



# TRAINING FOR GOVERNORS OF DUBAI SCHOOLS

**Online Training March – November 2021**  
[russellspeirs@rsacademics.com](mailto:russellspeirs@rsacademics.com)



## SESSION 4: 15<sup>TH</sup> AND 16<sup>TH</sup> JUNE

**Working with the Principal: how Governors can ensure they recruit the best Principal and that he/she performs to their best**

### RSAcademics Hosts:

- **Russell Speirs, CEO & Founder**
- **Durell Barnes, Head of Governance and Compliance**
- **Jonathan Hughes D'Aeth, Senior Advisor**





## **RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH:**

**James MacDonald, Director of International School of Brussels & experienced Dubai Governor**

## **GUEST SPEAKERS:**

**Keith Clark, Head of International Leadership Appointments, RSAcademics**

**Clarissa Farr, Coaching Partner, RSAcademics**

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## PROGRAMME FOR TODAY

- Findings from the survey
  - How to get the best out of the Principal
  - How to approach the appointment of a Principal
  - Coaching and Appraisal
  - Questions
- 
- Introduction to Governors' self-review
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## **FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY**

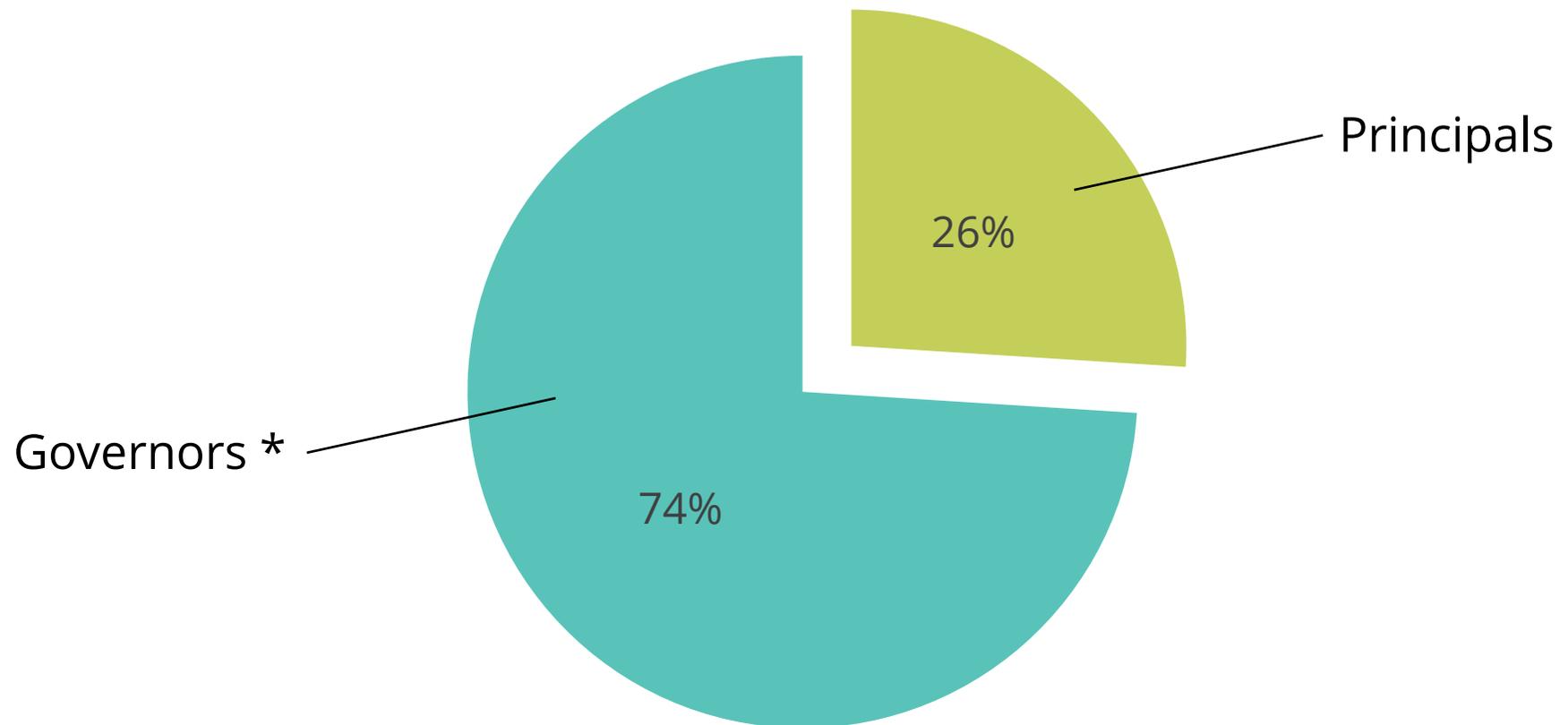
Russell Speirs, CEO & Founder

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## THE RESPONSE SAMPLE

- 100 useable responses

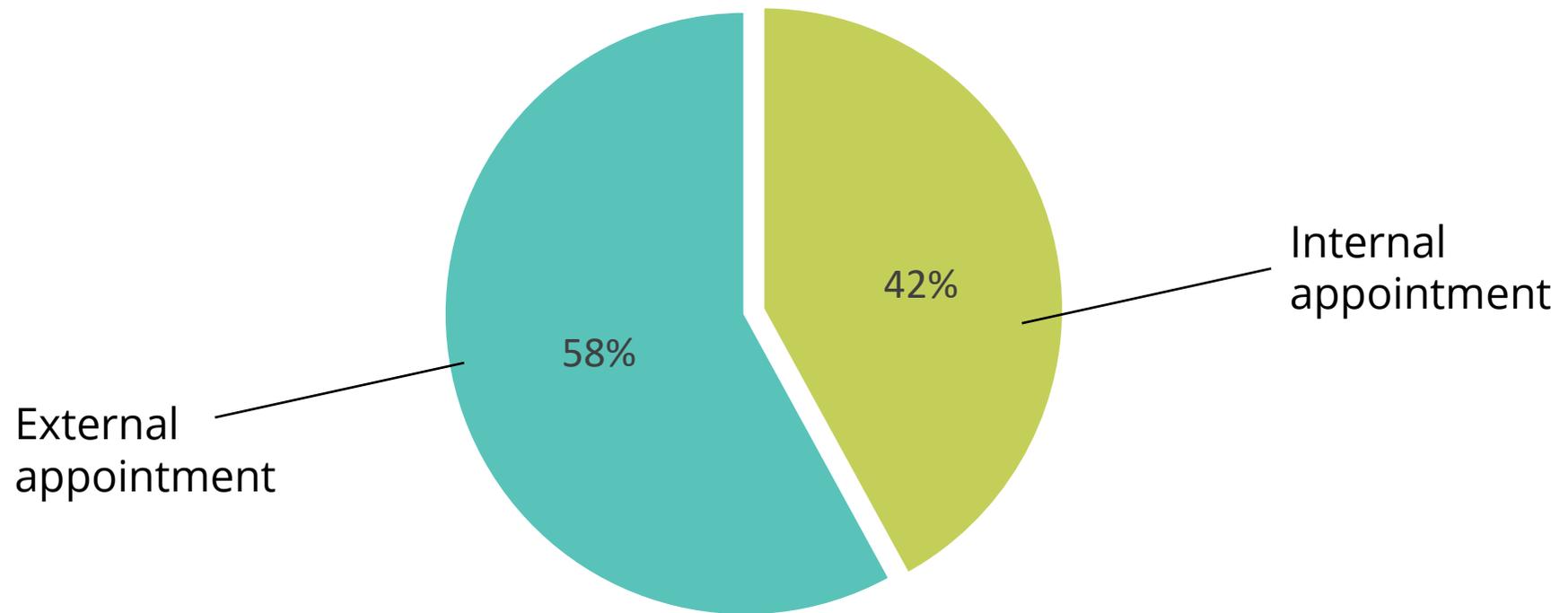


\* "Governors" = CEOs, Executive Principal, Director of Education  
Owner, Shareholder, Board Director  
Advisor (without authority over the Principal)

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## APPOINTMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL – BASIC FACTS



Agencies used in 35% of Principal appointments

Reasons given for using an agency

- To generate bigger / better qualified pool of candidates
  - Allows a more informed / experienced evaluation of candidates
-



## **APPOINTMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL – GENERALLY DONE WELL**

Which, according to the Principals AND Governors meant...

