional) had begun using pupil, parent and staff surveys (as well as governor visits) to collect data on indicators such as wellbeing and employment in a systematic way.

“We did take time last September at our newly instituted annual strategy day to look at Element C. This proved to be an exercise in better formalising and structuring the performance indicators we

already looked at more than any significant remodelling, although it did include a discussion around what we thought was important, particularly around some of the 'softer' outcomes."

School 4 (primary and secondary, special, transitional, full engagement)

Even partially engaged schools that had not addressed Element C during the pilot were beginning to discuss different approaches to data collection and management by the end of the evaluation. Among these schools, there was a clear appetite for measuring less conventional aspects of performance such as wellbeing, happiness and employability.

"I don't know how we'd measure [wellbeing], I don't know if we want to measure it, I don't know if it can be measured, but those kind of soft things are important because they feed into your ethos."

School 12 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

The FFT Data Dashboard was not referenced in Element C but was provided alongside the Code to assist schools with their data management. The Data Dashboard was well received. Most schools appreciated its clarity, the broad range of data covered and the speed of its delivery (which was ahead of RAISEonline). However, a few schools criticised the Data Dashboard for not providing the breadth of data they wanted to see. For instance, one advanced school wanted a broader range of data to be broken down by academic year.

"It's much better than the Ofsted one – much, much better. It's clearer. The staff liked it. I went to a heads of department meeting and they asked questions that governors should ask. One of the teachers asked about ethnic mix and why that was. So that was a really key question for us, and for me to be there at that meeting was quite useful."

School 17 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

"The data dashboard is very good for the governing body to have, but we actually feel that the committee that delves down more into that would still be looking at the RAISEonline details."

School 16 (primary, advanced, full engagement)

### 3.4 Outcomes of the pilot

The main outcomes for the pilot postulated by the theory of change were increased engagement of the governing body, increased confidence in the governing body and increased ability of the governing body to challenge the school leadership.

In most cases the Code was seen as a success in delivering these outcomes. Participants tended to agree that the Code had helped their governing body to become more engaged and more confident (or at least to sustain these attributes where engagement and confidence were already good). It achieved this in three main ways:

- **Alerting governors to their responsibilities** – by clearly and succinctly setting out the responsibilities of governors around strategy, governance structures, procedures and data, the Code enabled them to think broadly about their duties.
- **Enabling training** – governors leading on the Code frequently used it to provide training to the body on their responsibilities and the annual requirements of the governance cycle; the Code was seen as providing a valuable structure and overview for this.
- **Formalising actions** – the Code enabled governing bodies to organise themselves much better, providing a focus for meetings, decision-making and actions.

"The code sets out clear areas for governors to identify their roles and responsibilities."

School 13 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

“The governing body has a much clearer sense of what it should be doing and what it should be discussing.”

School 14 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

“It has helped me train governors and alert new governors to what they need to do and take note of.”

School 17 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

As well as confirming these outcomes, schools also provided evidence of how the Code had stimulated governors to challenge the senior leadership team. Element C was seen as particularly useful here. Where governors had engaged fully with data collection and were interrogating school data, this provided a platform for challenging the senior leadership team and holding them to account.

“Element C has perhaps been one of the areas where both senior leaders and governors have seen the most changes and improvements. A core group of governors formed a Joint Review Group to focus more sharply on data, performance and school improvement. These governors underwent additional Raise and FFT Data Dashboard training and quickly came to a much deeper understanding of school data. This led to immediate gains in enabling them to challenge the senior leadership team on data predictions and to hold the senior leadership team to account for the plans for school improvement.”

School 5 (primary, latent, full engagement)

“Governors, through the Code, now have a clearer understanding of what they need to do and what they should be doing. It has enabled me to guide them towards being confident in asking the right sort of questions in the right way.”

School 3 (primary, latent, engagement not sustained)

“Governors now have an enhanced understanding of their role and are better able to challenge the leadership.”

School 12 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

A minority of schools (typically advanced or transitional) disseminated the Code to other schools. This suggests that they valued the Code and thought it was a useful document and worth recommending. One advanced school had intended to disseminate the Code to other schools in its network in advance of the pilot (one of its stated aims was helping other local schools to improve). Others did this following their own application of the Code. Whereas some schools disseminated the Code to other schools within their partnership, others went beyond this – for instance, disseminating it to their feeder primary schools. In doing so, pilot schools were often engaged in wider conversations about governance with the schools in their network and were seeking to help them improve their governance and performance more generally. This kind of proactive engagement with and distribution of the Code will be important to its take-up and use following the pilot.

“I have shared the Code with another school I am working with...to help them improve their governance. They have been focusing mainly on Element B.”

School 16 (primary, advanced, full engagement)

“I’ve used the Code with the feeder primaries in our partnership... I’ve recommended it to them.”

School 17 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

Unfortunately, positive outcomes were not witnessed in every school, and not every school believed its governors were in a better position to challenge the senior leadership team than they had been previously. This was either because the governing body had already been well equipped to do this and had not seen much overall change in its capability and performance as a result of the Code or because the school had not been able to fully engage with the Code and needed support to implement its provisions.



## 4. Barriers to delivery

### 4.1 Absence of support and guidance

The four schools that did not sustain their engagement with the Code did not do so for the following reasons:

- The Code was not effectively disseminated at the start of the pilot and did not receive attention.
- The Code was not seen as being effective (the school did not believe it offered anything new) and was abandoned at the end of Year 1.
- The school required support and guidance in implementing the Code and felt unable to progress beyond Year 1 without it.

“We strongly felt that as governors, we had nowhere or no one to turn to for input, development and support in helping us to grow into our roles and support us in the challenges we were facing.”

School 5 (primary, latent, full engagement)

The need for support and guidance was also a major reason why schools that had engaged partially with the Code had not implemented Element C. In this regard, schools needed support in understanding the provisions of Element C (what did the indicators actually mean?), how the indicators might impact positively on Ofsted grades and how the indicators could be effectively implemented. Schools said guidance could be provided online or through face-to-face training and believed case studies demonstrating best-practice applications would be useful. For this reason, it may be worth redrafting Element C so it is better aligned with Ofsted requirements and making this alignment clearer to schools. This pilot shows that if schools do not feel Element C is well aligned with Ofsted, they will not engage fully with it.

“I mean in terms of Element C and the things we look at, it would be useful to have a kind of one-stop shop online with any kind of rating scales and assessment tools that have been used by schools, particularly for the softer parameters.”

School 4 (primary and secondary, special, transitional, full engagement)

“I think information and support are vitally important to the success of the Code. Many schools’ governors feel that they work in isolation, particularly if their local authority is not very proactive at providing training for governors.”

School 6 (primary, transitional, full engagement)

In terms of the theory of change, the gap between those who fully engaged with the Code and those who partially engaged with the Code was the difference between committing, *allocating* and *deciding* on a course of action and actually *delivering* it. Partially engaged schools showed a theoretical understanding of the Code (and Element C) but did not demonstrate practical activity. Schools raised concerns about the Code’s ability to direct practical activity as early as February, when some schools reported confusion about how aspects of the Code (particularly Element C) should be implemented. By the end of the pilot, confusion about Element C had not been resolved for all schools.

It should be noted that, initially, some schools also struggled with Elements A and B and were perturbed by the lack of guidance for practical activity provided within (or alongside) the Code.

“It is hard to start to look at [Element B] and know where to go from it. We didn't really know what to do with the 20 Questions, but we went through them and answered them. I suppose it made people think, ‘Should we do something about that?’, but we didn't know what was expected in that section.”

School 14 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

“I don’t know whether the phraseology of all the 20 Questions is quite right, whether there’s some that lead too much to yes and no rather than on what kind of evidence it should be based. For example, number 13, ‘Are our financial management systems robust?’ Well, yes, but actually on what quality standards should they be based? So it doesn’t kind of take them into the next step.”

School 12 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

## 4.2 Need for training and networking

Training appeared to be a crucial factor in making progress.

“An opportunity for more universal support for governance and governors would be really helpful. A single voice and a stronger network of support and standardised training for all governors, not just chairs of governors, would certainly be beneficial.”

School 5 (primary, latent, full engagement)

“Personally, I find meeting with other governors very beneficial and have particularly enjoyed this through being a part of the pilot scheme. It is also valuable to see and understand how various different models work for different types of school. Training courses and forums would be good, as well as reciprocal ‘health checks’ for governing bodies.”

School 5 (primary, transitional, full engagement)

Training often bridged the gap between theoretical understanding of the Code and implementing real change. In particular, the use of external moderators, facilitators or experts seemed to be a key factor in driving progress. Many schools had included some kind of external source to help support their use of the Code, and this was reported across the categories, with some advanced schools using external auditors to conduct skills reviews and latent schools seeking help with forming a strategic plan or understanding data.

At the end of the pilot, it was suggested that more could be done to provide training to schools that need it to support their progress using the Code. It was not thought that the Wellcome Trust would necessarily be the right body to do this, and it was acknowledged that a wealth of training materials on governance is already available to schools. Many schools thought the National Governors’ Association or national leaders of governance could provide suitable training on the Code. Instead, it was thought that the Wellcome Trust could play a part in signposting schools to suitable resources that complement the Code’s content and would help schools deliver on the issues they uncovered using it.

“When it’s rolled out...it does need some training and some help for the governing bodies. And I suggested national leaders of governance, particularly the ones who had been involved in the pilot projects, to be the obvious candidates to help.”

School 2 (primary, transitional, partial engagement)

“Perhaps a format like the Wellcome Trust training day is the best channel – locally that might be through the local governor support training framework, which works well in our local authority.”

School 4 (primary and secondary, special, transitional, full engagement)

“Definitely training. I don’t know whether Wellcome has people who would do that or whether a National Governors’ Association would. I don’t know necessarily the best people to do it. But certainly those of us who have trialled it, I think we should all be prepared to do a little bit more.”

School 10 (secondary, partial, transitional)

Several schools commented that the training set up by the Fischer Family Trust on reception of the data dashboard was extremely helpful, demonstrating the impact of face-to-face sessions in enhancing

understanding. School 2, a latent primary (partial engagement), actively requested additional training from the Wellcome Trust in February 2013 to support formulation of its strategic plan and assessment of the governance framework, although ultimately it was decided that this would not be appropriate within the pilot setting because it might bias the evaluation.

“Governors underwent additional FFT Data Dashboard training, hosted by FFT in York, and quickly came to a much deeper understanding of school data. This led to immediate gains in enabling them to challenge the senior leadership team on data predictions, and to hold the senior leadership team to account for the plans for school improvement.”

School 5 (primary, transitional, full engagement)

Proactive networking also made significant differences to the progress schools made, as well as their feelings of satisfaction. As an example, School 3 and 5 both began the pilot as latent schools, but while School 3 had made only limited progress by the end of Year 1, School 5 had seen significant progress. One of the main differences between them was a propensity to actively seek help as opposed to stalling due to a lack of knowledge and training.

There was a sense that knowledge sharing among schools was well developed – a few participants were National Leaders and were used to dialogue and discussion. However, there was a feeling that more formalised methods of networking should be built up around the Code of Governance, whether these were organised online or offline. The annual networking events, held at the Wellcome Trust in November 2012 and 2013 were highly valued.

“It perhaps needs to have a regional kind of networking-type element to it. And also the kind of – the interactive and web type approach that’s been taken with the science and the maths questions.”

School 12 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

“I would have found it useful to have more opportunity to network with the other schools participating in the pilot.”

School 17 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

It should be noted that attempts to set up an online forum for networking and knowledge sharing in Year 1 of the pilot was not successful and the forum was not utilised in Year 2. Online forums are perhaps likely to be more widely used where they cover multiple issues relating to school governance, rather than being focused solely on the Code.

### 4.3 Alignment with Ofsted

It was widely commented that the Recommended Code was not aligned with Ofsted inspection criteria. This was particularly the case for Element C.

