

Gateshead Governor Support Service

Raising Achievement Service, Learning & Children

Governor Induction Pack



Governor Support Service

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Dear Governor

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for offering your support and commitment as a governor in Gateshead.

Being a school governor is a key and strategic way to bring about an informed change within schools and governors represent a powerful force in the drive for school improvement.

As a governor you will be able to bring your beliefs, values, views and experience to help influence the vision of the school. Individual governors have a real opportunity to contribute to discussions that affect all aspects of school life.

As a governor you will have an opportunity to help give children a good experience at school, one which they both enjoy, and which enables them to develop.

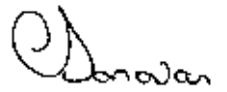
I hope you enjoy your time as a governor and embrace the training opportunities offered by the Local Authority which will not only help you fulfill your role as a governor but will bring you new skills and experiences.

Yours sincerely



Maggie Atkinson

*Group Director Learning & Children
& Director of Children's Services*



Councillor Catherine Donovan

*Portfolio Holder for
Children and Young People*

Dear New Governor

I am writing to welcome you to your new role as a school governor and to thank you for the commitment you are making.

I want all our children to grow up in a society where everyone has the chance to make the most of themselves and where parents are included in shaping the education system for their children. You, along with your fellow school governors, have a vital role to play in helping to make sure every child has the best start in life. School governors are an intrinsic part of the Government's aim to build an education system that is not only universally excellent, but universally responsive to its users too.

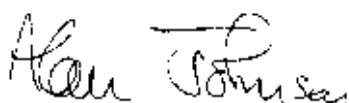
As a new governor, there may seem to be a lot to learn about schools and the education service. Whatever your background and whether you are an appointed or an elected governor, you, along with your fellow governors will take the strategic decisions about your school and ensure that the school is accountable to its community. Under the strategic leadership of the governing body the headteacher and senior management team are responsible for the day to day management of the school.

The co-ordinator of governor services in your local authority will provide you with information, support and training to enable you to carry out your role as a school governor. This, together with the Department's Guide to the Law for School Governors should help make you feel well-prepared for the exciting and challenging role you have taken on. Also, to help support school governors my Department funds an independent telephone and e-mail helpline "GovernorLine," the website "GovernorNet" and also publishes "Governors," a termly newsletter issued to every school governor. Details of these can be found overleaf.

As well as the support the Department and your local authority can offer there are a number of national bodies who exist to promote the interests of school governors. These include the National Governors' Association (NGA) and the Information for School and College Governors (ISCG), whose details can also be found overleaf.

I know that you will want to do all that you can to raise school standards and give every child in your school the opportunity to progress, to succeed and to fulfil their potential. I am delighted that you have decided to give your time, energy and commitment to making a real difference to education and wish you every success in your new role. It is greatly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP

Gateshead Council Governor Support Service

Governor Induction Pack

Congratulations on becoming a valued member of the largest voluntary organisation in the UK.

Welcome

to your new governor induction pack produced by Gateshead Council Governor Support Service.

This handbook helps to explain the roles and responsibilities of being a governor and how governing bodies carry out their duties.

Gateshead's Governor Support Service believes it is essential that all new governors receive a comprehensive induction pack covering a broad range of issues that we believe will assist you and provide you with confidence in your new role.

New governors of schools which have bought into the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for governor support will receive from Gateshead's Governor Support Service:

- this new governor induction pack
- the school's instrument of government which notes the composition of the governing body
- a *Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) application form (for completion and return to this service)*
- a *governor details form (for completion and return to this service)*
- an *eligibility form (for completion and return to this service)*
- a *health questionnaire form (for completion and return to Occupational Health)*
- a *reference form (for completion and return to the school)*
- the governing body membership
- the governing body code of conduct (if one has been agreed)
- the governing body committee structure, terms of reference and membership
- the Governor Support Service Development Directory for this year
- a copy of the most recent Governor Support Service newsletter
- a copy of Gateshead Council's Confidential Reporting Policy

New governors should expect to receive a number of documents from their school. These can be obtained from the school and include:

- a copy of the governor's "Guide to the Law"

- a copy of the school profile
- a copy of the school prospectus
- recent school newsletters
- a calendar of school events
- a copy of the school improvement plan (SIP)
- a copy of the school's latest OfSTED report
- a full list of staff and the staffing structure
- the Handbook of Financial Procedures & Scheme of Delegation (secondary from March 2007, primary and special schools from March 2008)
- copies of key policy statements including the school visits policy
- a copy of the school targets
- a copy of the last Annual Progress Review (APR) from the Local Authority
- papers from the last full governing body meeting

We also recommend that you make an appointment with the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors to take a tour of the school prior to attending your first full governing body meeting.

Schools are encouraged to allocate a mentor for new governors from within the governing body. Please check with your school to see if they have adopted an induction policy.

Joining an existing well established team can be a daunting prospect even for the most self-confident. Many new governors have confessed to being quite bemused during their first meetings and some feel unprepared for the barrage of papers with which they were greeted.

New governors come from varying backgrounds; some have knowledge of the school and of educational matters in general whilst others know less. In order to be effective, every governor needs some basic knowledge about their school and needs to be able to set this against a wider understanding of education.