- Thorough and robust, using a range of assessment tools and situations
  - Clear expectations of candidates i.e. transparency regarding the role and the school's challenges
  - Chance for candidates to meet relevant people e.g. HR, variety of Board members, future senior colleagues
  - Comparison with other candidates
-



## **APPOINTMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL – WHEN IT DID NOT GO SO WELL...**

The most common complaints were because of delays

- to decision-making
  - in issuing contract
  - announcing the appointment
-



## GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE PRINCIPAL – ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPAL

My Line Manager \* helps me perform to my best



My Line Manager \* challenges me in a helpful and constructive way



I feel recognised and valued by my Line Manager \* for the work that I do



■ Agree ■ Disagree/not sure

\* Line Manager = Any Governor with authority over the Principal, influence or significant involvement with the Principal



## GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE PRINCIPAL – ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPAL

What could your “Line Manager” do to help you perform even better and for you to be even more motivated in your role?

*“I would need more constructive feedback...to stimulate my thinking, not just supervision and taking stock of how far I was meeting a tick in the box for inspections”*

*“Stop micro-managing”*

*“Check in more often”*

*“Show appreciation”*

*“Stay in their lane”*

*“By acknowledging the existing good work”*

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## GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE PRINCIPAL – ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNORS





## GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE PRINCIPAL – ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNORS

What could you do differently or better to help the Principal perform even better and for him or her to be even more motivated in the role?

*“Spend more 1-1 time with them to hear their suggestions, ideas...often it is not asked: “What do you need right now to do your job better?”*”

*“Keep a more formal track of performance and current strengths and achievements”*