“The Ofsted criteria and Code of Governance criteria are not the same, or even aligned. Therefore it will not be a straight link between the Code and success in Ofsted inspections. Although the Code of Governance clarifies the expectation of a governing body, Ofsted expectations are not the same. Governing bodies will always look to the Ofsted criteria to make judgements about themselves and their schools.”

School 13 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

In some cases, Ofsted results had fuelled involvement with the Code. Schools hoping to improve their Ofsted grades had got involved in the hope that it would support this aim. Some schools who had been subject to Ofsted inspections throughout the pilot had found that this had prevented them from making headway with the Code and had stalled their progress in implementing the Code. Where schools had been

inspected and were required to address Ofsted comments, this usually took priority over addressing the broader strategic aims of the Code.

“A school should do the best it can and then be judged on that. If a school has good leadership, good behaviour and good outcomes it should follow that Ofsted judge it as good. If this were the case then the Code could / would be a critical part of meeting requirements. But Ofsted is an exam and unless a school follows the curriculum and acts in accordance with the mark scheme it won't do well. My school is now driven by what Ofsted want to see. I'm sure we aren't alone.”

School 14 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

By the end of the pilot, some schools did comment that Ofsted had been impressed by their use of the Code to develop a strategic plan, carry out a skills audit or review their data management. However, the gulf between addressing these wider strategic aims and the specific (often operational) issues raised by Ofsted was still felt. Explicit reference to Ofsted within the Code and to the way in which wholesale review of school strategy can have a positive impact on school performance and Ofsted results may still be needed.

“The three elements of the Code help provide a framework which embraces the core Ofsted responsibilities. However, will following the Code ensure success against these? Although the Ofsted framework and guidance are regularly evolving, the Code could show much more alignment – and signpost references (thus might form part of a regularly-updated Implementation Guide).”

School 15 (secondary, advanced, partial engagement)

#### 4.4 Need for strong leadership

Governing bodies are dependent on the energy, commitment and work of individuals and the success of the Code rested on the impetus of the key contact in each pilot school. Where individual governors were enthusiastic about the Code and willing to take a strong lead in getting their board and senior leadership team interested in implementing it, engagement with the Code was stronger than where this was not the case. Schools were clear that to achieve success with the Code, they needed a strong member of the governing body to drive activity forwards.

Schools struggled to implement the Code without a single contact responsible for its delivery during the pilot. They also struggled with implementation where personnel changed. Succession planning was a challenging area for governing bodies.

One school also suggested that a way of addressing this might also be to integrate the Code into the governance cycle, so that there was an explicit need to reference the Code at every annual strategy day or skills audit. None of the participating schools did this during the pilot.

#### 4.5 Time constraints

Governing bodies have only limited time to complete all the tasks required of them within the academic year. Discussion of strategy, governance processes, the composition of the governing body and the collection of data can receive only limited attention among the wide range of day-to-day and operational issues. This (as opposed to absence of support, lack of training and weak leadership) is one reason why some partially engaged schools did not make progress with Element C and were not designated 'fully engaged'. For these schools, a pilot period of longer than two years may have witnessed full engagement with the Code.

“Demands on governors' time are increasing. There are many tracking and recording packages available for school to enable them capture and demonstrate input, record evidence for Ofsted, and maybe something standard incorporating best practice for governors would also be beneficial.”

School 5 (primary, latent, full engagement)

## 5. Implementation beyond the pilot

The evaluation did not focus in great detail on whether and how schools intended to use the Code following the conclusion of the pilot. However, a range of likely outcomes were discussed and these are set out below. Most schools did intend to use the Code beyond the pilot and this does suggest that it was useful to them.

### *Intentions for ongoing use of the Code*

Ongoing use	Description
<b>None</b>	Schools would not use Code following pilot. This can be assumed for the four schools that did not sustain engagement.
<b>Uncertain</b>	The school was not sure whether or how they would use the Code in subsequent years. This was particularly the case for advanced and transitional schools who did not think the pilot offered them many new ways of doing things. These schools were often of the view that their own internal practices or other sources of information (e.g. via national leaders of governance) might offer more productive solutions to the governance issues raised in the Code. Potentially, the Code would remain one of a mix of sources of information and guidance.
<b>Address Element C</b>	Some partially engaged schools were determined to go on and address Element C, which they had not had time to do (either in part or in full) during the course of the pilot. Typically, these schools were interested in reviewing the indicators suggested and working through which they should adopt and how they should measure and report them.
<b>Address Element A and B</b>	Some partially engaged schools still had work to do on Elements A and B (for instance, they had not completely reviewed their strategic plan or had only embarked on this in Year 2). These schools intended to continue this work beyond the pilot.
<b>Integrate into governance processes</b>	Across categories, some schools did show a desire to integrate the Code into their ongoing governance practices, so that it was referred to at each annual strategic meeting and every time the skills of the governing body were reviewed (for instance).

Ongoing engagement with the Code and roll-out beyond the pilot schools will be enhanced by improvements to its content and delivery. This evaluation suggests that the improvements and considerations for roll-out detailed below will encourage schools to use the Code and engage with it as fully as possible.

### **A) Provide support and guidance**

There were frequent requests for more practical support for schools in implementing the provisions of the Code. Schools variously thought this should be provided via case studies, tutorials (online and face-to-face), networking opportunities, conferences and the involvement of organisations and networks such as the National Governors' Association, the national leaders of governance and local authorities. Wellcome Trust should consider provision of support and guidance with the Code, especially for less advanced schools. In doing so, it should be noted that schools do not want the Recommended Code itself (i.e. the document) to be augmented by case studies and other materials. These should be provided in parallel, perhaps through an online hub.

#### **B) Align more closely with Ofsted**

The Code should make explicit reference to Ofsted so that schools can see how its provisions are aligned with Ofsted requirements.

#### **C) Redraft Element C**

Element C was often seen as the weakest area of the Code. Comprehension of some of the indicators was low and schools were not always clear as to how these indicators should be applied and measured. Wellcome Trust should consider redrafting Element C to make its requirements simpler and its benefits clearer to schools. Practical guidance should also be provided on how new indicators might be implemented.

#### **D) Encourage better dissemination**

While the Wellcome Trust's role on the Code was valued, schools felt wider take-up might be achieved if the Code was disseminated through organisations such as the National Governors' Association and local authorities. Wellcome Trust could seek to promote the Code to the National Governors' Association, local authorities and other relevant bodies and involve them in its dissemination.

Some pilot schools had disseminated the Code to others in their local area. This kind of proactive engagement with and distribution of the Code will be important to its take-up and use following the pilot. The Wellcome Trust should seek to stimulate dissemination, networking and partnership working around the Code at all opportunities.

#### **E) Tailor for partnerships**

A number of pilot schools were part of formal or informal partnerships. During the pilot, an increase in partnerships was reported, with partnerships being actively promoted by the DfE and certain local authorities. While a radical overhaul of the Code was not required in response to this, some schools felt that reference to partnership schools and guidance on appropriate governance structures for them were required.

#### **F) Amend the name**

A few participants commented that the name 'Code of Governance' was not appropriate. These schools saw the Code as providing a 'checklist' or 'framework' for governance.

#### **G) Encourage cyclical use**

Some schools challenged the linear application of Elements A, B and C and felt this should be reframed as a cyclical process.

## 6. Case studies

Individual case studies for all 21 of the participating schools follow. These are intended to demonstrate how the Code was used in each school in detail, with specific reference to the actions taken in each school. Schools are not named (numbers are used) and, where possible, positively identifying data has been removed to preserve anonymity. Case studies are structured according to the key below.

### Key to symbols:



School context and relevant information



Satisfaction at the end of pilot (based on actions taken and stated levels of satisfaction)



Action taken with Element A



Action taken with Element B



Action taken with Element C



Suggested improvements

Each school's starting position is stated at the top of each page. Starting positions include the following:

- **Advanced** – had both a strategic plan and governance framework in place at the start of the pilot and were seeking to review these (but not necessarily to overhaul them).
- **Transitional** – had either a strategic plan or a governance framework in place at the start of the pilot (but not both), or had both in place but needed to overhaul them (e.g. due to structural change at the school).
- **Latent** – did not have a strategic plan or governance framework in place at the start of the pilot.

The level of engagement with the Code exhibited by each school is then recorded. Three levels of engagement were observed:

- **Full engagement** – the school took positive action on Elements A, B and C over the course of the pilot and this resulted in concrete changes to strategy, governance and the use of data.
- **Partial engagement** – the school took positive action on one or two Elements of the Code but not on all of them. Typically, action was not taken on Element C and no changes to data collection or management were observed (aside from use of the Data Dashboard).
- **Engagement not sustained** – the school did not complete the evaluation and engagement with the Code was not sustained over the pilot period. Typically, there was little or no evidence of the Code having been used in Year 2.

This analysis, cross-referencing starting position with engagement, shows that a school's starting position did not dictate its level of engagement with the Code over the pilot period. While all advanced schools engaged with the code fully or partially, transitional and latent schools fell across all three levels of

engagement (full, partial, not sustained). To some extent this demonstrates the relevance of the Code to schools in very different positions. It was possible for latent, transitional and advanced schools to engage fully with the Code over the course of the two-year pilot.

The table below shows the starting positions and engagement levels of the 21 pilot schools.

*Engagement with the Code*

Engagement with the Code	TOTAL	Starting position		
		Advanced	Transitional	Latent
<b>Full</b>	<b>6</b>	3	2	1
<b>Partial</b>	<b>11</b>	3	6	2
<b>Not sustained</b>	<b>4</b>	0	3	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>

Case studies begin on the following page. The case studies are not ordered by school number (1–21) but by level of engagement, from ‘full’ through ‘partial’ to ‘not sustained’. Within each category, schools are ordered by starting position (advanced, transitional, latent).



**School 16**  
**Starting position: advanced**  
**Engagement with Code: full**



School 16 was an ‘outstanding’ primary with fewer than 200 pupils. It was an academy partnered with another two schools in the area. The headteacher was the executive head of both schools within the partnership, and the chair of governors of the lead school was also chair of the Local Governors’ Association (i.e. the association between local schools and the local authority) and involved with national governing body organisations.

From the outset of the pilot, the headteacher wanted to ensure that influence wasn’t just concentrated in one role (the chair of governors) and that the entire body had requisite skills and knowledge. She was very conscious of the business element of running an academy and wanted to ensure that the governing body was structurally sound enough to cope with these changes, and incorporated more business acumen. Her long-term aim was to move from a stakeholder to a skills-based model of governance.



The school said it was satisfied with the Code and remained positive about its aims and content. However, there was a divide in opinion between the headteacher and the chair regarding how useful the Code had actually been. The chair thought that the Code content was too basic for the school and did not offer insights beyond the school’s current practices. However, the headteacher felt she had seen an improvement in governance as a result of using the Code.



A review of the Academy Vision was carried out in Year 1 and Year 2. The Code was referred to but did not affect the focus of each of the Vision days, which helped establish strategic priorities and actions for the coming year.



The 20 Questions were completed in both schools. This helped define responsibilities and weaknesses in the governing body of the less well performing school within the partnership. The 20 Questions did lead to a 360-degree review of the chair’s role, which had not taken place previously.



In response to the Code, a new data subcommittee was established to oversee and review data collection and dissemination. Target Tracker, a new method of monitoring individual pupil performance, was also introduced during the pilot. The data dashboard was seen as a summary tool that would not replace Raise Online but would act as a top line for school data, while the data committees would continue to use more in-depth tools. It was also believed that while KPIs were suitable for secondary schools, they were not all applicable for primary schools. The chair of governors said the Code had stimulated the school to look into which performance indicators were available and how it might use them, although no new indicators had been implemented.



With regard to improvements, the school wanted to see a list of primary school-relevant KPIs included, as well as relevant case studies showing best-practice implementation of the Code. The school had promoted the Code to other schools outside the partnership, demonstrating its perception of the Code’s value.

