

A GUIDE TO SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

(Note: information is provided for all school governors by the Department for Education. The Governors' Handbook is available to download at www.gov.uk/government/publications)

WHAT DOES THE GOVERNING BODY DO?

The functions of the Governing Body include the following core functions:-

- ensuring that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined;
- ensuring that the head teacher performs his or her responsibilities for the educational performance of the school ;
- ensuring the sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources.

In exercising their functions the governing body shall –

- act with integrity, objectivity and honesty and in the best interests of the school;
- be open about the decisions they make and the actions they take and in particular shall be prepared to explain their decisions and actions to interested parties.

It is the role of the governor to take a strategic overview of the school. This will include:

- shaping the vision for the school
- understanding the school's strengths and weaknesses and setting targets for improvement
- monitoring and evaluating the progress made or addressing weaknesses by challenging and supporting the school.
- approving plans and policies to promote achievement and learning
- accounting for the schools and governing body's performance.
- carrying out the governing bodies statutory duties
- acting as the "critical friend" to the school

It is also the duty of each governor to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of the governing body. This would include attending meetings regularly, reading the papers in advance and contributing to the discussions. A good quality Induction process should be in place and all governors should receive regular training and be given opportunities to gain experience of leadership within the governing body.

"GETTING STARTED"

As part of its annual governor training programme the local authority offers this course at a time and place that best suites the school as an introduction to governance for new and recently appointed governors. Information on the courses is provided by the Clerk and available on the Learning Zone. Please ask your Clerk to provide information on the training available. **It is important that new governors try to attend one of these courses.**

WHAT KINDS OF GOVERNOR ARE THERE?

The school's Instrument of Government (a copy of which is available from your school) is the legal basis for each Governing Body. It sets out the size and composition of the governing body and specifies the categories of governors and number of governors in each category. It also specifies the term of office for each category of governor, normally this is four years. All categories of governor have equal standing and include the following in the combination set out in the Instrument of Government:

Parent governors are elected by and from among parents of registered pupils at the school. Parent governors are not "mandated" by the parent body to take a particular stance on governance issues but to bring a parental viewpoint to discussions and to act, as every other governor does, in the best interests of the school.

Staff governors are elected by and from among the staff at the school. One staff governor place must be reserved for the headteacher (who may choose not to be a governor).

Local Authority governors are appointed by the Local Authority (i.e. North Yorkshire County Council).

Foundation governors (at voluntary aided, voluntary controlled and some foundation schools only) are appointed by the body or bodies named in the Instrument. They are appointed to preserve and develop the religious character of the school, if it has a religious character, and to see that the school's trust deed is complied-with.

Associate Members are not governors but they are people appointed by the governing body to serve on committees. They are usually appointed to provide a particular area of expertise to the benefit of the committee and governing body. They can be appointed for a period of between 1 and 4 years

If your school is operating under the 2007 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations and has not reconstituted you may also have the following categories:

Community governors are appointed by the governing body. They are intended to represent community interests and should be committed to the good governance and success of the school.

Sponsor governors (if any) are nominated by the sponsor named in the Instrument of Government and appointed by the governing body. Sponsors are people or organisations who give substantial assistance to the school, financially or in kind.

If you school has reconstituted under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations the following will apply:

Co-opted governors are appointed by the governing body. They are people who, in the opinion of the governing body, have the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school.

AS A GOVERNOR, YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND:

- ✓ the roles of governance, and how these connect with the management role of the head teacher;

- ✓ that the governing body is a corporate body under the law with statutory duties and powers, and is "the responsible authority" for the school. It follows from this that no action may be taken by any individual governor on behalf of the governing body unless authorised by it (except the Chair in an urgency situation as defined in Regulations)
- ✓ that governance should be carried out on the basis of, and in a spirit of, team work;
- ✓ the way work is done is in meetings, and the Regulations about the "proceedings" of meetings are statutory. Where regulations do not apply, there may be Standing Orders adopted by the governing body;
- ✓ that there is much to learn about your school.

ABOUT MEETINGS:

- ✓ the importance of preparing, by reading the papers received, and giving some thought to the items on the agenda;
- ✓ the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Failure to attend any meetings of the governing body in a period of six months without the consent of the governing body will result in disqualification. It should be remembered that sending apologies is a courtesy but it is not the same as being given "consent";
- ✓ the importance of observing "committee disciplines" to enable the meeting to be conducted efficiently and the business discharged effectively. Committee disciplines include:
 - Working democratically;
 - Declaring interests and withdrawing when appropriate;
 - Speaking, when invited, to the item under consideration;
 - Not raising items outside the agenda without prior notice and agreement of the Chair;
 - Keeping contributions "to the point";
 - Respecting others' viewpoints;
 - Accepting collective responsibility for decisions.
 - **the importance of discretion: respecting the privacy of all discussion in the meeting and observing the confidentiality of matters which the governing body decide will be confidential.**

IN GENERAL:

- ✓ the importance of bringing to the governing body values, attitudes and knowledge of the world, as well as any particular expertise, which can help the school better serve its pupils and community.

SUMMARY OF THE PRINCIPAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNING BODIES

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| Curriculum | Ensure curriculum meets legal requirements. Hear any complaints about curriculum and appeals against head's decision to alter National Curriculum for pupil. Must ensure only approved external qualifications and syllabuses taught. Must decide in primary schools whether school should provide sex education, and have a policy on content and organisation in secondary schools. |
| Religious Education and Collective Worship | See that daily worship and that RE delivered in accordance with agreed syllabus except in controlled schools where the Trust Deed makes provisions or in aided schools in line with the religious character as specified in 'The Designation of Schools Having a Religious Character (England) Order 1999'. |
| Special Educational Needs | Make every effort to meet needs of SEN pupils and ensure teachers know of their needs. Refer pupils who may need a Statement to LA for statutory assessment. |
| Finance | Decide how to spend delegated budget within terms of LA delegation scheme. |
| Staff | Select the headteacher; decide staff numbers; make appointments and place on appropriate grade; set disciplinary rules and procedures; hear staff grievances; ensure a policy is in place for to performance management requirements. |
| Admissions | Must admit pupils (community and controlled) in line with LA policy. In aided schools act as admission authority. |
| Equal Opportunities | Ensure no discrimination against pupils, job applicants or staff on grounds of gender, race or disability. |
| Pupil Discipline and Attendance | Must agree a statement and policies on discipline and consider representations about exclusions. Must report on unauthorised absences. |
| Providing Information | Must publish: - prospectus on the school website; whole school results KS1-3, school complaints policy, pupil premium information and other information required by statute* |
| Ofsted Inspection | Notify parents of inspection, receive and publish inspection report, draw up post-inspection action plan and report on progress with issues identified. |
| Health and Safety | Must ensure buildings, equipment and materials are safe and no risk to health. Set up procedures for implementing Health and safety Policy and make sure they are followed. |
| Charging for School Activities | Must have a published policy on charging for activities. Although schools cannot charge for school-time activities they may still invite parents and others to make voluntary contributions. |
| School Building | Control use of premises outside the school day, considering the needs of the local community. In aided schools carry out most external repairs, alterations and capital building work possibly aided by DCFS grant. |

*Further, more detailed information is available in the Governors' handbook published by the DFE and available to download from their website.