*“Provide specialist training in certain areas, where needed”*

*“Coaching opportunities for the Principal beyond the Governing Body”*

*“Involve the Directors in the appraisal process”*

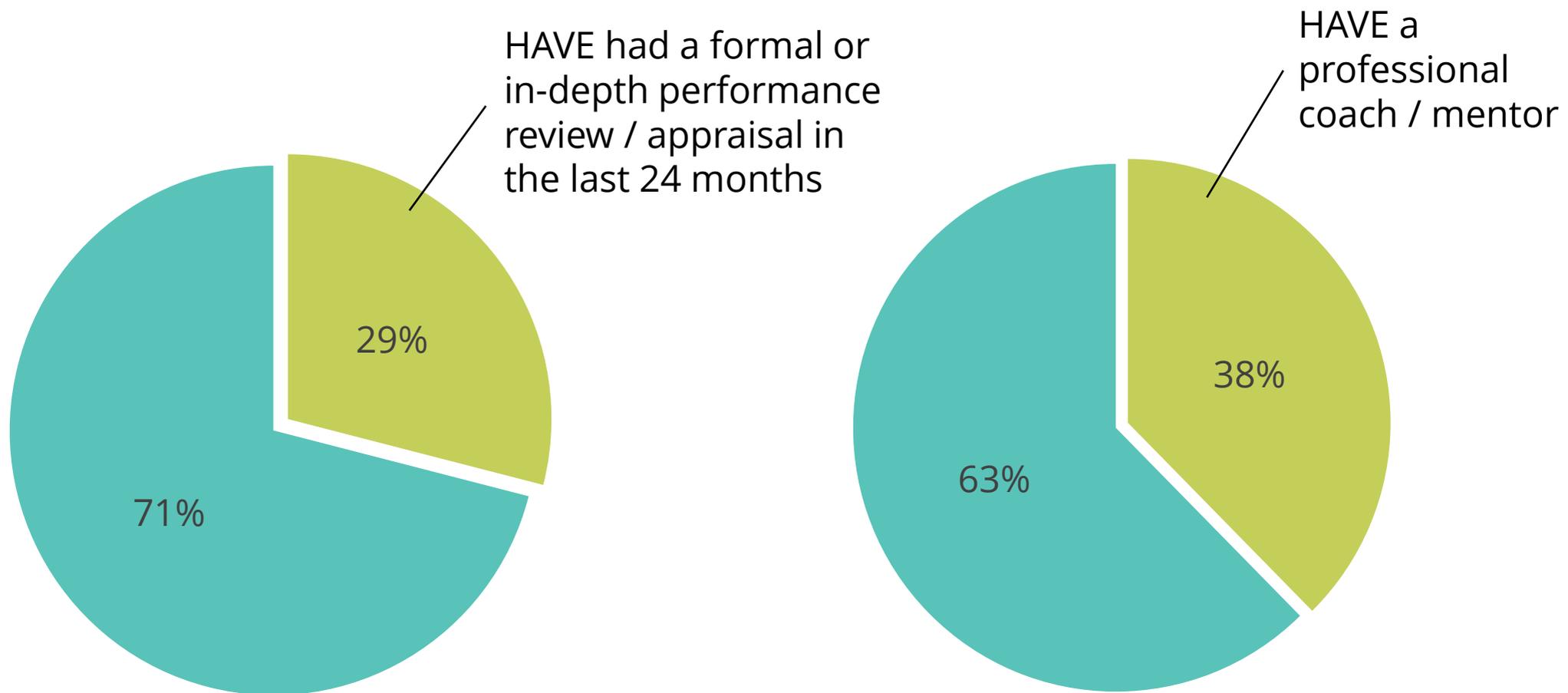
*“New Principals must have a mentor for the first 2 years”*

*“Continue to improve my knowledge and ability to ask the right questions to support performance and development”*

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## GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE PRINCIPAL – APPRAISALS AND COACHING





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## HOW TO GET THE BEST OUT OF THE PRINCIPAL

**Durell Barnes**, Head of Governance and Compliance

**James MacDonald**, Director of The International School of Brussels,

Formerly:

Senior VP Education for IB and US schools at GEMS

Managing Director of Al Futtaim Education Foundation

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## INTERVIEW WITH JAMES MACDONALD