## School 18

**Starting position: advanced**  
**Engagement with Code: full**



School 18 is a secondary school that has recently become an academy and has achieved a 'good' grading status from Ofsted. The main reason the school joined the pilot was to be at the forefront of school governance. It sought to employ the best methods and learning from the experiences of other schools and felt the Code would facilitate this. There was a strategic plan in place at the start of the pilot, and the school saw this as being fit for purpose. The school had a governance framework in place and had already done a skills audit of the governors.



The school was very satisfied with the Code; it believed the Code identified the pertinent areas of good governance and set a standard against which the school could judge itself. The governors liked the separation of the three elements and believed the 20 Questions offered a very useful means by which to evaluate the governing body. All elements of the Code were engaged with (considered, discussed and implemented) over the course of the pilot.



The school reviewed its strategic aims and mission statement and rewrote these in light of the Code during Year 1. In Year 2, the school reviewed its school improvement plan and obtained governor input for this. This was a reversal of previous practice, where governor input was sought after the plan was drafted.



The school has made use of the 20 Questions to audit its current practices and identify areas of strength and weakness. The school reviewed its current committee structure and simplified it considerably, while still ensuring that it could fulfil its statutory duties. In Year 2, the school reconstituted its governing body to enable some of the current parent governors to be re-elected as community governors. A succession plan for the governing body was also developed.



The FFT Data Dashboard was well received and provided a useful platform for raising issues with the senior leadership team. The school developed a 360-degree model for appraising the headteacher, to allow for more input from parents, carers and pupils. A survey was established using random sampling, with tailor-made questionnaires, to be administered twice a year. In Year 2, this led to a challenging discussion with the headteacher and senior leadership team over the school's performance.



The school has engaged fully with the Code. In particular, it used Element C in an innovative manner to appraise the headteacher's performance. This appraisal had led to a direct and frank evidence-based discussion of performance between the governors and the headteacher. In the way of improvements, the school said the Code could be more directive to help schools implement its provisions. A national conference was also suggested, to facilitate networking and sharing of best practice.

**School 21**  
**Starting position: advanced**  
**Engagement with Code: full**



School 21, a secondary academy, had particular reason for coming on to the pilot scheme. Both the headteacher and the chair of governors were involved in workshops drafting the Code and wanted to remain committed to development of the model. An ‘outstanding’ school, renowned for excellence in both academic achievement and leadership, it was keen to increase accessibility to data, and to encourage governors to challenge the senior leadership team – as the headteacher himself acknowledged, despite strong leadership from the chair of governors, much of the school’s success rested on his impetus and it was time to develop a governing body that fully held him to account.



The school ended the evaluation with a positive view of the pilot. It had started to take the Code into other schools in the area and had started to see real changes in the ways that these schools were organising their governing bodies.



For the headteacher, the focus of the pilot was not on creating or modifying a strategic plan but on up-skilling governors so they were able to understand why decisions were made and challenge them. In Year 1, a planning workshop was run to explore approaches to strategy. The school’s aims and objectives were reviewed, and a strategic plan was finalised.



At the start of the pilot, the school had two subcommittees, an ‘education staffing’ committee and a ‘finance’ committee. By the end of Year 1, an away day had taken place, with the governing body reviewing its functions and practices. A skills audit had been performed, and the body as a whole felt more confident about its role and the skills and personnel required.



The school set up a new data committee to attempt to find consensus on the wealth of information and data it was using, and to start training governors to understand the data provided. Once the strategic plan had been finalised, the governing body considered how desired outcomes could be measured. The Data Dashboard was seen as a marked improvement on the Ofsted model because it was far more accessible for the full range of governors on the body. By the end of the pilot, the school said it was using its data in a more systematic way to report to governors and that it had extended the range of the data available through focus groups with pupils.



Following the pilot, the school intended to use the Code to review its performance on an annual basis. In rolling out the Code to a national audience, the school emphasised the relevant organisations should be involved in its dissemination and promotion. It was also important for each school to have a single governor responsible for leading on implementation of the Code.

#### School 4

**Starting position: transitional**  
**Engagement with Code: full**



The school is a special primary and secondary school with 100 pupils aged 7–16; it performs well at Ofsted. In 2011 the school received a ‘good’ grade and in July 2014 the school received an ‘outstanding’ grade. The school was initially interested in the Code of Governance as it was becoming increasingly aware that Ofsted inspections were looking in detail at school governance and, despite having a very engaged and enthusiastic governing body, felt they lacked strategic direction. The school was being rebuilt during the pilot period and alongside this, the school was looking to overhaul its strategic aims and governance framework, with a view to improving its overall performance.



The school had engaged with all elements of the Code in a comprehensive manner. It had found the Code extremely helpful in enabling it to develop a new strategy and review its governance processes. A new strategy, governance framework and monitoring programme had been developed and implemented, and the school’s use of the Code had been central to these achievements.



The school instituted a new Annual Strategy Day in September 2013, for the senior leadership team and governors to get together and discuss the school’s strategy. This enabled the school to develop a new strategy and consider its approach to governance and monitoring. A new strategic plan was developed using Element A of the Code.



The school’s governance framework was redeveloped. It completed the 20 Questions, which identified areas that needed development. An annual plan was created, stating activities to be completed and by whom. The governing body completed a 360-degree feedback evaluation on the chair of governors, and meetings were improved by an agenda being sent out in advance and minutes taken and circulated. In addition, new link governors were established and their roles were clearly defined.



During the Annual Strategy Day, Element C was addressed. This better formalised and structured the performance indicators being used and helped the school define the measures it thought were important, particularly regarding some of the ‘softer’ outcomes that were seen as particularly important in a special school setting. The school also set out an annual programme of items, policies and reports for meetings across the year for both the full governing body and each of the committees, which covered the Element C items. A new behavioural reporting framework was developed and a new staff questionnaire, pupil profile and commentary on leaver destinations were established.



The school was able to apply the Code without much outside support and direction. However, it did feel the Wellcome Trust’s initial Training Day was very helpful. Given this, the school requested that more training and networking opportunities were provided when the Code was launched, to help schools understand how to apply and implement its guidance. In particular, the school thought that networking might help it understand how to apply some of the softer measures suggested in Element C. The school also requested an online repository of helpful documents (e.g. strategic plans), to help schools in the process of developing their own.

## School 6

**Starting position: transitional**  
**Engagement with Code: full**



School 6 was a primary school with around 500 pupils. On joining the pilot scheme, the school was graded as 'outstanding,' as was its governing body, having gone through a significant period of transformation – an amalgamation of infant and junior schools into one as part of this – and moving from 'requires improvement' to 'outstanding' in a five-year period. The school was starting to move to three forms of entry, taking on a significantly higher number of pupils and undergoing almost a million pounds' worth of rebuilding work as a result. Staff and governors came into the pilot conscious of a need to revise the school's strategy and the framework for governance.



School 6 said the Code had made a strong and positive impact on governance. It was seen as a useful tool that worked well to steer governing bodies towards best practice. This school found that the three-stage approach to the Code was helpful in splitting out tasks and helping enhance understanding of how to improve and drive progress forwards. The school noticed a general uplift in governor engagement and confidence over the course of the pilot and were still considering additional applications of the Code (e.g. a staff wellbeing survey at the end of the pilot). Engagement with the Code was sustained despite a change of chair of governors, through effective handover of leadership.



The school already had a strategic plan and the Code helped reassure the school that it was on track with its strategy, even if this element of its work was sometimes difficult (owing to the limited time available to think about non-operational issues). The governing body met to discuss its strategy and the impact of the Code, and this meeting acted to consolidate various points of view into a clear direction forwards.



The school had changed its approach to governance in several ways and these changes were, in part, due to the Code. It had established a new link governor and reviewed the size of the governing body and the skills represented (through a skills audit). As a result of this, the size of the governing body was reduced through an intentional process of attrition. A committee looking purely at the expansion of the school was created and finance was given special attention with a session from the headteacher. During the second year of the pilot, the focus was on recording and understanding the right data. The school found Element C and the Data Dashboard very helpful here.



The school began to use data in new ways over the course of the pilot, with Element C and the Data Dashboard providing useful guidance. Data was used to evaluate the governing body (leading to its reduction in size). All governors were trained on Raise Online and the FFT's Data Dashboard and, overall, the board had become more aware of its obligations with regard to data and data monitoring. A staff survey had been carried out as the school considered whether it should move to academy status, and at the end of the pilot the school was considering whether to introduce a staff wellbeing survey to monitor the impact of its ongoing expansion.



School 6 was adamant that the Code had a positive impact on its governance. Nevertheless, several improvements were suggested. The school felt endorsement and promotion of the Code via the National Governors' Association and local authorities would be of value. It was also of the view that increased support for schools (particularly via networking) would help promote better engagement with and use of the Code.

## School 5

**Starting position: latent**  
**Engagement with Code: full**



During the pilot this primary became an academy (September 2013). This followed an Ofsted grade of 'requires improvement' in December 2012. The Code was adopted before the 2012 Ofsted inspection as some governors became aware that the governing body as a whole was relatively inactive and did not do as much as it could to challenge the senior leadership team or the data provided about the school's performance. The school has since embarked on a comprehensive review and overhaul of its strategy, governance and monitoring activity in the process of becoming an academy.



The school said the Code had provided it with invaluable guidance at a time when it really wanted to improve its performance. Following its decision to become an academy, the school had reconstituted its governing body, developed a new strategic plan and reviewed the way it collected data to monitor its performance. The Code had been used to support all three of these activities.

Initially, governors expressed some disappointment that there was little direction in the Code regarding the implementation of its tenets and little guidance and support available. Although this criticism persisted to the end of the pilot, all three Elements of the Code were engaged with and implemented.

a

Teaching staff and governors attended an away day in April 2013 to develop a strategic plan and had productive discussions about what the school's short-term and long-term priorities ought to be. This was a success in getting all governors involved and making sure the governing body were united in one vision. The governors also began thinking about what this vision would look like in practice and how it would be measured. These considerations were set out in a new strategic plan.

b

The governing body was restructured in September 2013, when the school became an academy. The Code of Governance provided a model for the restructure. The governing body undertook a skills audit and recorded the skills that each governor had. Lead governors were appointed to each key area of performance – numeracy, literacy, and so on.

c

The governors did find the data dashboard helpful and said it presented the data in a visual and easy-to-digest manner. However, they believed that additional training was required in order for them to interrogate the data effectively. The school introduced a range of new monitoring practices, including a PASS survey of pupil opinion. A staff and parent survey was in development at the end of the pilot. Governor leads were assigned to monitor performance. Guidance was still required on how pupil wellbeing should be measured.



The school spoke very highly of the Code: they felt it should be made a national standard for all schools and be endorsed and recommended by Ofsted. However, it admitted that governors had initially struggled to embed the Code and that additional support and time would have helped with this. A national support centre for chairs of governors was requested, as was more advice and guidance on implementation from the Wellcome Trust or other national organisations. Clearly, the move to academy status had given the school the impetus for all the changes it had achieved, but the Code was also used to support and guide these changes during the pilot period.

**School 15**  
**Starting position: advanced**  
**Engagement with Code: partial**



This is a partnership school that became a multi-academy trust during the pilot. The lead school (to which this summary applies) is a secondary academy with 1,400 pupils and an 'outstanding' Ofsted rating.



The school was satisfied with the Code. Elements A and B were seen as a useful restatement of good practice, enabling the school to review its performance, although they did not introduce anything new to the governance processes followed by the school. However, Element C was seen to challenge the school's thinking about how it measured outcomes and spurred it to consider different kinds of measurement and measurement of different outcomes. The Data Dashboard was well received as the school was looking for more rapid delivery of data than previous sources provided.



The school had a strategic plan in place and a formalised system of strategic governor review, leading to an annual development plan. The Code was a relevant reminder to undertake a review of the development plan but did not add to the school's existing processes.