For both new and experienced governors there are training courses run by the Local Authority (LA). All governors are encouraged to take advantage of the training on offer. These courses are free of charge to governors.

Why Have Governing Bodies?

To help schools provide the best possible education for their pupils by:

- thinking and working strategically to help raise standards
- monitoring and evaluating progress towards priorities and targets
- supporting the Head Teacher and staff as well as challenging their expectations
- accounting to all stakeholders for the school's performance and for the decisions they make

Why Become a School Governor?

There are many benefits to becoming a school governor. As a school governor, you will have the opportunity to:

- develop new skills and to strengthen existing ones. Free training is offered to all governors in Gateshead (see enclosed Development Directory for courses offered). As a governor you can take the nationally recognised BTEC Advanced Certificate in School Governance, which develops and recognises the skills which serving governors can acquire.
- work with a wide range of people from a variety of social, cultural and religious backgrounds
- gain an idea of how schools are run and how the education system works
- enjoy the personal satisfaction and sense of achievement of working to improve the school
- enjoy using your skills to the good of the local community

Note:

Governors will find a comprehensive list of the abbreviations used throughout this document on pages 20 - 25.

The Composition of a Governing Body

The instrument of government (copy for your school is enclosed) states the composition of your governing body. Governing bodies now have considerable latitude in determining size and membership. There must be between nine and 20 governors on a school's governing body.

There are differences in the composition of governing bodies in accordance with the type of school. The following types of governors can be found at the following categories of schools:

Community, Community Special and Maintained Nursery Schools

The governing body consists of parent, staff, LEA and community governors.

Foundation and Foundation Special and Voluntary Controlled Schools

The governing body consists of parent, staff, LEA, community and foundation governors.

Voluntary Aided Schools

The governing body consists of parent, staff, LEA and foundation governors.

What School Governors Do

A school governing body has a strategic role in the development of the school but does not become involved in day-to-day management issues – that is the role of the Head Teacher.

You are there to:

- **provide a strategic view** - help to set and maintain the broad framework within which the Head Teacher and the staff should run the school
- **act as a critical friend** - provide the Head Teacher with support and offer advice and information but also to provide some challenge. The governing body is there to monitor and evaluate the school's effectiveness and governors should therefore be prepared to ask challenging questions
- **to ensure accountability** - the Head Teacher and staff report to the governing body on the school's performance. In turn the governing body is accountable to all stakeholders on the school's overall performance

Who Are School Governors?

School governors are in place to ensure schools are well run. They are volunteers who help to decide on the direction, focus and ethos of the school.

Governors represent school staff, parents, the local community and even the church organisation connected to the school. This means that school decisions are made by people with a wide range of experience and views.

Different types of governor:

Parent Governors - parents or carers elected by other parents or carers with children at the school or, on occasion, appointed by the governing body;

Staff Governors - the Head Teacher and staff members elected by teaching and support staff;

Community Governors - individuals chosen by governors from the local community who represent community interests;

LA Governors - appointed by the Local Authority who take regard of the skills and experience which schools require and appoint candidates who support the schools' ethos and mission;

Foundation Governors - (not community schools) appointed by the schools founding body, church or other organisation to help preserve and develop the school's religious character;

Sponsor Governors - a discretionary category appointed by the governing body from a business or an individual who has made significant contributions to the school;

Associate Members - a discretionary category appointed by the governing body from individuals who may be able to make specific contributions, but who is not a governor and has no vote at full governing body meetings but may have limited voting rights at committee level.

The Seven Principles Of Public Life

From the Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (The Nolan Committee).

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands this.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Governor Do's and Don'ts

Governing Bodies Do:

- set the overall budget for the school
- decide on the number of staff
- decide on the level of pay for teachers
- help to decide the priorities for the school when the school improvement plan is being developed
- ensure the national curriculum is taught to all pupils
- set targets for pupil achievement
- publish national test and exam results
- compare the performance of their school to similar schools
- receive information about the quality of teaching in the school
- have a published strategy for dealing with parental complaints and concerns
- ensure health and safety issues are addressed
- set the times of school sessions
- consult the Head Teacher when making decisions
- ask challenging questions
- help develop school policies and procedures
- consider the repair and maintenance of school buildings
- consider the use of school premises outside school hours
- appoint committees of governors to look at specific issues such as finance, staffing, curriculum and premises.

Governing Bodies Don't:

- inspect the school
- report on the quality of teaching after visiting the school
- authorise all expenditure
- share concerns about staff capability
- decide on how pupils are taught different subjects
- have the right to exclude a pupil
- write the school's policies on their own
- rubberstamp recommendations from the Head Teacher
- automatically approve all apologies for absence for meetings sent by governors
- need to be aware of the performance objectives which had been set for individual teachers
- write the OfSTED action plan

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- the internal organisation, management and control of the school
- formulating aims, objectives and policies for the governing body to consider adopting
- advising on and implementing the governing body strategic framework
- giving governors the information they needed to help the school raise its standards
- reporting on progress at least once every school year

What Makes an Effective School Governor?