The interview is available by reviewing the recording of Session 4

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# HOW TO APPROACH THE APPOINTMENT OF A PRINCIPAL

Keith Clark, Head of International Leadership  
Appointments, RSGlobalAcademics

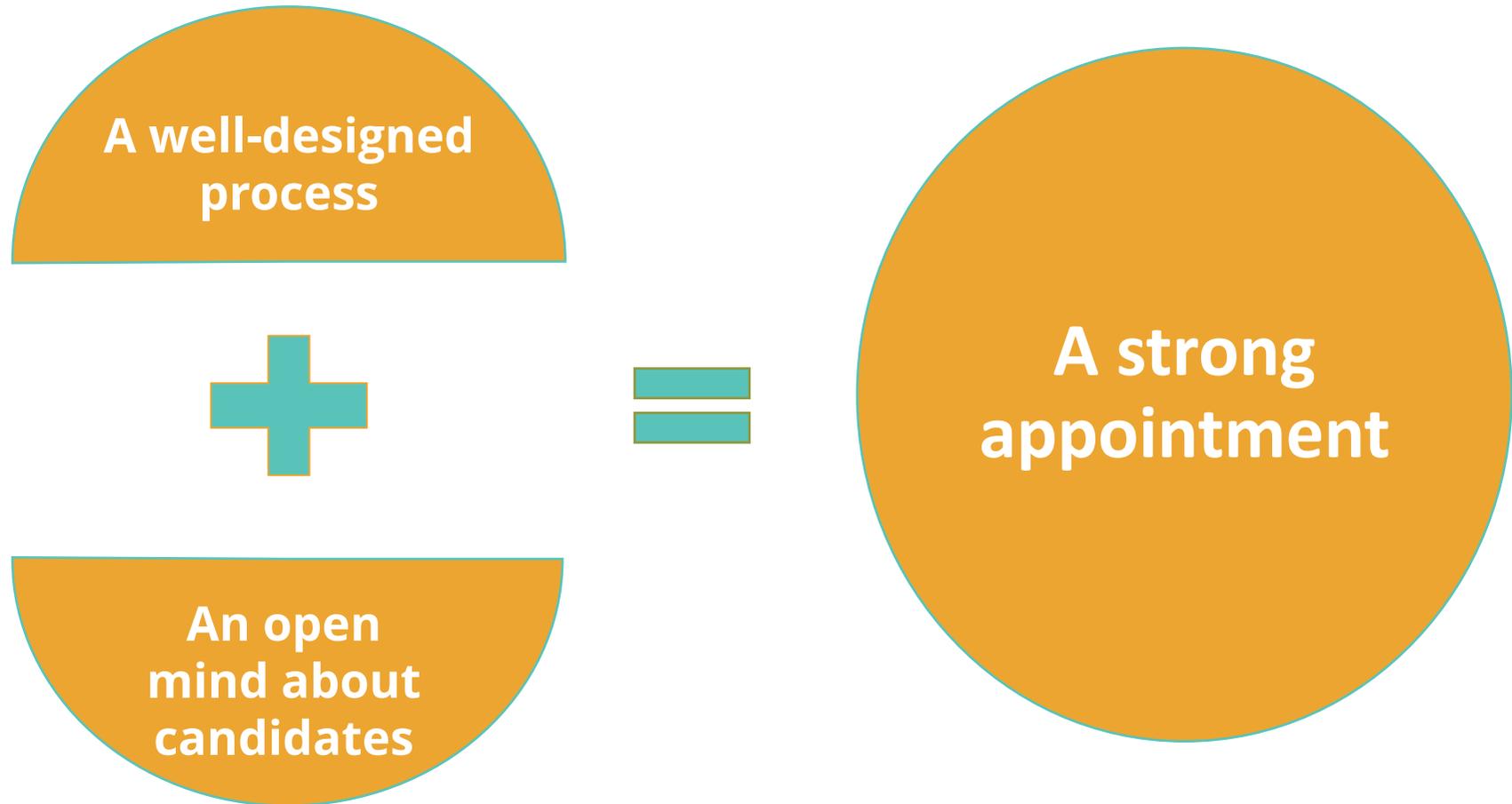
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**Appointing a new Principal is the single biggest decision Governors will make and the biggest opportunity they have to shape a school's future**



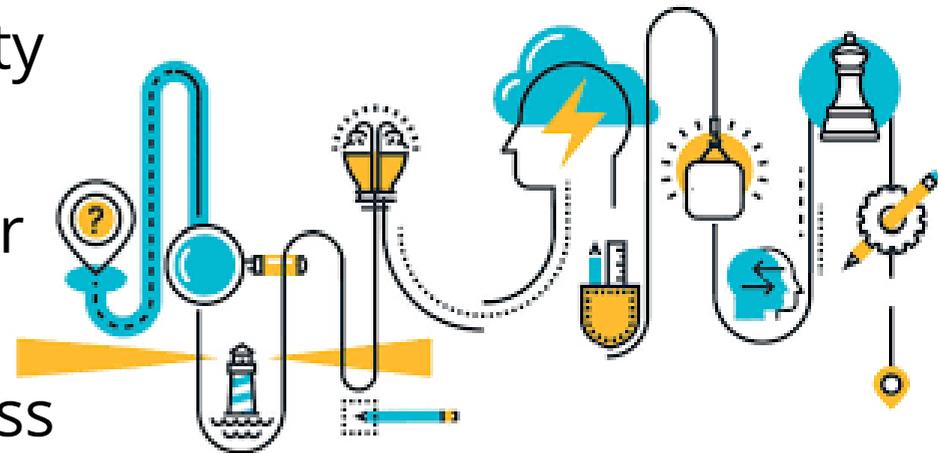
## THE FUNDAMENTALS





## CHARACTERISTICS OF A WELL-DESIGNED PROCESS

- Be clear about priorities for the School and the next Principal
- Establish the main steps and timeline
- Minimise delays
- Beware the interview! Evaluate candidates using a variety of methods
- Consider the value of personality tests
- Link evaluation methods to your priorities
- Remember it's a two-way process





## KEEP AN OPEN MIND

Our experience tells us that...

