



Celebrating the equality and value of all people

Governance through a lens of weight and voice

A metaphor to hold in mind

A board table can appear level, while some voices still carry more weight than others.

The lack of a level contribution may not show up all at once. Over a number of meetings, a pattern may develop. Certain contributions tend to set direction more quickly. Others are heard, sometimes carefully, but don't seem to carry the same influence when a decision begins to become apparent.

No one designs it that way. Most boards would recognise the importance of hearing each person around the table. Even so, experience, confidence, professional standing, and the habits a group has formed over time all seem to play their part in how weight gathers.

What makes this harder to notice is that the meeting itself still looks balanced; everyone is present and the usual process is followed. Yet when the conversation reaches its critical point, the outcome often reflects a narrower set of influences than the table itself might suggest.

This characteristic invites boards to pay attention to that difference, not at the level of principle (thought), but in the way decisions actually take shape (action).

Governance through a lens of weight

It is not difficult to affirm that all people have equal value. Most boards would do that without hesitation. The question is less about agreement and more about translation. How does that conviction find its way into the ordinary work of governance, particularly when decisions are complex or time is limited?

In those moments, differences in weight tend to become more visible. Some perspectives carry further into the decision while others are acknowledged but do not alter the direction taken. Occasionally, a voice that might have changed the conversation in a highly important way is not present at all.

This is not simply about personalities. It is also shaped by structure: things like how expertise is recognised, how information is framed, which forms of evidence are trusted, and how discussion is paced. Over time, these elements combine to form a pattern that is usually felt before it is named.

Engaging this characteristic does not mean removing difference or flattening experience. It does, however, ask whether the way weight is distributed across the board's work reflects what the school claims about the equal value of people.



The 10 facets reframed through a lens of equality

Facet	Where might weight be settling in ways we have not fully noticed?
Role clarity	When questions cross into complex territory, whose judgement tends to carry authority, and whose is treated as advisory?
Strategic vision	When the future of the school is discussed, whose lives and experiences are most clearly in view?
Board composition	Who shapes the early direction of conversation, and who tends to enter once a theme has already formed?
Financial stewardship	Which parts of the school are resourced with confidence, and which are expected to adjust to constraint?
Risk management	When trade-offs are required, whose risk is most readily recognised and acted upon?
Succession	Who is seen as a natural future leader, and what assumptions sit behind that recognition?
Transparency	When matters are explained to the community, whose concerns receive careful attention, and whose are addressed more briefly?
Stakeholder engagement	Which voices lead to a shift in direction, and which are noted but leave the decision unchanged?
Community partnership	In relationships beyond the school, who is setting the terms of engagement?
Board effectiveness	When decisions are forming, how evenly is influence actually distributed across the table?

Prompted inquiry: for your board conversation

1. When a decision becomes difficult, whose perspective tends to carry through to the outcome?
2. Are there groups within the school community whose experience is regularly present in reports, but less present in decisions?
3. Where might we be assuming equality rather than noticing how it is working in practice?
4. If someone observed a series of our meetings, what might they conclude about how influence moves in this room?



Practice: beginning with place

A short reflection on a recent board outcome

Choose a decision made in the past term.

Begin with a few minutes of silence and invite each member to consider:

- Which voices most shaped the direction of this decision?
- Which perspectives were present but had less influence on the outcome?
- Who was not in the room, whose presence might have changed the discussion?

After the pause, open the conversation.

Rather than focusing on individuals, attend to the pattern that becomes visible.

- What does this suggest about how weight operates in our governance?
- Does this align with how we understand the equal value of people in this school?

A final question to take into your next meeting

Where in our governance is equality something we state, and where is it something that can be observed?