- you care about improving children's educational attainment
- you want to work as part of a team and can value and respect the contribution made by different people
- you are willing to listen, learn and to ask questions
- you are open to ideas and have a feel for what is important to people
- you are enthusiastic
- you can commit time and energy
- you will attend relevant training

What Does The Effective Governor Need to be Familiar With?

- the recent history of the school
- the type of school and the nature of the pupil intake
- the number of pupils on roll and projected future numbers
- how the school is staffed, organised and managed
- the status of the school budget
- the contents of the school improvement plan
- the curriculum provided at the school
- the range of extra curricular activities on offer and the nature of any extended services
- the school policies
- how the school communicates with parents, other schools and the community
- the layout of the buildings, grounds, their suitability and state of repair

How Much Time Do Governor's Give?

A governor's term of office is usually for four years, but as a volunteer you can resign at any time. Previous governors can normally apply to be reappointed or re-elected if they wish to return and are still eligible.

Your main task is to attend meetings of the school governing body. Meetings of the full governing body normally take place once or twice each term and each committee normally meets once a term, but may meet more frequently. You should clarify with your governing body the time commitment required.

Governors also visit school (see page 14) as part of their role in monitoring and evaluation to observe practice, meet with staff and to familiarise themselves with the school. Governors are usually welcome, by invitation, to attend school performances, events and some staff training.

Am I Entitled to Any Time Off Work to Undertake My Duties as a Governor?

Under employment law, employers must give employees who are school governors "reasonable time off" to carry out their duties. The employee and employer have to agree on what is "reasonable time" off. Issues to be considered when arranging time off with your employer include:

- how much time is needed to carry out your governor duties
- whether the employee also has time off work for other activities
- the circumstances of the employer's business and the impact the employee's absence may have on it

Employers do not have to give time off with pay. The Department of Trade and Industry has an online guide relating to time off to undertake public duties (www.dti.gov.ph).

Help with Expenses

Many governing bodies have a governor allowances or expenses policy. Allowances/ expenses may include childcare expenses, support for governors whose first language is not English, telephone bills, photocopying, postage, travel and stationery. Contact your governing body to see if they have such a policy.

What Training and Support Will I Receive as a Governor?

Your governing body subscribes to the training programme presented by Gateshead Council and encourages all governors to enroll on courses relevant to governing body activity.

All new governors are strongly recommended to attend at least the induction course – details of which are published in the enclosed development directory.

Governors attending training courses are given an opportunity to report on the course at each governing body meeting.

Support includes:

- a Guide to the Law for School Governors (available from your school) and at www.governornet.co.uk
- the Local Authority training programme for governors (Development Directory enclosed), including training on Ofsted preparation, finance, staffing matters and monitoring and evaluation
- a National Induction Training Programme for New Governors (delivered by the LA, see enclosed Development Directory). It is strongly recommended that all new governors attend the three sessions of the National Training Programme for New Governors as this gives an excellent introduction to your new role
- newsletters and briefing material from the Local Authority
- information and support from colleagues in school
- [governornet \(www.governornet.co.uk\)](http://www.governornet.co.uk). An excellent website, with discussion facilities and up to date information on all aspects of governance

Who Can Become a School Governor?

Anyone can apply to be a school governor, however:

A governor must be aged 18 or over at the time of their election or appointment.

A person cannot hold more than one governorship at the same school.

A person is disqualified from holding or from continuing to hold office as a governor or associate member if they:

- are at any time during their period of office detained under the Mental Health Act 1983
- have failed to attend the governing body meetings for a continuous period of six months, beginning with the date of the first meeting they failed to attend, without the consent of the governing body (not applicable to ex officio governors)
- are bankrupt
- are subject to a disqualification order or disqualification undertaking under the Company Directors Act 1986, a disqualification order under Part 2 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, a disqualification undertaking accepted under the Company Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, or an order made under section 492(2)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986 (failure to pay under county court administration order)
- have been removed from the office of charity trustee or trustee for a charity by the Charity Commissioners or High Court on grounds of any misconduct or mismanagement, or under Section 7 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990 from being concerned in the management or control of any body
- are included in the list of teachers or workers prohibited or restricted from working with children or young people
- are disqualified from working with children
- are disqualified from being an independent school proprietor, teacher or employee by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills
- have received a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months (without the option of a fine) in the five years before becoming a governor or since becoming a governor
- have received a prison sentence of 2.5 years or more in the 20 years before becoming a governor
- have at any time received a prison sentence of five years or more
- have been fined for causing a nuisance or disturbance on school premises during the five years prior to or since appointment or election as a governor
- refuse an application being made to the Criminal Records Bureau for a criminal records certificate.

Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Check

This is primarily available to anyone involved in working with children or vulnerable adults. A CRB Disclosure shows current and spent convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings held on the Police National Computer. If the post involves working with children or vulnerable adults, the following may also be searched:

- Protection of Children Act (POCA) List
- Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) List
- Information that is held under Section 142 of the Education Act 2002 (formerly known as List 99)

As you are going to work as a volunteer for an organisation where your work will bring you into contact with children, you will be asked to apply for a CRB check.