Element B triggered a self-review of the governing body, based on the 20 Questions, as well as the National College and Ofsted frameworks. An annual assessment tool, developed independently by the school, was also used. Again, this was in line with the school's annual processes, although the Code was used. It was believed that Element B did not pay enough regard to Ofsted requirements (beyond the 20 Questions), and the headteacher also said the Code should stipulate that proof of challenge from governors should be fully documented as evidence for Ofsted inspection.



Element C was seen as being the most novel aspect of the Code. It had initiated discussion about KPIs – what these should be and how they should be tracked. The school was interested in receiving or generating predictive data showing projected outcomes for future years. The Data Dashboard fulfilled this to some extent, as data could be tracked by academic year. During 2013, consideration was also given to the data that should be reported to parents on an annual basis. However, no additional data collection was carried out, and none of the softer measures suggested by the Code were introduced during the pilot.



The school recommended that the Code be tailored for multi-academy trusts and other partnerships, as this was a rapidly emerging model of school management and provided new challenges for governance (coordination across schools, the decision to have one or multiple governing bodies).

In addition, the school identified a need for better guidance and support for implementation of the Code. This might include templates accompanying the Code, showing schools with less well-developed processes and systems how a strategic or development plan (for example) should be set out. Guidance on the difference between vision, values and mission and how these should be articulated was also requested. Stronger links between the Code and Ofsted requirements could also be made. The school wanted to see a move to 'real-time' data for schools. While the Data Dashboard represented a step in this direction, quicker, faster data was still an aim. Finally, the school wondered whether the Code should be rebranded as a 'checklist'.

**School 19**  
**Starting position: advanced**  
**Engagement with Code: partial**



This secondary school has 870 students in years 7–11 and became an academy in 2012. The school was building a sixth form during Year 1 of the pilot period, and from September 2014 the school incorporated years 12 and 13, as well as a new special school. In 2011 the school was given a ‘requires improvement’ grade by Ofsted. In March 2012 the school was graded ‘outstanding’. At the start of the pilot the school had a strategic plan and a governance framework already in place.



The school was very satisfied with the Code as it provided a structure for the governors to work around and a framework that covered all elements required for governing bodies. The chair of governors liked the independent perspective on governance and liked that the Wellcome Trust focused on science education, as he perceives this as a particularly challenging area for all secondary schools. The school viewed the Code as one reference document among many and used it alongside other sources of guidance from Ofsted and the National Governors’ Association.



The school had a strategic plan before the pilot. The Code was used to review this plan and analyse school development. Since the Code’s implementation, governors were more confident and perceived to be better at questioning the senior leadership team. The Code provided them with a structure on which to base their questions and challenges to the senior leadership team. It had also helped the board to structure their meetings by giving them specific items to structure their discussion around.



Over the course of the pilot, the school performed a complete skills audit and established the training needs of the whole governing body. The chair of governors collected the results into a matrix that showed each governor’s role on the governing body, what their skills were and the training available to them. This matrix was then presented at a full meeting of the governing body. The chair of governors felt the governing body had a more considered and structured approach to its representation of different skills than before.



The school was already very data focused. It attributed its Ofsted progress, in part, to good analysis and use of school data. The Data Dashboard was well received, and the chair of governors was happy that the data included reflected data the school had already captured. Data was sent to governors and all members of staff. Governors felt they could hold teachers to account much better as year-group performance was made clearly visible on the Data Dashboard. The headteacher was very happy that the governors were using data to question the senior leadership team and teachers in a manner that pushed them to strive to achieve better.



The school believed the Code needed to be updated to reflect the way schools were now organised and the rise of partnerships and federations. The Code could also give clearer guidance on how to organise subcommittees, to enable better management of decisions across committees that might meet at different times (sometimes weeks apart). The school also felt the Code should be given official recognition (e.g. by Ofsted), to prompt schools to use it.



**School 20**  
**Starting position: advanced**  
**Engagement with Code: partial**



This school is a rural Church of England primary school with a 'good' Ofsted grading (2011). Its main driver for taking part in the pilot was to make its already strong governing body more effective. The school had both a strategic plan and a delivery plan in place on commencement of the pilot.



Engagement with the evaluation was not continued beyond January 2014, when the school submitted its final self-completion response. The main reason for the school's lack of engagement beyond this point was an overhaul of its senior leadership team in November 2013. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed, and a major building scheme was embarked upon. This led to various changes in governance. Among the school's plans in January 2014 were a review and strengthening of its committee structure and its remit to support greater scrutiny of performance and progress, the recruitment of new foundation and parent governors, and the development of a new marketing and communication strategy for the school.



In Year 1, the governing body had an away day in April to examine the strategic goals and refresh and confirm their core priorities. As a result of this they reconfirmed the strategic plan. In Year 2, the school and governors put a set of long-term objectives in place for the following two years. The priorities within these objectives were to be revisited and refreshed during 2013-14.



The school used the Code as one of a few core documents to underpin strategic discussion among governors. The 20 Questions were used as a means of self-assessing the workings of the governing body, building on a skills audit completed before uptake of the Code.



The acting headteacher was commissioned to undertake a whole-school audit of achievement, progress and teaching quality, and this informed the school plan agreed for 2013/14. The school development plan focused on the specific actions required to address performance issues identified by a rigorous review of data, including pupil tracking and RAISE Online. The school invested in a new pupil progress tracking system, which was embedded and providing helpful and meaningful data for teachers, support staff and governors alike.



Although much action had been taken during the evaluation period, most of this was attributed to the school's changing circumstances and senior leadership team, rather than the Code itself. The chair of governors felt the Code had been a background to developments in governance at the school (and that it was compatible with these) but that these developments had not been stimulated by the Code. For this reason, engagement can only be described as partial, despite the range of actions taken. Due to the early departure of the school from the evaluation process, suggestions for improvements to the Code were not made.

## School 9

**Starting position: transitional**  
**Engagement with Code: partial**



School 9 is a primary school that originally got involved with the Code as a means of helping the governing body to evaluate its performance and use data more effectively. The headteacher was appointed in January 2013, when the school's Ofsted grading was 'good' (inspection carried out in 2010). In 2013, the school was graded 'inadequate' and feedback was particularly critical of governance and governors' understanding of data.



Given the downgrading of the school to inadequate in 2013, uptake of the Code was slow in Year 1. While plans were made for an away day to discuss all Elements of the Code and while a skills audit of the governing body was carried out, activity was limited. Following the Ofsted inspection and downgrading, the recommendations of the inspection were prioritised. The school was placed in special measures and governance was reviewed, with a reconstitution of the governing body. By the end of the pilot period, there was no evidence that the Code had been used for anything but a review of the governing body following reconstitution.

**a**

At the end of Year 1, all members of the governing body were due to attend an away day in April to discuss all Elements of the Code and to refine the existing strategic plan. The requirements of Ofsted took over and no evidence emerged of the Code having helped support development or review of the school's strategy.

**b**

In Year 1 the governors have evaluated their performance against the nine areas covered by the 20 Questions, alongside Ofsted criteria. The governors did not use the 20 Questions as presented but decided which ones were applicable to them and what evidence they would gather to answer them. In Year 2 the governing body was reconstituted. Element 2 was used to audit the roles and skills needed on the board of governors.

**c**

There was no evidence that Element C had been used to review the way data was collected and monitored. Again, Ofsted requirements were prioritised here following the school being placed in special measures. The Data Dashboard was not felt to be sufficient in itself as presenting the full state of affairs to governors and allowing them to understand fully the school's performance.



In terms of improvements, case studies were requested, along with support from 'lead governor practitioners.' The school felt there was a need for a range of exemplars for documentation that would transfer well to other schools.

**School 10**  
**Starting position: transitional**  
**Engagement with Code: partial**



Graded 'good' at Ofsted inspections in 2011 and 2014, School 13 was one of two special schools on the pilot, and so faced the additional challenges faced by all special schools. It was a small school, with fewer than 50 pupils. The headteacher was dedicated to the pursuit of academic and applied breakthroughs in special needs education, having worked closely with a London university.

In 2011, Ofsted highlighted that the governing body did not work very strategically. As the school was considering entering into a new partnership with another special school in the area, it wanted to be clear on its strategy before this happened, as well as being clear on its governing framework and being more robust as a governing body.



The school said it was very satisfied with the Code. Element B had been very helpful in helping the school to consider the structure and skills of the governing body after this was reconstituted during the pilot. Use of the Code provided evidence of the school's willingness to improve governance in the 2014 inspection and was discussed at the inspection meeting with Ofsted. However, Element C of the Code was not used and was not seen as relevant to a special school. The headteacher and governor contact did believe the Code had helped the governing body to hold the senior leadership team to account better than in the past.



The school faced some confusion about the local authority's strategy towards special education and did not believe that a new strategic plan could be created until this was clarified. Element A was discussed but was not actioned during the pilot.



The school had problems with retention of governors. An away day in Year 1 allowed the governing body to assess its governing structures. By the end of the year, the governing body had completed a skills audit based on the 20 Questions. The governing body was then reconstituted and a new governing body built using Element B. Training for new governors was provided, with specific reference to the Code. This was felt to give them a good grounding in their roles and responsibilities.



As a special school, School 13 had not received a data dashboard and did not feel in a position to monitor this kind of data. Their internal reporting was deemed to be effective, although some of the governors were still uncomfortable with data management. Element C was not implemented, and the school was still unclear over how the kinds of measures addressed by Element C might be applied by a special school.



The school believed it would have benefited from training to help governors implement the Code. It also pointed out that a strong advocate was needed within any school for the Code to become established and receive attention. The school wondered whether endorsement and dissemination by local authorities might encourage its use. The governing body was very stretched for time, and finding time for the Code had been a problem. Finally, the school wondered whether promotion by the Wellcome Trust might be a bit misleading and thought endorsement by a body more focused on education might be more appropriate.

**School 12**  
**Starting position: transitional**  
**Engagement with Code: partial**



This school is an academy with more than 1,200 students and an Ofsted rating of 'outstanding.' At the beginning of the Code of Governance pilot it had a strategic plan and a document outlining governor responsibilities, but it was felt that more could be done to ensure the governing body was united. The school appointed a new headteacher in 2012, who wanted to be more involved with the strategic plan.



The school was very satisfied with the Code and found that it has provided a focus for governors. As a result they have been able to implement actions to arrive at a new strategic framework and skills audit of the governing body. No action was taken on Element C, and the Data Dashboard was not subscribed to.



The school revised its existing strategic plan in light of the Code of Governance. The new headteacher had some input, and the revised strategic plan was included in the agenda for all governors' meetings and has been made publicly visible at parent open evenings.



A skills audit of the governing body was carried out. The governing body analysed the results to get a measure of specific skills within the group. Lower-scoring areas were identified as the areas of most value to the school as it recruited new governors and adjusted to academy status. New appointments were made on a skills basis, as a result of the Code. The skills audit was made completely transparent to members of the governing body.



The school historically produced and interrogated a lot of data relating to its performance. As a result, the school found the Data Dashboard to be of limited use and did not subscribe to it. They did not think it provided any comparative data regarding how the school was performing and this is what the school required. The governors took greater steps to familiarise themselves with the internal workings of the school by arranging visits on a school day to observe and record different aspects of the school's performance. The governors logged their observations and reported back to the rest of the governing body, to help them make more informed decisions about the direction of the school and the steps that might be taken to reach its goals. However, these actions were not prompted by the Code and the school did not feel it had actioned Element C as its needs and requirements were different.



The only improvement mentioned by this school was the need for more regional and online networking to help schools share knowledge and to support implementation of the Code.

### School 13

**Starting position: transitional**  
**Engagement with Code: partial**



School 13 was a secondary school with 111 pupils. The school was built in 2010 and following the Ofsted inspection that year was made a 'National Challenge School'.<sup>4</sup> The school has improved and in September 2012 was given a 'good' grading by Ofsted.



At the start of the pilot the school had a school development plan, with specific people responsible for each action detailed on the plan. They did not have a governance framework at the start of the pilot. The school wanted to enhance the confidence and ability to challenge of the governing body.