- There are a lot of good candidates out there
- Candidates move for different reasons
- Success in one school does not = success in another
- First-time leaders can be excellent
- It is hard not to be biased towards the familiar
- It is ok to refine what you are looking for as the process evolves





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## COACHING AND APPRAISAL

Clarissa Farr, Coaching Partner, RSAcademics

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## WE'VE HIRED A GREAT PRINCIPAL – NOW WHAT?

- According to research by the Hay Group, Headship is one of the most **complex and exacting** of leadership roles
  - Newly appointed Principals want to prove the board made a good decision – **trust** will lead to honesty
  - **Invest** in optimizing each of the 2,500 hours your CEO will spend at work each year - they need to spend some of those reflecting
  - The case for **coaching** and **appraisal**
-



## COACHING

- Provide the Principal with a **professional coach**, regardless of whether they have been a Principal before
  - Appoint the coach in consultation with the Principal and ensure coaching happens **off site**, regularly
  - The coaching relationship should be **confidential**
  - Having a coach is **a sign of strength**, not weakness
  - *Growth happens when we become the person we are destined to be, rather than when we try to be the person we are not...*
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## APPRAISAL

- Agree together with the Principal what the **priorities are for year 1** – and then make them less ambitious
  - Appraise your new Principal at the end of year one. Make it two way and **light touch**
  - An **external, 360 appraisal** after 2 years in post
  - Appraisal is not a destination. It's part of a journey and concludes with a **focus on the future** to be supported by coaching
  - A thorough appraisal **informs the board** and is essential to outstanding governance
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## GOVERNORS INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

- The arrival of a new Principal is an **inflection point for the whole school** - including the board – everyone is watching
  - You each need to know your Principal. Meet with the new Head to **introduce yourselves individually**. Ask: what can I do for the school?
  - The relationship with the **Chair** is key
  - Put the **educational vision at the centre of your thinking** as you plan strategy
  - **Think big - act small - start now**
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## KEY POINTS

- Critical friendship involves Challenging, Supporting and Connecting
  - Dubai has lots of external challenge so support and empathy are important from the board
  - Importance of the balance between short term, often business priorities, and longer-term strategy
  - Open mindedness and flexibility are important in recruitment of principals
  - Recruitment is a two-way process
  - Coaching can be beneficial at any stage of a career fully appreciated by strong leaders
  - 360 appraisal is part of a continuing conversation about self-aware leadership
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## FOUR CORE FUNCTIONS