It is the policy of Gateshead Council that a governor's appointment is subject to satisfactory clearance through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) procedure. Governors are checked at Standard Level.

No payment is required for your Disclosure Clearance. A CRB application form has been included in this pack for you to complete.

Along with your application form you are required to provide evidence to confirm your identity. Original copies of the evidence must be witnessed. Details of this process can be found in the enclosed covering letter.

A governor who refuses to undertake a CRB disclosure is disqualified from holding office.

Governing Body Meetings

Frequency, notice & duration of meetings

Clarify with your school how much time you will be expected to give, for example how frequent the governors meetings are.

You will usually be given a terms notice of the next full governing body meeting date. You should receive your papers seven days before the meeting. The papers set out details of the date, time and place.

Governing bodies must hold at least three governing body meetings per year. In practice they may need to meet more often. In addition, committees or working groups of governors also have to meet as necessary. At certain times of the

school year governors have particular business to settle, for example the budget or production of the school profile. These occasions are predictable, and so should be built into a planned schedule of meetings, which are set out at the start of the year. (See Annual Planner page 17).

Agenda

The agenda, which will be contained with your notification for the meeting, will list all the items that are to be discussed at the meeting. Consider the agenda carefully before the meeting and make notes where there are items of particular interest or importance to you or where you want to ask a question.

You have the right to request that an item be placed on the agenda by contacting the Chair or clerk a few weeks before the meeting.

If "Any Other Business" features on your agenda and you wish to raise an issue under this item you must discuss this with the Chair prior to the start of the meeting so the Chair can evaluate whether the meeting is an appropriate forum for the issue and can allow sufficient time for discussion.

Quorum

If a meeting of the governing body can not be held for a lack of a quorum (50% of current membership) or has to be terminated on that account before all agenda items have been completed, the clerk must convene a further meeting as soon as reasonably practicable. If the governing body decide to terminate the meeting before all agenda items have been completed, it must first fix the date and time for a further meeting at which the outstanding items will be considered and must direct the clerk to convene that meeting accordingly.

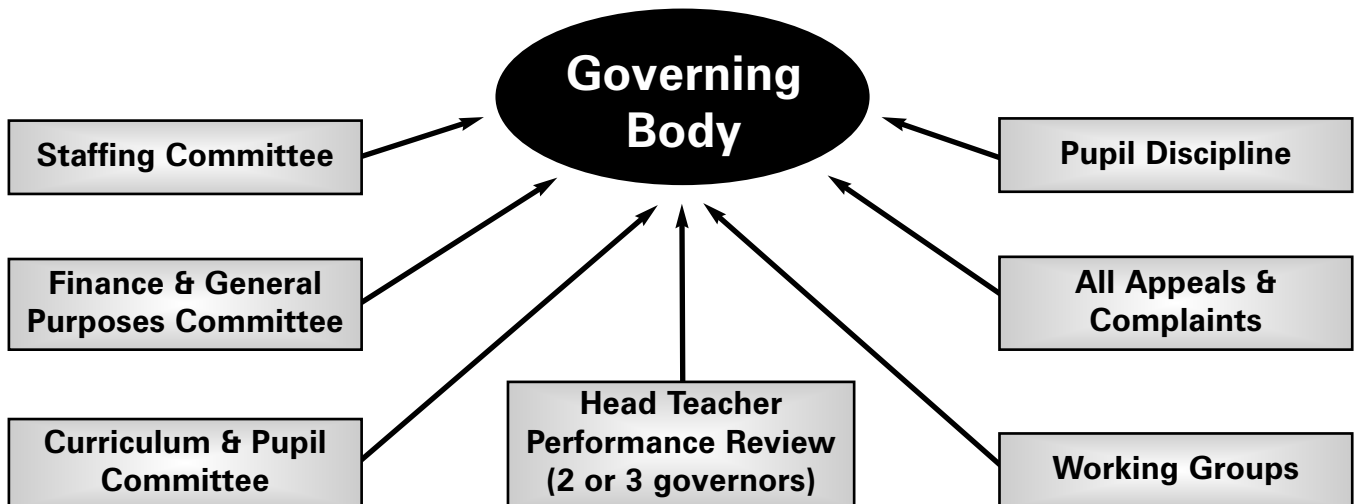
Governors need to consider the time and date of their meetings and their committees. They should take account of the personal commitments of individual governors. It is important that the timing should not always rule out a particular governors' attendance nor should be determined to suit the Head Teacher rather than the other governors.

Minutes

The clerk takes minutes of the meeting which are a record of what happens at that meeting. All governors receive a draft version of the minutes from the clerk and are given the opportunity to suggest amendments and raise matters arising at the next meeting. Once approved by the full governing body, the minutes are a public record.

General School Governing Body Structure

(Individual schools committees may differ)



Whilst each Committee has a specific area of responsibility the support of other committees may need to be sought before decisions can be actioned.

Financial Matters

Register of Pecuniary Interests

Governors and school staff have a responsibility to avoid any conflict between their business and personal interests and affairs and the interests of the school. One important means by which a school may demonstrate it is applying these principles is by maintaining a Register of Pecuniary Interests. Such a register must be maintained for governors and Head Teachers and must be freely available for inspection and reviewed annually or as and when an interest arises.