There was little evidence for the Code having an impact on the school's strategic plan, which was already in place at the start of the pilot.



The school had administered the 20 Questions and carried out a skills audit. The school now felt that governors were more aware of their role and that the self-appraisal process had assisted this.



Engagement with the Data Dashboard was strong. The school was adept at collecting and monitoring data, and the Dashboard had enhanced this and was frequently referred to in monitoring performance. However, no progress had been made on considering or evaluating any of the softer measures referred to in Element C. Overall, the school now felt it was better engaged with data and better able to make use of its data.



Although the school had got what it wanted from the pilot (enhanced confidence in the governing body), it believed that Element C was not as clear as the other parts of the Code and had experienced difficulty engaging with this, especially its advocacy of softer measures. The school would also have appreciated more networking opportunities to share problems, solutions and practices. Finally, it thought the Code could have been better aligned to Ofsted requirements.

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<sup>4</sup> The introduction of the National Challenge programme resulted from a pledge in the Children's Plan that by 2020 at least 90 per cent of children will achieve the equivalent of five higher-level GCSEs by the age of 19.

**School 14**  
**Starting position: transitional**  
**Engagement with Code: partial**



This school is a secondary school with an Ofsted grading of 'requires improvement'. They wanted to take part in the pilot to improve the school by embedding good governance systems. There was a rudimentary Code of Governance in place at the school before the pilot started, which was developed in consultation with schools in the area that had been rated 'outstanding'.



The main goal for the end of the pilot was for governors to have a clearer understanding of their roles so they could better support the school. Governance at the school had received criticism during the Ofsted inspection, and the school wanted to address this. Over the course of the pilot, the school focused closely on Element B, and governors believed their ability to challenge the senior leadership team had been enhanced by use of the Code. This was ratified by external inspection (see below).



The school reviewed its strategic plan and developed it using the Code. A school development plan was produced in Year 1. Strategic reviews were carried out in Year 1 and Year 2.



The school engaged particularly strongly with Element B. It administered the 20 Questions and carried out a skills audit and a review of succession planning for the chair of governors. The lead governor for the Code felt that the Code had enabled governors to be more aware of their responsibilities and to challenge the senior leadership team more effectively. As evidence of this, the school's governance was said to have 'improved rapidly' in an RI judgement at the end of 2013.



Nothing had been done on Element C by the end of the evaluation. The school also struggled to engage with the Data Dashboard, which it thought did not provide sufficient information. The school was particularly interested in the inclusion of A-level data and thought that other data sources (Lat and Panda) were more effective.



The school believed the Code was useful and particularly liked its openness and flexibility. However, it clearly saw the Code as just one of a wide range of information sources. Elements of the Code did not seem well suited to this school (particularly Element C). However, the school acknowledged that the Code was most useful for schools that were struggling with their governance (as they had been) and that it should be actively promoted to them.

**School 17**  
**Starting position: transitional**  
**Engagement with Code: partial**



The school is a secondary with academy status. Before the pilot, the school had gone through a period of immense change. Having been in special measures, a change of leadership was undertaken; the school now has a new headteacher and reconstituted governing body. Following special measures the school was granted academy status and has since improved, receiving a 'good' Ofsted grading.



The school was satisfied with the Code and had found it helpful over the course of the pilot. It was looking to use the Code beyond the pilot period, especially with the ongoing process of strategic development. Given the protracted process involved in turning the school around following its period in special measures, the school had not moved on to full engagement with Element C during the pilot period. Crucially, the Code has helped new governors understand their duties as governors and particularly their responsibility to challenge the senior leadership team.



Element A was used to structure a governors' training day held in May 2013. This had the specific aim of feeding into development of the new school improvement plan. The plan was drawn up and new targets were set around governance. This was the first time the school improvement plan had directly addressed governance. In Year 2, the long-term strategic plan was presented at the full governing body training session and a strategy document was drawn up to define the school, its ambitions, how it would achieve them and key monitoring elements.



The 20 Questions were addressed and a skills audit carried out. This fed into ongoing changes to and development of the governing body, with the school looking beyond parents as governors to local businesses and other stakeholders, in order to address the skills needed on the board. The school had addressed succession planning for governors and how this should be managed, partly in response to the Code.



Element C was not fully addressed during the pilot, principally due to the time available to governors. The Data Dashboard was used and was seen to be of value. The school was interested in real-time data collection, and the Dashboard provided a step in this direction. The school had not begun to think about the wider measures of performance suggested by the Code in any detail by the end of the pilot.



The school shared the Code with its feeder primary schools and was working with the feeder schools to improve their governance. Succession planning for governors and the collection and evaluation of 'softer' measures for pupil outcomes remained on the school's 'to-do' list. The Code could be improved through more networking opportunities and guidance on how best to combine data and strategy (i.e. how they should feed into and inform one another in an effective way). There were some concerns that the Code may be too advanced for struggling schools.

## School 1

**Starting position: latent**  
**Engagement with Code: partial**



School 1 was a primary with 295 pupils. Following an Ofsted inspection in November 2012, the school was graded as 'requires improvement'. Ofsted provided the school with actions for improvement, and a local authority task force was put in place to support improvement. The current headteacher took over in January 2013. Fifty per cent of pupils speak English as a second language, and 42 per cent are registered as having special needs.

At the beginning of the pilot, governance was at a turning point. The school did not have a strategic plan or governance framework. It was hoped that the Code would help form the governor action plan, as well as giving governors a clearer understanding of their roles, helping communication between the different types of governors on the body. The ultimate aim was to use the Code of Governance to create an effective governing body that would meet Ofsted objectives, leading to a 'good' grade at the next inspection.



The school used the Code to redefine the governors' roles and responsibilities. It also enabled the headteacher and chair of governors to evaluate the effectiveness of the governing body, using the 20 Questions. The Code was also used to help develop the governor action plan. Element C of the Code was found to be less useful. The school wanted more direction on how to apply Element C and found it did not fit well with Ofsted requirements.



Element A was used by the headteacher, the chair of governors and a team from the governing body to create a governor action plan, which was implemented in the second year of the pilot.



Between January and July 2013 a skills audit of the governing body was completed and areas that need improvement were identified, using the 20 Questions. The chair of governors and the headteacher attended governance training. Following this, the governing body was reconstituted from four subcommittees to three. The governing body performed a review of its skill set, to identify where skills were lacking. After this, the governors also became more structured in the way that they performed school visits. Every term, governors visited the school and give feedback to the curriculum committee, full governing body and senior leadership team.



Although the Data Dashboard was appreciated, Element C was seen as less effective. It was felt to be too broad and not aligned to the requirements of Ofsted and the local authority task force. Given the lack of alignment, the school set aside Element C. New actions taken by the school (such as automated pupil tracking) had not been motivated by the Code.



Element A and C were very useful to the school. However, better alignment between Ofsted requirements (particularly for data collection and monitoring) and the Code was required. At present, Element C is seen as too broad and should be focused on specific measures, recognised by Ofsted. The school requested that Ofsted and local authorities be engaged with the Code more fully. Greater provision of resources (e.g. case studies) via a website was requested.



## School 2

**Starting position: latent**  
**Engagement with Code: partial**



School 2 is a primary school graded 'good' by Ofsted. At the start of the pilot the school was graded 'requires improvement' and took part in the pilot in response. The school wanted to increase the effectiveness of its governing body and to learn from the experiences of other schools.

At the start of the pilot, there was a very basic strategic plan in place but no governance framework. The school had an Ofsted inspection in April 2013 and the Code helped the governors show their effectiveness. It helped the school get a 'good' grading and focus on key improvements.

The school found Elements A and B helpful in the development of a new strategic plan and the reconstitution of the governing body, although Ofsted requirements were the main prompts for these actions. Element C was not used, as the school thought it was too wide and preferred to develop its own KPIs based on guidance for primary schools provided by other sources. There was some disappointment that the pilot scheme did not provide more opportunities for networking among schools. More networking and support would have helped the school implement the Code.



Element A was implemented in Year 1. The senior leadership team and governors reviewed the school's mission statement, and a new strategic statement and a strategic plan were developed and put in place. This was actioned throughout Years 1 and 2. The school felt that more support could have been provided alongside Element A through training, networking and perhaps a buddy system for chairs of governors.



Workshops were held at the start of the pilot to evaluate current governance practices. The roles of the governors were defined using the 20 Questions. The governing body was reconstituted, and the Code helped the school to think about the required roles and personnel and to move to a skills-based model for recruiting governors.



The school also devised an action plan for governors. The governing body began having more regular informal meetings, which helped improve the relationship between the governing body and the senior leadership team. Informal training sessions for governors were put in place.

Element C was not used by the school and was heavily criticised during Year 2. The requirements of Element C were believed to be very wide and the school developed its own KPIs, rather than follow the considerations set out in Element C. Some of the measures suggested by Element C were seen as very hard to measure and as not beneficial to the school in meeting Ofsted requirements. There were also issues with the Data Dashboard, where the school had been provided with incorrect data.



In terms of improvements to the Code, the school felt Element C could be more focused on the needs of primary schools. It also felt that more support should be provided to schools. This could be offered through initial training on the Code, implementation of a buddy system between chairs of governors and more frequent networking sessions. Closer links between the Code and Ofsted were also requested – the school saw a role for the Code in explicitly translating 'Ofsted jargon' into practical applications.



**School 7**  
**Starting position: transitional**  
**Engagement with Code: not sustained**



The school is an academy primary school with just over 200 pupils. It operates within a partnership in the area, and the governing body operates across both schools in the partnership. In 2012 it received a 'requires improvement' Ofsted grading, and it recently received academy status. The move to academy status was controversial within the school and resulted in multiple members of the governing body resigning. The academy received its first Ofsted inspection in 2014 and received a 'good' grade.

As a result of changes to the governing body, the Code was not implemented within the school. The school did not engage with the evaluation process beyond initial interviews in January 2013.

In early 2013, the initial lead contact for the pilot scheme withdrew her involvement and did not pass the Code on to her replacement, with the consequence that the governing body did not receive the Code until a second copy was issued by the Wellcome Trust in June 2013 on advice from Opinion Leader.

This shows the impact personnel changes can have on communication within a governing body. Where information is not handed over effectively, useful programmes and documents (such as the Code) can be lost. Nevertheless, evaluation data for this school is limited. Interviews were carried out with the headteacher and a director in February 2013 (no governor was interviewed, and neither participant had actually seen the Code). Although contact was maintained between evaluators and the school during 2013, no data was obtained after January. In June 2013, the Code was resubmitted to an alternative governor and Opinion Leader attempted to continue the evaluation. No responses to the evaluation were received.

The partnership had a strategic plan and governance framework, although these were under review following the transition to academy status. The Code had not had an impact on these as it was not communicated within the governing body or to the SLT. The partnership has a complex governance system, including separate local advisory committees for both schools, advising a central governing body for both schools.

## School 8

**Starting position: transitional**  
**Engagement with Code: not sustained**



School 8 is a secondary school. It has 1,200 pupils and received a 'good' rating at its last Ofsted inspection in 2012. It decided to adopt the Code of Governance for several reasons: to continue working towards ensuring all governors brought particular skills to meetings and could apply those skills in practice; to ensure all members of the governing body and teaching staff were pursuing the same goals; and to focus on giving students the support and skills to pursue any career they choose after leaving school.