Setting  
strategic  
direction

Holding  
leadership  
accountable

Overseeing  
educational  
performance

Overseeing  
discretionary  
budget

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## CRITICAL FRIENDSHIP

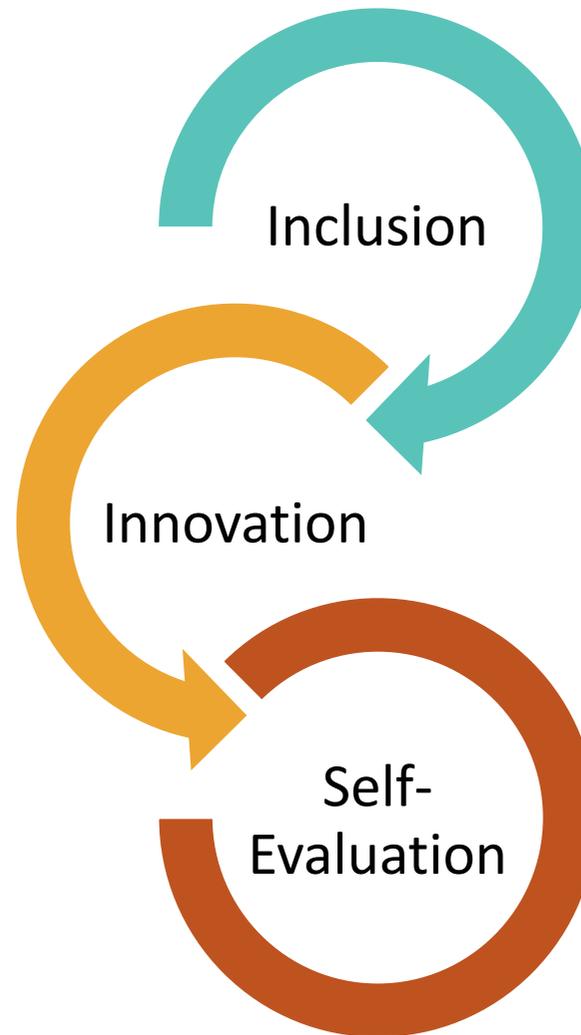
‘Integrity,  
competence,  
responsibility,  
accountability,  
fairness and  
transparency.’

‘Selflessness,  
courage,  
curiosity,  
independence,  
honesty,  
humility,  
tact,  
and the ability to  
listen and forge  
relationships.’