Responsibilities – Setting the Annual Budget

Your governing body is responsible for setting your school's annual budget. Most schools have a finance committee which reports to the full governing body. After governors and the schools management team have completed the strategic planning for the next year. It is usual practice for the finance committee to cost the plan and any options proposed. The finance committee will then report back to the full governing body with a detailed budget for consideration and approval.

Finance Committee

The finance committee is non-statutory and as such the governors are able to determine their individual requirements and to delegate the financial responsibilities if desired.

Where a finance committee has been set up, the governing body will define terms of reference for the committee and the extent of its delegated authority. The finance committee minutes should be reported to the governing body.

Committees created by the governing body can include members who are not governors. This may enable some schools with limited financial expertise on the governing body to invite suitably qualified individuals to serve on committees.

The requirement for meetings may vary between schools and throughout the year due to financial matters requiring the committee's attention, such as capital projects or the setting of the annual budget. In any event the finance committee should meet at least termly. The finance committee gives your governing body an on-going involvement in financial issues. It should arrange to meet frequently enough to discharge its responsibilities. All decisions made must be reported to the next meeting of the main governing body, usually via sufficiently detailed minutes.

Membership will be determined by your governing body, but should include your Head Teacher and people with financial expertise. If you do not have governors with appropriate financial expertise, your governing body may appoint non-governors to your finance committee.

Governors need to be aware of the Council's Confidential Reporting Policy (a copy of which is enclosed).

Financial Management Standard (FMSiS)

All schools must meet the Financial Management Standard by March 2008 (March 2007 for secondary schools).

As part of the requirements of the standard the school must assess how well equipped their finance committee are to deal with the schools financial business.

The guidance recommends that the members of the committee collectively display a set of competencies to enable them to effectively carry out their duties. A list of these competencies can be found at www.fmis.info (follow the link to toolkit index, resource documents, R20 Financial Management Competencies Matrix for School Governors).

Your Finance Committee has, at the very least, the following tasks to perform:

- preparation of draft budget
- appraising different expenditure options
- assessing expenditure bids
- forecasting rolls and expected income levels
- monitoring and adjusting in-year expenditure
- ensuring accounts are properly finalised at year end/reviewing outturn
- evaluating the effectiveness of financial decisions
- the administration of voluntary fund

Budget Monitoring

The governing body is an incorporated body. It is desirable for the governing body to ensure that it meets its statutory responsibilities in respect of the financial management of the school.

A governing body that has good financial management competencies will fulfil its financial roles and responsibilities by:

- Being a more effective "Critical Friend" to the Senior Management Team, especially the Head Teacher and the Bursar provide a clearer strategic lead on Financial Management issues.
- Ensuring the school is properly accountable for the financial aspects of its performance.
- Fulfilling its roles and responsibilities within the new Financial Management Standard (FMSiS)

As a result, the school is more likely to:

- deploy resources in line with its priorities
- achieve planned levels of financial performance
- be successful when bidding for additional funding
- receive favourable assessment from internal audit and OfSTED
- ensure value for money

The Productive Governing Body:

- works together as a group and makes decisions collectively as a team
- delegates
- takes reasoned decisions and follows them through
- holds meetings that are focused, a manageable length and achieves their aims
- supports the pupils, parents, staff and Head Teacher
- works closely with the Head Teacher

Be Prepared for a Meeting:

- read the papers before the meeting
- know who all the governors are (governors could be asked to wear name labels to help you)
- make sure you have all the necessary papers
- prepare your thoughts and questions before the meeting
- bring with you a pen, your diary and your annotated papers

Attendance

Any governor who, without permission, is absent from meetings of the full governing body for a continuous period of six months will cease to be a governor. If you need to offer apologies for a meeting this should be done through the Chair or the clerk in advance of the meeting with the reason for your absence noted.

Confidentiality

Governing body meetings are not open to the public. Visitors may attend by invitation but may be asked to leave if a confidential item is discussed.

Governors observe confidentiality regarding proceedings of the governing body in meetings and from their visits to school as governors. How an individual governor votes should always be regarded as confidential.

The minutes of any part of the meeting that are confidential should be kept separate. In the main confidential items will be those where the privacy of an individual needs to be respected.

Governors should exercise the greatest prudence if a discussion of a potentially contentious issue affecting the school arises outside the governing body.

The intention of the law is that governors should be accountable and business should be transparent with any confidential items being kept to a minimum.

Any old documents governors wish to dispose of should be shredded, given the sensitive nature of some of the information.

The Role of the Chair

The tasks of an effective Chair as listed by OfSTED.

Effective Chairs:

- give a clear lead in organising the governing bodies work, delegate and ensure other governors are fully involved
- manage meetings effectively
- keep other governors fully informed
- hold regular meetings with the Head Teacher
- co-operate with other agencies to support school improvement

The Chair has a pivotal role to play in helping the governing body work as a team. The Chair must have a clear view of the governing body and understand the shared visions for the school and know how that vision is to be achieved.

A Guide to the Law for School Governors

This is a quick reference guide to the law for governors.