Engagement with the Code was not sustained. The school participated in all stages of the evaluation during Year 1 but did not continue participation in Year 2. At the end of Year 1, the school was satisfied with the Code and said it had been helpful. It had carried out a skills audit based on Element C. However, the school did not feel there was sufficient information in the Code itself to be able to set about developing a new strategic plan, although it did review the existing plan using the Code. No progress was made on Element C, and the school asked for more concrete examples of how Element C might be implemented to be provided.

a

The governing body reviewed its existing strategic plan and found it fit for purpose. The plan was reviewed by a parent group. Before this it was a concern that all members of the governing body should fully understand the sentiment of the strategic plan and the steps that needed to be taken to implement the plan. The governors were hoping the Code would instruct them on how to construct a new strategic plan but found the Code lacked sufficient information regarding how they might approach this.

b

The governors used the 20 Questions and modified the wording of some where they felt it was appropriate. They carried out a skills audit at a meeting in the summer of 2013. The outcomes of this are not known.

c

The governors did not feel confident about applying Element C. They were not sure what 'success' meant in relation to Element C and did not know where to turn to find out how they might apply this Element of the Code. There was some consensus that pupil performance was the main measure of good governance. In a bid for governors to become familiar with both hard and soft data, the governing body agreed that governor visits to the school would be a good idea. The data dashboard was thought to be a useful starting point for governors to begin using the right sort of data to challenge the senior leadership team.

+

In terms of improvements, greater guidance (including case studies and hands-on support) was requested in relation to the implementation of Elements B and C.

**School 11**  
**Starting position: transitional**  
**Engagement with Code: not sustained**



School 11, a partnership academy, came onto the pilot scheme as an ‘outstanding’ school. Following Ofsted inspection in 2013 it was downgraded to ‘good.’ The partnership had a Board overseeing two schools (primary and secondary), which had their own separate governing bodies. The school had developed a strong grasp on governance and, at the start of the pilot, had focused on improving pupil behaviour, which had not been good. The chair and director of the executive board for the schools were both conscious of the tension between ensuring consistency between the two schools through the Board and allowing the governing bodies separate identities. Initial aspirations for the Code were to measure progress against a new set of criteria and to use the Code to help join all documents, policies and ideas together. Over the course of the pilot, the chair of governors stepped down and his vice-chair stepped up to overall leadership.



Engagement with the Code was not sustained over the course of the pilot and evaluation. The school responded in full during Year 1 but did not respond during Year 2. Governors and the school director did say at the end of Year 1 that the Code had not been of much use to the school.

The school already had a strategic plan and established governance framework. By April 2013, the school had not specifically done anything as a result of the Code. In June, the incumbent chair commented that he felt remote from the pilot. The school had hoped to use the pilot scheme to benchmark themselves against other schools, but had ultimately found that the scheme is not set up for this kind of comparison. The school felt encouraged that most of the Elements were already strong in their school, and they had used the Code to justify work they were already completing. This school believed the Recommended Code was a good resource for schools that were not as far advanced as they saw themselves to be. They also believed that these schools were likely to need more support to implement the Code than was currently provided.



The school already had a clear strategic plan and ten principles of working before starting the pilot, and did not find it necessary to amend these.



The chair commented in July that he didn’t feel it was necessary for the governing body to have an away day or to adjust any of their procedures. They were already completing regular skills audits and were happy with their governance framework; at the start of the year, they had found that other schools seemed surprised by how advanced they were in this respect.



The Fisher Family Trust data dashboard had been disseminated to all governors by June, but focus for the school was on having a tailored view of data within the school. They valued the Fisher Family Trust as a source of verification and information, but are suspicious of data dashboards overall and have contested official results in the past. Therefore, the data dashboard was a good summary tool to encourage access for all governors to school data, but essentially the school saw it as a top line rather than a full interrogation of school data.



The school would have found the Code more useful if some form of benchmarking and information sharing across schools had been put in place.

### School 3

**Starting position: latent**  
**Engagement with Code: not sustained**



This primary school had undergone turbulence, both before its engagement with the Code and during the pilot scheme. In November 2012, the school received a 'requires improvement' grade from Ofsted. Since the summer of 2012, the school had seen a total of five different headteachers come into the school. The Code of Governance was adopted as a means of enabling governors to get more involved in measuring the performance of the school and holding leadership to account.



Engagement with the Code was not sustained over the pilot period. While responses were received to all stages of the Year 1 evaluation, the school did not respond in Year 2, suggesting that engagement with the Code had come to an end. The school provided no reasons for this.



At the end of Year 1, the governing body was organising a strategic planning day in the run-up to the summer holiday. The governors saw the strategic plan as a tool for interacting with teaching staff and collaborating with them to achieve the school's goals.



The governors established the need for a skills audit, and a leadership skills audit had been completed by the end of Year 1. A full skills audit was planned in the run-up to the 2013 summer holiday. The school had addressed the 20 Questions to help define governors' roles and responsibilities.



The school had given some thought to using data and making governors more comfortable with handling data, and it was beginning to focus on this at the end of Year 1. Data was circulated two weeks before each governors' meeting, and governors had to complete a pro forma demonstrating their understanding of the data and registering questions for discussion in advance of the meeting. Pupil progress was the main area of interest, and the body was beginning to focus on variation across year groups in pupil performance.



At the end of Year 1, there was general satisfaction with the Code and a feeling that it provided a helpful framework and point of reference for structuring governors' meetings. However, the school had not developed a strategic plan. In addition, although the 20 Questions had been addressed, a skills-based approach to the constitution of the governing body had not. The wider measures suggested by Element C had not been addressed by the school.

## Appendix: Evaluation reports

This appendix shows how schools engaged with the Code step-by-step over the course of the pilot. Findings from each of the interactions within the evaluation process are presented. This shows the order in which schools tackled the different elements of the Code, the extent to which they found implementation easy or difficult, and the stages at which they felt in need of support or guidance in translating the provisions of the Code into their school setting.

### A) Initial interviews: February 2013

In February, an Opinion Leader researcher visited the schools for an in-depth discussion of their reception of the Code and any activity they may have undertaken. By this point, few of the schools had achieved a great deal of concrete action, as to be anticipated after comments on time constraints, although some had made headway in implementing changes.

The majority of schools had received and committed to the Code of Governance, and had read it thoroughly and ensured that all relevant stakeholders had read it too. There had been discussion about the allocation of resources and people to various tasks, and some activity related to deciding deadlines and priorities within the schools.

Feedback was largely positive. The Code was seen as clear, succinct, comprehensive, and logical. Headteachers were frequently happy with the way the Code was structured, and governors believed the breakdown into three areas (Element A, Element B and Element C) made sense and stratified the work they wanted to do in a logical way.

People saw the Code as clearly focused on driving performance, rather than on mitigating risk (as some other local authority guides tend to be). This meant it was seen to drive tangible change, focusing the governing body on key aims, as opposed to simply defining legal responsibilities and individual behaviours.

One of the perceived strengths of the Code was that it moved governors' attention from day-to-day operational activities to more strategic matters; this had already started to happen in some schools. Many governors and headteachers (especially in latent or transitional schools) said this was something they had historically struggled to do, so the Code was starting to prove useful in this regard.

“One of the things that I was really, really pleased about was that we started doing a bit of blue-sky thinking in the room – it was almost as if the shackles of ‘this is how you run a governing body’ had been taken off, and we can now be free to think outside the box.”

Headteacher, School 2 (latent)

For special schools in particular, the Code was seen to free up the parameters for assessment and allow them to set their own benchmarks for assessing progress and development. Schools that were classified in the ‘latent’ category were much more likely to be unsure about how to get started on tackling the Code content or making changes, but for several schools using the Code reassured them that they were already working along the right lines, even if they had some way to go.

However, some advanced schools and some transitional schools with a well-developed strategic plan and governance framework had begun to question whether the Code was really offering anything new to their particular school. The knock-on effect was that schools' propensity to commit was directly affected, and the beginning of some disengagement with the process was seen, albeit at small levels. Despite a positive outlook overall, there were some comments indicating that the content was very similar to that which these schools had completed already.

“We are concerned that actually what [the Code] might recommend may start to duplicate anything that is happening with the OFSTED Evaluation Schedule.”

Chair of governors, School 11 (transitional, academy, partnership)

There was also a feeling at some schools that the Code did not focus enough on getting all stakeholders involved in governance. The main focus of the Code was the relationship between governing bodies and senior leadership team. For those schools that said community was one of the key aspects of their schools, encouraging relationships and connections between governing bodies, parents, other staff and pupils was an area where the Code had to be tailored to meet their objectives more effectively.

## B) Self-reporting: April 2013

In April, schools fed back to Opinion Leader through a short report on their progress. At this point, the data dashboard had been released to the pilot schools and some had completed feedback before the final version was rolled out. The Wellcome Trust also released the Recommended Code of Governance forum, hosted on the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Network website, at the end of April.

Many schools had made more progress, taking on a variety of forms. Many of the schools had gone further in allocating time and resources to the Code implementation, and many had started to decide on the content of their strategy and governance framework. There were some instances of delivery: some schools had completed training and disseminated new or revised documents around their governing bodies and schools.

As part of this stage of the evaluation, pilot schools were asked to rate their satisfaction with the Code, to establish their perceptions of its content, and to rate how helpful the Code had been and gauge how appropriate it had been for their individual circumstances.

Satisfaction was rated on a scale from ‘very satisfied’ to ‘very dissatisfied’. Results are displayed in the table below. Eighteen schools reported that they were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the content of the Code at this stage.

### *How satisfied are you with the content of the Recommended Code of Governance?*

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
<b>Number of schools</b>	5	13	2	0	0

Two schools reported that they were neither ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ with the content of the Code. In both cases, it was noted that it was simply too early to judge how the Code would function in their school as neither school had really started acting on it yet. Both of these schools were transitional secondary schools who had some form of governance but had recently experienced turbulence in their governing bodies, meaning they had often not completed their allocation of tasks owing to other priorities and time pressures.

Schools were also asked to rate the helpfulness of the Code on a scale from ‘very helpful’ to ‘very unhelpful’. It was generally found that the Code had been helpful to the schools, and 16 reported that they had found the Code ‘helpful’, or ‘very helpful’ (five latent, five transitional and six advanced).

### *How helpful has the Recommended Code of Governance been for your school?*

	Very helpful	Helpful	Neither helpful nor unhelpful	Unhelpful	Very unhelpful
<b>Number of schools</b>	5	11	4	0	0

There were four schools – three transitional secondary schools and one transitional primary academy – that reported that they found the Code ‘neither helpful nor unhelpful’. Their satisfaction with the content of the Code for these schools was still good: three reported that they were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the content of the Code.

In these cases, it was generally found that the schools had a focus on tangible outcomes when assessing the validity and usefulness of the Recommended Code. Because of the lack of outcomes at this point, these schools simply felt unable to make a more conclusive statement about the helpfulness of the Code.

One school, however, reported that it was neither ‘satisfied’ nor ‘dissatisfied’ with the Code, nor had it found the Code ‘helpful’ or ‘unhelpful’. This school, a transitional secondary, had recently had a new headteacher join the school and had done little up until this point. They also expressed doubts or queries about the need and usefulness of the Code content – specifically, the 20 Questions, which were not all seen as appropriate to the governing body, and a perceived disconnection between the three Elements of the Code (which they were not convinced fitted together into a cohesive whole). By the end of the year, this school had commented that they believed there was more work to be done on the content of the Code itself, although they were seen to have decided and delivered on several aspects of the Recommended Code and made progress.

Overall, feelings towards the Code were positive. There was, however, scope for the Code and the pilot to be enhanced, with 12 schools commenting that they would like more support with implementing the Code (four latent, four transitional and four advanced). Requests for support took the following forms:

**1) Sharing and networking**

- a. Mainly references to the anticipated ‘training day/networking event’ that was promised by Wellcome Trust at the previous (November 2012) Training Day.
- b. Requests for sharing of resources and best practice.

**2) Explanation of and support for the Data Dashboard**

- a. Requests for guidance on how to use the Data Dashboard, as well as notes on how the data was calculated. The RAISEonline library, which provides methodology documentation on its data, was referred to as a good benchmark.

**3) Information on training governors**

- a. Requests for information on available governor training. By the end of the academic year, the positive impact of training on the schools across the board was evident and had become important to many schools.