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## THE NATIONAL AGENDA



Inclusion

Innovation

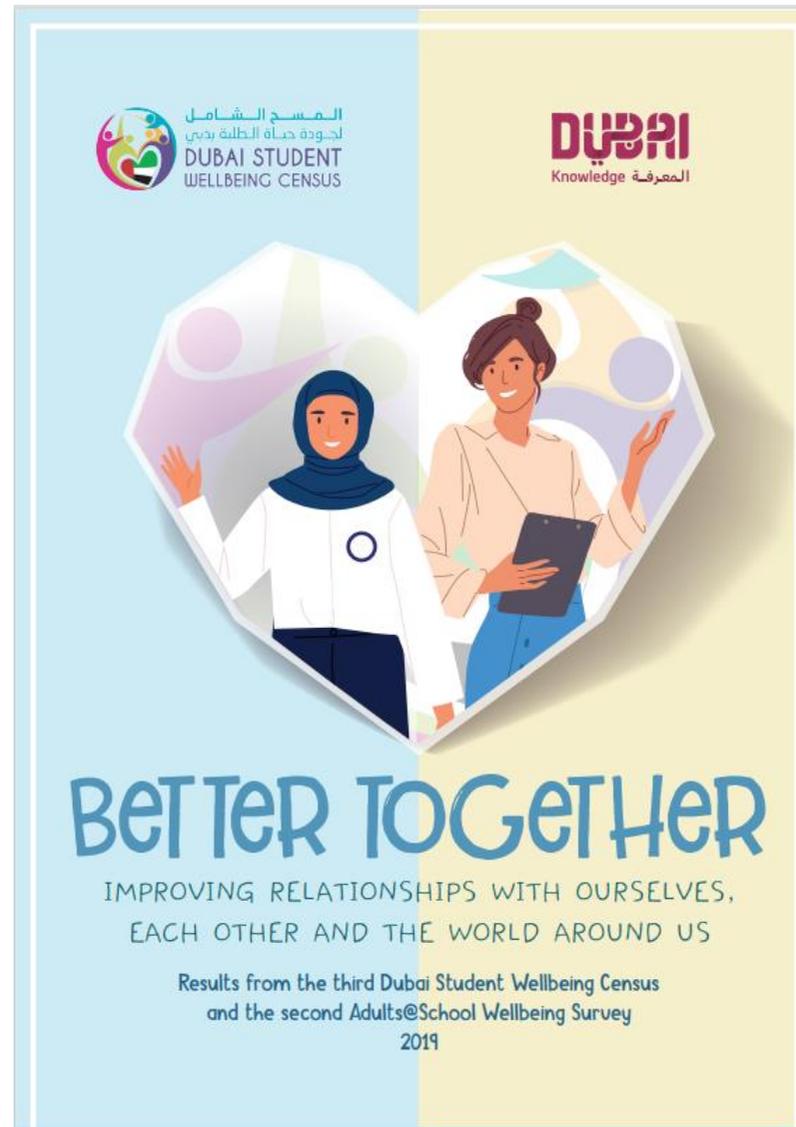
Self-  
Evaluation

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# WELLBEING CENSUS





## ASPIRE TO EXCELLENCE

### **Descriptors**

6.4.1 The GB consistently seeks and thoughtfully considers stakeholders' views and gains comprehensive and accurate knowledge about the school.

6.4.2 The GB monitors the school's actions and holds senior leaders accountable for the school's performance, the achievements and personal development of all students. It acts as a constructive critic for the school.

6.4.3 The GB makes a significant contribution to the school's leadership and direction, based on ethical principles. It ensures that the school is very well staffed and very well resourced and that all statutory requirements are met. It makes a significant contribution to the performance of the school.

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## REFLECTION AT THE HEART OF THE GIFT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

‘Talk Time’—questions designed to help you reflect on your school’s governance approach and to encourage further conversations, best answered collaboratively to ensure a rigorous governance framework aligned with best international practices.’

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## TALK TIME QUESTIONS





## USING TALK TIME AS A STARTING POINT FOR SELF-REVIEW

- Can you answer all the questions confidently or do you feel less confident about some of them?
- Do you think some of the questions are 'easier' or more straightforward than others?
- Which of the questions are most important?
- Which of the questions does your board need to work on?





## INTRODUCTORY

- How does your school's board of governors set the improvement strategy?
- How does your school source its governors to ensure a balance of skills, experience and professional backgrounds?
- How does your governing body reflect the diversity of Dubai, your school and its operating context?





## LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

- Which different character strengths are important for your board members to display?
- How do board members uphold ethical leadership and act as good social citizens?
- How does your board ensure your school's activities and outputs align with the UAE Vision 2021?
- How does the governing body promote the wellbeing of all students and adults in the school?





## CLARITY OF PURPOSE

- Which features of your school's governance framework enable board members to govern effectively?
- What is your school's purpose or vision? How clearly is this expressed?
- What are the short-, medium- and long-term priorities for your school?





## ACCOUNTABILITY

- What strategies are in place to ensure a positive relationship between the board and school management?
- How does the board provide constructive feedback to the Principal?
- How does the board review its own performance?
- How well does the board use data analysis to monitor the performance of the school?
- What procedures are in place to ensure that the school's financial and human resources are used effectively?





## DIVERSITY AND INDEPENDENCE

- How is your board diverse in its representation and perspectives?
- What mechanisms are in place to help the board manage conflict?
- How does the board manage knowledge transfer over time and ensure continuity?
- What training and mentorship do new and existing board members receive?
- What skills sets does your board need? How will you fill the gaps?





## EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

- How well does your school's governance charter enable the school to function effectively?
- How often does your school's charter need to be reviewed to ensure maximum effectiveness?
- What sort of subcommittee structure and delegation is needed in your school?





## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- How does your board distinguish its and the Principal's roles and responsibilities?
- How does your school ensure effective communications between the board and the Principal?
- How does the governance charter enable governors to take risks and make tough decisions?





## COMPLIANCE

- How does your board ensure it keeps updated with all UAE and Dubai regulations affecting education?





## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- What strategies are in place for your board to listen to the views of your school community?
- In which ways are governors interacting with each other and the school community outside of board meetings?
- How do governors represent the school in the broader community?





## USING TALK TIME AS A STARTING POINT FOR SELF-REVIEW

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## NEXT TIME

- How self-review can help improve governance
    - Using Talk Time
    - Other ways to review contributions
    - Acting on self-review
    - Introduction to skills and experience audits
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## TRAINING FOR GOVERNORS OF DUBAI SCHOOLS

### **Session 5:**

How self-review can help improve governance

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> September** 12.00 to 13.30  
& **Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September** 16.00 to 17.30