Remember in the Guide to the Law:

- "Must" means law
- "Should" means strongly recommended
- "May" means the governing body's choice

Many responsibilities, where the governing body has the legal responsibility, are carried out by the Head Teacher and staff. The governing body needs to ensure they are happening; not necessarily perform them themselves.

Delegating some decision-making to the Head Teacher is very common and good practice. The governing body must agree what decisions will be delegated annually.

The Head Teacher has day-to-day responsibility for staff management and the running of the school. The Chair can take decisions in an absolute emergency but must report back to the governing body when this happens.

Top Tips for Governors in the First 12 Months

By Judy Burgess (Educational Consultant for Governance)

- don't bring up issues about your own children at governing body level
- consider the best interests of the school
- remember you are equal to all governors
- remember decision-making is corporate, bring your view, but abide by the corporate decision
- you have no power, responsibility or liability as an individual
- get to know your school, speak to the Head Teacher, the Chair and the clerk
- ask for a mentor governor as a first point of contact
- your volunteer status means getting summaries - don't allow governance to become a full-time job
- remember the governing body steers, the Head Teacher manages the rowing and the vessel
- if you are a member of a committee be familiar with its terms of reference
- find out about confidentiality
- don't be part of decision-making where a personal interest or occupation allows you to become biased - declare the interest and withdraw
- if you don't feel you have enough information to make a decision then say so - remember you can abstain
- prepare well for all meetings
- attend training where possible, ask about options including distance learning or online training from your Local Authority

Dealing with Parental Complaints

Handling complaints is not easy. Quite often it is a governor who parents turn to, in the first instance, when they have a particular concern about their child or a complaint about a member of staff in the school.

It is important to remember the following:

- be familiar with your school's complaints policy
- don't agree to solve the problem
- if parents approach you with clearly personal worries, then direct them through the proper channel - which is usually the Head Teacher
- if you receive a lot of complaints or comments on one particular issue, discuss this with the Chair and Head Teacher first
- the governing body meeting is not the place to bring up petty grumbles - you need to exercise good judgement
- never bypass the Head Teacher in any action you feel should be taken in response to a complaint
- remain impartial, do not offer an opinion
- a serious concern may be dealt with by the Complaints Committee if the Head Teacher cannot resolve the difficulty
- remember to pass on the nice things people say too!!

Visiting the School

All governors should visit the school during the working day and you should arrange an early introductory session with the Head Teacher.

There are two main reasons why Governors make visits to the school.

Firstly a new governor may visit to familiarise themselves with the school. A more experienced governor may visit to acquaint themselves with changes to the school or re familiarise themselves if they have not visited for a while.

The second main reason is a focused visit which is part of the governors "monitoring" role.

The governor's role is that of a "critical friend" not an inspector and a visit should be used to learn about the school but not to make judgments about the professional expertise of teachers.

What do we mean by "monitoring"?

Governors need to see that the National Curriculum is being delivered and that the pupils are receiving the best possible education. The governors' role is to concentrate on an "overview" of the development of the school, and not to get too tied

up with the detail which is the business of the staff in their day-to-day teaching.

How do governors do this?

Governors select an area to monitor for a period of time – usually related to a priority on the School Improvement Plan (SIP), and follow the protocol set out for governor visits to school.

What should a governor expect from a visit?

Visits allow the governor to become familiar with the school at work, and to get to know the children (not individually but in a class situation). It allows the governor to observe teaching taking place, so when the governors receive reports, and discussions take place, the governor sees things in the context of the school.

Visits should be viewed by the governor as adding to their personal bank of knowledge, which at some time may be brought forward to contribute to a discussion or evaluation at a meeting of a committee or of the full governing body.

Before the visit

- clarify a focus for the visit. This may be suggested by the governing body
- agree an appropriate time to visit with the members of staff involved and the Head Teacher

During the visit

- try to relax and enjoy yourself
- observe discreetly
- do not intervene, only get involved in activities when invited
- do not monopolise the teacher's time
- show an interest and ask questions but never comment on the teacher's conduct or on individual pupils
- do not allow yourself to become an instrument to advance a particular issue
- do not express your own opinions when pressed on controversial issues

After the visit

- discuss your observations with the relevant member of staff as soon as possible
- make notes when the visit is still fresh in your mind
- never include comments about individual children
- remember monitoring staff performance is the role of the Head Teacher and not the governor
- prepare a draft report of your observations and share this with the member of staff and Head Teacher
- prepare a **short** final written report to be circulated to the governing body before the next meeting (your governing body may already have a standard proforma/report template for completion following a visit)

Gateshead Governor Support Services

Generic Code of Conduct for Governing Bodies

This code of conduct is produced as a guide for governing bodies who wish to establish a governors' code of conduct.

Introduction

The following is not a definitive statement of responsibilities but is concerned with the common understanding of broad principles by which the Governing Body and individual governors will operate.