More negative comments on the Code built on views first noted in February, where some schools had expressed concern about the duplication of governing materials. In April, some schools began to express the feeling that the Code was not offering them anything new, and they felt they had already completed a large amount of the Code’s content. These schools were from the advanced and transitional categories, and were the schools that had first come onto the pilot to be involved in the development of Code practice (rather than with a clear need to change or develop their own governing practices).

“The content of the Code is fine as far as it goes. However, this basic framework isn’t sufficient for a school or academy to be rated as outstanding. The Code has not been of great use to us. However, this does not detract from its ability to provide a useful structure for inexperienced or poorly performing governing bodies.”

Chair of governors, School 11 (transitional, academy, partnership)

This school – along with others that expressed similar beliefs – generally displayed a lack of commitment and allocation, which limited the activity it had completed directly as a result of the Recommended Code.



## C) End of Year 1 interviews: July 2013

In July 2013, the schools involved on the pilot scheme were asked to contribute to an end-of-year review looking at the progress they had made over the past few months, their views on the Code and their aspirations for the next year. Overall perceptions of the Code, as through the year, were positive. The Code and schools' participation in the pilot scheme was seen to have injected enthusiasm and drive into governing bodies across the pilot.

"I genuinely think it has met expectations. It has really been a useful tool for me and for the governing body...the governors are much more on board. From being reluctant initially, they're now quite interested to see what we've done as a governing body to fulfil the Code and where we need to head next."

Headteacher, School 6 (transitional)

At the end of the year, the Code was praised for its simple approach to a complex topic, and many felt the clarity of the Code was its key strength. For one school, its simplicity had provided a framework for rebuilding the governing body after a period of turbulence.

"It has given that frame of reference that we were desperately needing for a governing body and a very simple frame of reference as well that everyone could understand."

Chair of governors, School 1 (latent)

The Wellcome Trust was perceived to be a positive force in helping drive change and best practice in school governance, and was subject to a halo effect because of having produced the Code. There were also positive expectations that the Code could be used nationwide to start driving change in UK governing bodies.

For some schools, even those who had not taken much action, the Code had functioned to reassure them that they were working along the right lines and that other schools struggled with the same issues that they did. For others, the Code and inclusion on the pilot scheme was a fundamental game changer that had led to a substantial amount of change in their government practices, functioning to set up the parameters for demonstrable change and focus governing bodies on collective outcomes.

For other schools, the Code had been less of a significant catalyst but had helped them to assess, evaluate and refine their current practices – a health check more than a driver of change.

"I think it is driving us forward... If I was ticking a box, I'd say I'm quite satisfied."

Chair of governors, School 16 (advanced, academy, partnership)

It was seen that the clearest impact of the Code at the end of the year was lifting governors away from day-to-day operational issues and changing how they think about their role. Many schools reported a clearer, more strategic and long-term approach to governors' meetings that was previously missing.

However, in many schools, the anticipated barriers of time and logistics meant that progress was not as extensive as initially hoped. Many schools believed they had been limited by the other pressures of the academic year and by the basic issue that governors are volunteers and cannot be expected to dedicate too much time to the role. At two schools (School 13 in particular), the chair of governors expressed some awkwardness about asking too much from their governing body.

It should also be noted that for some schools the pilot itself was seen as an important catalyst for progress. It follows that perhaps without the structure of the research evaluation, some schools may not have achieved as much as they did.

“I think you following us up and asking us questions keeps it moving. It would have been acknowledged and put on the pile.”

Deputy headteacher, School 12 (transitional, academy)

Building on comments made throughout the year, several schools continued to state that they had not seen a huge amount of value in the Code for their particular school, although they continued to regard the Code positively as a tool for underperforming schools. While they had used the Code to check their progress, they had not found that it offered them any cause for change. These schools had therefore not fully committed or allocated resources and time and thus had not delivered on any outcomes, although they may have established significant progress that they did not attribute to the Recommended Code itself.

## **D) Self-reporting: January 2014**

This interaction with the pilot schools was the first of the academic year 2013–14 and consisted of a self-completion questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to the key contact in each of the schools in the week commencing 16 December, and the deadline for returning the forms was 24 January.

Eight schools did not return their responses. The account below is based on 12 schools' responses. The questions asked in this round of fieldwork focused on four main areas:

- a) use of Elements A and B in the coming year
- b) use of Element C in the coming year (and specifically how schools intend to use data)
- c) overall usefulness of the Code and any additional support required
- d) the role of the Code in science education specifically.

### *Use of Elements A and B in Year 2*

Typically schools intended to continue using Elements A and B in Year 2. For some schools, particularly those that had only begun to make progress towards the end of Year 1, this was seen as a necessary means of consolidation before moving on to Element C. These schools hoped to use Element B in particular to strengthen the governing body so that it was in a position to ask the necessary questions of the senior leadership team. In addition, schools that had undergone significant leadership change since the beginning of this academic year believed that focusing on Elements A and B would be crucial to establishing or re-establishing the governing body effectively.

Some schools said Element A would form part of an ongoing review of the school's governance. These schools said they intended to hold strategy planning days later in the year to ensure the vision for the school remained aligned with the school's circumstances and performance.

The greater focus for schools, however, was Element B, and the continued restructuring and strengthening of the governing body. Schools said their engagement with Element B so far had resulted in plans to: reduce the size of the governing body; recruit for vacancies selectively to plug any skills gaps (e.g. recruiting governors with commercial backgrounds or with an understanding of the local business community); and secure training for governors where there was a perceived skills gap (e.g. in understanding and interrogating data).

### *Use of Element C in Year 2*

Schools reported different levels of engagement with Element C. Some showed no inclination to focus on Element C in Year 2, and others set out in detail the data they intended to gather and analyse as a result of the Code.

Overall, schools appreciated the importance of governors understanding data so that they can effectively hold the senior leadership team to account, even if they did not seem to demonstrate an understanding of how they would encourage this in the year ahead. Some schools cited Ofsted's requirement that schools clearly organise and analyse data effectively, but this did not necessarily mean they knew how to fulfil it.

One of the most common intended actions cited by schools was a discussion of what data the governors would find helpful in understanding the school and its performance. This was true of schools across the board, although with some discrete differences: in latent schools, this entailed building governors' confidence. Commonly, the headteacher or governor responsible for the Code within the school would lead this discussion. Some schools stated that governors needed more support to develop their knowledge of the data available and the need for performance information before identifying the data required. In schools classed as advanced, this discussion sought to highlight areas where there were gaps in the data already being collected.

In some cases, schools made direct links between their intended actions with regard to Element C and their work to date using Elements A and B. School 19, an advanced school, said that one of the key focus points for its sixth form was 'employability', and one of its plans for Year 2 was to explore how data on this might be gathered and used by the governing body.

Some schools said the governing body had devised an idea of the data they would like to gather and analyse in Year 2, although they were vague about how they might obtain it. School 10, a special school, said it wanted accurate benchmarking data so that the governing body could review the school's performance against the broader landscape, and it was working with other schools to produce this. Other schools claimed that Element C had highlighted areas where governors would like information that is not currently collated – for example, feedback from staff about their working environment or the happiness of children at the school – but did not have specific plans for how they might gather this information.

There was evidence among some schools that governors had a clear idea of the types of data they required to review the performance of the school. These included schools that were originally classified as latent but also included those that were advanced. In addition to 'hard data' such as attendance, reading age and parent surveys, this included reports from staff about take-up of extra-curricular activities and school trips, as well as reports from governors who had attended school council meetings. Perhaps more crucially, schools that were able to specify the data they intended to collect also seemed to have established mechanisms of gathering and analysing the data in a systematic way – for example, delegating responsibility for various aspects of data to subcommittees, or routine governor visits to the school.

Two schools mentioned the Fischer Family Trust Data Dashboard in connection with Element C. One school said its use of the Dashboard to date had been a way of introducing governors to using data themselves rather than being dependent on the senior leadership team of the school to provide and explain it. The other school said it had used the Dashboard but was intending to create its own real-time version so that it could capture what was going on "on the ground". Feedback on the Fischer Family Trust Data Dashboard more broadly contained mixed views.

Positive feedback	Negative feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A good introduction to governors unaccustomed to handling data.</li> <li>• Helpfully brings together lots of disparate pieces of data.</li> <li>• Highlights 'danger areas' in a visual way for further investigation by governors.</li> <li>• A useful external benchmark of performance of the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors would have more use for a "living dashboard" with the latest available data.</li> <li>• Data not always accurate.</li> <li>• Not possible for Special Schools to use this as a benchmarking tool.</li> <li>• Information provided too simplistic or insufficient to provide a full picture for governors.</li> </ul>

This suggests that, although schools have engaged with the Dashboard previously, it was rarely used as an ongoing resource.

### Overall usefulness of the Code

Schools were asked to what extent they agreed that the Code would enable them to achieve their governance goals in Year 2. The table below shows the breakdown of responses provided.

**To what extent do you agree with the following statement: ‘The Code in its current form will enable us to achieve our governance goals this year?’**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2	7	3	0	0

Schools in strongest agreement were most positive about the logical application of the Code and coherence of each of the three Elements alongside each other. The schools had little in common (one was transitional and one was advanced, and one was a primary school and the other a secondary school) and had used the Code in different ways, but both had structured approaches for collating and analysing school data in Year 2 (e.g. one school was putting in place measures to synchronise data from different sources, such as teaching and learning reviews and results data, and the other had established a Data Group that meets regularly).

Seven schools agreed that the Code would enable them to achieve their governance goals in Year 2. They felt their focus on Elements and A and B had laid good foundations from which to work in the future and had given the governing body an understanding of its purpose and responsibilities. For the five transitional schools that agreed, the Code had been instrumental in supporting the whole governing body, from ensuring the appropriate range of skills were represented to encouraging governors to become more familiar with the school itself. For the two advanced schools that agreed, the Code acted as a stimulus for the governing body to reflect on its performance in relation to the 20 Questions but was flexible enough for the governing body to develop its focus – and ‘solutions’ – for Year 2.

Of the schools that neither agreed nor disagreed, there was a feeling that the Code alone was not sufficient to enable the school to achieve its governance goals. In one instance, the school did not feel the governing body was strong enough to begin focusing on data and needed external support to achieve its governance goals. In another, the school said that although the Code was “helpful” in supporting governance, they would not say the Code alone would enable them to achieve their goals.

Even among those who agreed that the Code would be helpful in Year 2, there were some that called for additional support. Perhaps unsurprisingly, however, schools that were less likely to be in agreement that the Code would enable them to achieve their governance goals in Year 2 were more likely to request additional support.

**To what extent do you agree with the following statement: ‘Our school requires or will require additional support alongside the Code to achieve our goals this year?’**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	5	1	3	2

Schools requiring additional support tended to provide the following reasons:

- The governing body had undergone recent significant change following an Ofsted inspection and needed to be recruited from scratch. The Code alone does not provide sufficient assurance for the senior leadership team to feel confident about this process.
- Governors needed to increase their familiarity and confidence with using data, and schools were not sure where to look to obtain this training and support.
- It would be useful to have some external verification that the steps schools were taking were appropriate, perhaps through the sharing of knowledge and experiences between schools.

Schools that did not feel they required additional support felt their governors' confidence and familiarity with the school had grown sufficiently that no external interference was necessary. One school said their governing body included a National Leader of Governance and that their expertise was invaluable in steering the governing body forward.

Finally, schools were asked what role the Code might play in strengthening **science education** specifically. Overwhelmingly, schools' responses said the Code would be as useful for strengthening science education as for any other subject. Schools believed that the Code's strengthening of governance would lead to governors holding the senior leadership team (and subject-specific faculties) to account, thus improving outcomes throughout the school. One school, for example, said the Code would be useful in helping to look at individual subjects – including science – in a holistic way, beyond examination results and league tables. Another said that there were clearly issues within science education relating to take-up among students (and female students in particular). Despite this, however, there was little appetite for the Code to deal with these issues distinctly: rather, use of the Code by the governing body in its current form was felt to be sufficient in strengthening science education.

### *Focus for future interactions*

Following this phase of fieldwork, we believe there are several areas that it will be necessary to focus on in future interactions with schools. These include:

- The specific actions undertaken by schools as part of Element C and how Element C fits alongside schools' work on Elements A and B.
- The relationship between governors' use of the Code (specifically Elements B and C) and Ofsted.
- Any disparities between governors and the senior leadership team in levels of engagement with the Code and delivery of the resulting outputs.
- Outcomes as a result of schools' participation in the pilot according to the theory of change framework.

## **E) Self-reporting: April 2014**

This interaction with the pilot schools was the second of the academic year 2013–14 and consisted of a self-completion questionnaire. Fourteen schools had returned their forms, and seven had not. This report is therefore based on 14 responses.

The questions asked in this round of fieldwork focused on four main areas:

- the impact of Element C on school governance
- the influence of the Code on schools' ability to meet Ofsted requirements
- future dissemination of the Code (post-pilot).

### *The impact of Element C on school governance*

Only a slight majority of responding schools (eight of 14) agreed that Element C of the Code had had an impact on governance at their school. Responses are shown in the table below.

*To what extent, if at all, would you agree or disagree that Element C has had an impact on governance at your school?*

TOTAL	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
14	6	2	5	1	0	0

Six schools strongly agreed that the Code had an impact on their school. These schools had used Element C to assess the impact and performance of the governing body. One of the more involved examples of this is

demonstrated by the quote below. Here, a primary school used Element C to review its performance in a wide-ranging manner:

“We have used Element C to re-evaluate our governing body and to look carefully at the way we undertake our monitoring (and also our strategic) role. We are currently undertaking a ‘task and finish’ exercise, which involves a group of interested governors looking at the way we operate using the code of governance and a PESTLE template. Although this has not come about entirely because of Element C (it was undertaken also as a result of questionnaire feedback from parents, staff and carers as part of the consultation to become an academy in a multi-academy trust), the element has provided very useful guidance for us.”

School 6 (transitional, primary)

The one school that tended to disagree that the Code had had an impact on governance had recently been moved into special measures. This had limited the school’s ability to respond to the Code in a sustained way and introduced other pressures to change and improve performance. This school thought that its new shadow governing body might now be able to use the Code to guide the development of new governance procedures.

“The school situation has had a significant impact on the use of the new Code. Having gone into special measures last June, the governance of the school has changed significantly. The new interim executive board (IEB) has had a very different focus on school improvement and the Code has not been a top priority. The IEB has very recently been replaced by a shadow governing body, and I envisage that we will be able to use some of the key facets of the Code in the creation of the new governance procedures.”

School 9 (transitional, primary)

Those schools who neither agreed nor disagreed that the Code had had an impact on school governance tended to be in agreement that methods of monitoring and reporting school performance had not changed greatly as a result of the Code and that their focus remained on existing measures (particularly those that were Ofsted related).

“Element C is the most qualitative and our governing body processes are skewed towards the measures for which the school is accountable. For example, the governors have an annual quality assurance meeting each September, which aims to provide Ofsted-type information: DfE similar schools, internal KPIs, Ofsted Dashboard, external results.”

School 12 (transitional, secondary)

However, schools did welcome the dissemination of the data dashboard and reported that this had given their governing body sharper insight into school performance.

“The introduction of the Dashboard superseded discussions governors had held on the nature of the targets to be set for the school. Analysis of the dashboard is now used by the governing body Review Committee to analyse school performance. This allows for challenging discussion with the headteacher and his senior leadership team over the school’s performance. It has, however, meant that work that was being done on identifying how to assess softer targets has now been shelved.”

School 18 (advanced, secondary)

### *The influence of the Code on schools’ ability to meet Ofsted requirements*

The overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that the Code would help their school meet Ofsted requirements at the next inspection.

*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Recommended Code of Governance will help you meet your Ofsted requirements at your next inspection?*

TOTAL	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
14	2	11	1	0	0	0

Only one participant neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. This school saw a possible disconnection between Ofsted requirements and the requirements of the Code. Particularly when facing inspections and dealing with Ofsted, school governors and governing bodies would focus on their immediate needs rather than the wider, strategic demands of the Code.

“Although the code of governance clarifies the expectation of a governing body, Ofsted expectations are not the same. Governing bodies will always look to the Ofsted criteria to make judgements about themselves and their schools.”

School 13 (transitional, secondary)

Schools that tended to agree or strongly agreed that the Code would help them meet Ofsted requirements saw the Code as a whole as providing the required strategic direction for a school to make improvements and raise its standards. By following the guidance provided across the three elements, a school would reshape its governance team and activities and be better equipped to improve its performance.

“This whole exercise has provided a tool for us to evaluate our governance and remodel the way we operate – primarily to provide more effective input and support for the school, but hopefully also to better meet those increasingly onerous Ofsted criteria. In particular, it has enabled us to begin the shift to a more strategic and proactive way of working, which was one of our aims at the outset and reasons for signing up to the pilot.”

School 4 (latent, special)

The primary school, which had recently been put in special measures by Ofsted, tended to agree that the Code would help the school meet Ofsted requirements at the next inspection. The school had a new shadow governing body and, since the intervention of Ofsted, was in a position to begin using the Code. The respondent thought this would help the school to put effective processes in place and meet the requirements of future Ofsted inspections.

One of the reasons schools tended to agree with the question above (rather than strongly agreeing) was that they thought Ofsted wanted to see delivery against a much wider range of criteria and across a wider range of performance areas than the Code made reference to. This leaves open the question of whether demonstrable use of the Code will help schools maintain or improve their Ofsted rating, as the comment below suggests.

“If all governors did was follow the code, then it would be easy to miss the various boxes which Ofsted require ticking. What I’m not sure about is whether the code helps governing bodies get better Ofsted judgement because by following the code practice is refined – or whether if governing bodies are doing what Ofsted require them to do then governance improves anyway.”

School 14 (transitional, secondary)

### *Overall usefulness of the Code*

The Code itself is still regarded as a useful document. It is seen as concise and helpful, providing clear guidance on core elements of the governance process.

As in previous waves of this research, the main request made by participants was for additional hands-on support and guidance in applying the Code. Respondents thought this could be provided by the Wellcome Trust itself or through a network of participating schools (perhaps online). In addition to direct training and guidance in applying the Code, respondents thought they would benefit from case study materials emphasising practical successes in applying the Code within schools. This has been commented on repeatedly before and is clearly something schools would find useful if it can be delivered once the pilot has ended and the Recommended Code of Governance has been rolled out further.

In addition, respondents want to see the Code acknowledged and promoted by national organisations involved in school governance. They felt that the National Governors' Association could get involved in supporting and promoting the Code and that Ofsted could reference the Code in its requirements for schools and governing bodies.

### *Focus for future interactions*

There are two further interactions remaining within this evaluation – telephone interviews with schools in June or July and a further self-completion in September. We believe that the telephone interviews should focus on the overall outcomes and impact of the Code: this is the last verbal interaction researchers will have with schools, and it is essential that they get a clear reading of the Code's effect over the past 18 months. The final self-completion should then be used to pick up any remaining thoughts or suggested improvements from the schools involved. At both these stages, we should inform schools of the next steps for the pilot and for the roll-out of the Code.

## **F) Final interviews: July 2014**

Final telephone interviews were carried out with representatives of each school in July 2014. A total of 15 schools participated. By this stage, three schools had been dormant throughout Year 2. A further three schools had participated in the previous stage of research but did not complete a telephone interview.

The final telephone interviews reviewed schools' overall perceptions of the impact and outcomes of the pilot. They also examined suggested improvements to the Code and considerations for its relaunch and wider roll-out in the second half of 2014.

### *Impact of the Code and outcomes for schools*

By July 2014, Opinion Leader was able to make a judgement about the level of engagement shown by each school. Schools were classified as having exhibited 'full engagement' where they had taken positive action on Elements A, B and C over the course of the pilot and where this action had resulted in concrete changes to strategy, governance and the use of data. 'Partial engagement' was demonstrated where the school had taken positive action on one or two Elements of the Code but not all of them (typically, action was not taken on Element C and no changes to data collection or management were observed, aside from use of the Data Dashboard). Where the school did not complete the evaluation and engagement with the Code was not sustained over the pilot period, it was judged that engagement had not been sustained.

Typically, schools that had engaged fully with the Code said it had been a genuine catalyst for action and change across the three Elements. Not only had it stimulated thinking within the governing body and senior leadership team, it had also resulted in positive action.

"I think it's had a big impact, actually...it's improved the confidence of the governors in their role, and that's had a knock-on effect on their positive involvement in the rest of the school."

School 21 (secondary, advanced, full engagement)



All 'fully engaged' schools had taken action on Element A (e.g. reviewing an existing strategic plan or developing a new one). All had taken action on Element B (e.g. using it to help reconstitute the governing body or to carry out a skills audit which informed subsequent recruitment of governors). However, unlike most 'partially engaged' schools, all had also taken action on Element C. They had gone beyond the approach to data they had taken before the pilot and, as a result of the Code, were now measuring performance in different ways and distributing data in different ways.

"Data was something that wasn't readily available to governors [at the start of the pilot]. The governors have put a lot of effort into understanding data to ask the right questions... [We have developed] performance indicators, we have got a comprehensive Data Dashboard now, which we look at every half-term, and we are much better placed to be able to monitor progress for the pupils."

School 5 (primary, latent, full engagement)

Some of these schools (particularly those that were not advanced) also pointed out that the Code had provided a structure for their governance activities, which had not been available to them before, and that this had helped focus their thinking and performance.

"It did give us that framework about what we should be doing and what we should be focusing on – it gave us something to move forward with, really. It was just good timing for us as a school...it has seen us through the last two years."

School 5 (primary, latent, full engagement)

"It comes back to having a framework to work from...it is almost a tick list or a checklist, which I personally find very beneficial. I think it has sharpened our focus – I think that's really what the Code is about. The Code makes us realise what is important."

School 6 (primary, transitional, full engagement)

Schools who had demonstrated 'partial engagement' with the Code had typically taken action on Elements A and B but had not taken positive action on Element C. Opinion Leader took 'positive action' to mean that the school had in some way changed its practices in response to Element C over the course of the pilot – for instance, by introducing new indicators or changing the way data was disseminated. Use of the Fischer Family Trust's Data Dashboard alone was not considered 'positive action' for the purposes of the evaluation.

There were three main reasons why these schools had not taken positive action on Element C:

- They could not see the benefit of introducing new indicators for aspirations, relationships, employability, etc. In particular, this was because schools were unclear how these would impact on their Ofsted grade. Better alignment between Element C and Ofsted requirements was requested.
- Some schools did not understand how they would measure the new and different indicators suggested by Element C. These schools requested guidance and support alongside the Code to help them with this.
- Other schools simply did not have time to take action on Element C within the two-year pilot period. Some schools, who had taken action on Elements A and B, intended to move on to Element C in the 2014–15 academic year.

"I think what would be helpful would be to provide worked examples and resources [in relation to Element C]."

School 1 (primary, latent, partial engagement)

"If we could monitor what our children are doing in the workplace or what kind of university they go to, that would give us that strategic overview. We haven't got it yet, but...how can we do that?"

School 17 (secondary, transitional, partial engagement)

A total of four schools did not sustain their engagement with the Code over the course of the pilot. The reasons for this were:

- the Code was not effectively disseminated at the start of the pilot and did not receive attention
- the Code was not seen as being effective and was abandoned at the end of Year 1
- the school required support and/or guidance in implementing the Code and felt unable to progress beyond Year 1 without them.

#### *Improvements and considerations for roll-out*

Suggested improvements to the Code fell into the six categories shown below:

- provide support
- align with Ofsted
- redraft Element C
- better dissemination (using local authorities and other intermediaries)
- tailor for partnership schools
- amend the name – is 'Code' right?