The governing body accepts the following principles and procedures:-

General

1. We have responsibility for determining, monitoring and keeping under review the broad policies, plans and procedures within which the school operates.
2. We recognise that our Head Teacher is responsible for the implementation of policy, management of the school and the implementation and operation of the curriculum.
3. We accept that all governors have equal status, and although appointed by different groups (i.e. parents, staff, LEA) our overriding concern will be the welfare of the school as a whole.
4. We have no legal authority to act individually, except when the governing body has given us delegated authority to do so.
5. We have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfill all the legal expectations as, or on behalf of, the employer.
6. We treat each other and all the school community with courtesy and respect and will demonstrate honesty and discretion in matters relating to the governing body.
7. We will encourage transparent government and shall be seen to be doing so.
8. We will consider carefully how our decision may affect other schools.

Commitment

9. We acknowledge that accepting office as a governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
10. We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the governing body, attend meetings regularly and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.
11. We will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
12. We will strive to improve our effectiveness as governors through training and other developmental activities.

Relationships

13. We will strive to work as a team.
14. We will seek to develop effective working relationships with our Head Teacher, staff, parents, the LEA, other relevant agencies and the community.

Confidentiality

15. We will observe confidentiality regarding proceedings of the governing body in meetings and from our visits to school as governors.
16. We will observe complete confidentiality when required or asked to do so by the governing body, especially regarding matters concerning individual staff or students.
17. We will exercise the greatest prudence if a discussion of a potentially contentious issue affecting the school arises outside the governing body.

Conduct

18. We will encourage the open expression of views at meetings, but accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the governing body or its delegated agents. This means we will not speak out **against** decisions, in public or private, outside the governing body.
19. We will only speak or act on behalf of the governing body when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
20. In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school we will follow the procedures established by the governing body.
21. Our visits to school will be undertaken within the framework established by the governing body, in agreement with the Head Teacher and staff.
22. In discharging our duties we will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school.

Suspension

23. If the need arises to use the sanction of suspending a governor, we will do so by following the Procedures Regulations so as to ensure a fair and objective process.

Removal

24. We recognise that removing a governor from office is a last resort, and that it is the appointing bodies which have the power to remove those they appoint.
25. If the need arises to use the sanction of removing a governor, we will do so by following the Constitution Regulations so as to ensure a fair and objective process.

The Governing Body Annual Planner

Given the responsibilities of governing bodies it is important that the governing body plans its actions in advance to ensure statutory tasks are not overlooked and are completed in good time.

Included is a suggested plan for governing body activities for an academic year.

Each term is broken down into suggested core agenda items for full governing body and committee meetings. Governing bodies can remove and add items, as they deem necessary. The full governing body can still consider items delegated to a committee.

A model agenda for the full governors' meeting is generally drafted by the LA in conjunction with the Chair and Head Teacher.

Autumn Term

Autumn Term Full Governing Body

- Apologies
- Election of Chair
- Election of Vice Chair
- Review Committee Terms of Reference & Membership & Appointment of Clerk
- Review Governor Monitoring Links
- Minutes & Matters Arising
- Committee Reports
- Governor Monitoring Reports
- Head Teacher's Report
- Agree Staffing Structure
- Annual Register of Business Interests
- Agree Pupil Performance Targets (can be delegated)
- Receive Results (unless completed in the summer term)
- School Improvement Plan
- Annual Planner for Governors (focus of monitoring visits and annual plan of visits and focus for the year for governors), optional but recommended.
- Policy Review
- Dates & Times of Future Meetings
- Governor Training
- Staff Development /School Closure Dates
- LA Reports
- Any Other Business

Autumn Term Committee Meetings

Staffing Committee

- Review Performance Management Policy
- Feedback on Performance Management for the Head Teacher
- Annual Pay Review - Review salaries for Head and Deputy Head Teacher

Finance & General Purposes Committee

- Review Pay Policy
- Review individual school range
- Annual review of lettings
- Receive information on trigger/claw back

Premises & Health & Safety Committee

- Receive health and safety report

Curriculum & Pupils Committee

- Agree policy review cycle
- Review policies in accordance with agreed cycle (including school charging policy)
- Consider proposed targets or agree if so delegated

Spring Term

Spring Term Full Governing Body

- Apologies
- Committee Reports
- Annual Progress Report (APR)
- Minutes & Matters Arising
- Governor Monitoring Reports
- Head Teacher's Report
- School Improvement Plan
- Progress Towards Targets
- Approve Budget and Service Level Agreements
- Preparation of the School Prospectus & School Profile
- Policy Review
- Dates & Times of Future Meetings
- Governor Training
- Staff Development/School Closure Dates
- LA Business
- Any Other Business

Spring Term Committee Meetings

Staffing Committee

- Annual pay review
- Appraisal arrangements for staff
- Review staff and governor development against School Improvement Plan

Finance & General Purposes Committee

- Review pupil number forecast
- Prepare indicative/final budget
- Consider SLAs

Premises & Health & Safety Committee

- Organise annual health and safety visit
- Receive health and safety report

Curriculum & Pupils Committee

- Review home/school contract & Parent handbook (or in summer)
- Review school prospectus
- Receive School Improvement Plan
- Review policies in accordance with agreed cycle

Summer Term

Summer Term Full Governing Body

- Apologies
- Minutes & Matters Arising
- Committee Reports
- Governor Monitoring Reports
- Head Teacher's Report
- Approve Budget and Service Level Agreements (unless done in Spring Term)
- GB Self Review and Action Plan
- School Improvement Plan
- Review SATs and other results
- Policy Review & Approval of Prospectus
- Dates & Times of Future Meetings
- Governor Training
- Staff Development/School Closure Dates
- LA Business
- Any Other Business

Summer Term Committee Meetings

Staffing Committee

- Review staff performance management arrangements

Finance & General Purposes Committee

- Review delegated spending limits
- Complete asset management plan
- Consider outturn
- Approve disposal of obsolete resources

Premises & Health and Safety Committee

- Receive health and safety report

Curriculum & Pupils Committee

- Review policies in accordance with agreed cycle
- Review home school agreement and parent handbook (unless completed in the spring term)
- Draft the School Profile

Useful Contact Information for Governors

Governor Support Team - How To Contact Us

Senior Governor Support Officer

Jacqueline Ridley Telephone 433 8624

Governor Support Officers/Clerks

Kim Bosomworth 433 8625

Leone Buchanan 433 8627

Nicola Dinning 433 8626

Debbie Todd 433 8627

Carole Todhunter 433 8625

Administration

Yvonne McClelland 433 8628

Karen Patterson 433 8628

Jayne Rayne 433 8628

Fax: 491 1394

Email: *Insert name of person* @gateshead.gov.uk

Useful Websites

www.dfes.gov.uk	Department for Education and Skills
www.governornet.co.uk	Governornet
www.ngc.org.uk	National Governors' Association
www.ofsted.gov.uk	OFSTED
www.qca.org.uk	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
www.nagm.org.uk	National Association of Governors and Managers
www.ngc.org.uk	National Governors Council
www.gateshead.gov.uk	Gateshead Council
Governor Line (0800 722 181)	a free telephone helpline service for governors

Useful Terms and Abbreviations

A	Admission limit	the maximum number of pupils intended to be admitted into any year of a school
	AEN	Additional Educational Needs. A wider term than SEN, attempting to recognise additional needs
	ACE	Advisory Centre for Education. A non profit making campaigning body, which provides educational advice to parents and others
	Aided schools	schools set up by a voluntary body, usually a church body. The governing body employs the staff and controls pupil admissions and the religious education
	AMP	Asset Management Plan
	Appeals	parents have the right of appeal against decisions relating to admission to schools, special educational provision and exclusion from school
	Appraisal	the periodic reviewing of staff to identify their future needs in terms of training and staff development generally
	APR	Annual Performance Review
	AQA	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. The largest examining board in the UK
	AST	Advanced Skills Teacher
	Attainment target	the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils are expected to have by the end of each national curriculum key stage
	AT	Attainment Target
	AWPU	age weighted people unit. The sum of money allocated to the school for each pupil according to age. This is the basic unit of funding for the school

B	Ballot	a method of voting, usually secret.
	Baseline assessment	assessment of pupils' attainment on entry
	Benchmarking	the technique which permits the comparison of data between schools or different departments and schools to allow performance to be assessed
	Best value	replaces compulsory competitive tendering and confirms the need for all council services to be efficient, cost effective and responsive to client needs
	BEST	Behaviour and Education Support Teams
	BIP	Behaviour Improvement Programme
	Budget share	the amount schools receive through the formula and for which the governing body has delegated responsibility under the local management of school (LMS)

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BSF	building schools for the future. A 10 to 15 year programme for the rebuilding or refurbishing of schools
BV	Best Value



C

CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CC	Children’s Centre
Capital expenditure	spending on building projects and large items of equipment
Casting vote	an additional vote to be used by the chair when an equal number of votes are cast
Child protection governor	the governor who oversees child protection
Clerk	the person appointed to carry out administrative duties to the governing body such as preparing the agenda, managing meetings and dealing with correspondence. The clerk advises the governing body on legal and procedural matters
Collective worship	a single act of worship for all pupils required to take place in maintained schools
Community School	school maintained by the local authority
Community special school	special schools maintained by the local authority
Connexions	service providing advice, guidance and personal development opportunities for all young people aged 13 to 19 in England
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau. A organisation created to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse by identifying unsuitable employees and volunteers working with these vulnerable groups
CEA	Cambridge Education Associates
CLC	City Learning Centre
COGS	Co-ordinators of Governor Services
Croner	an organisation which produces a school governors’ manual. Governing bodies can subscribe to this organisation and receive the manual and regular updates
CPD	continuing professional development
CVA	contextual value added
CYPP	children and young people’s plan

D	DDA	disability discrimination act
	Delegated budget	money which governing bodies can use to their discretion
	Delegated powers	committee or the Head Teacher permitted to take action on behalf of the governing body
	DFES	Department for Education and Skills
	Devolved capital funding	funding allocated to schools specifically for large capital projects
	Directed Time	time when a teacher must be available to carry out duties, including attending staff and parents meetings under the direction of the Head Teacher

E	EBD	emotional and behavioural difficulties
	ECM	Every Child Matters
	EDP	education development plan
	EWO	education welfare officer
	Ex officio	an individual who is able to attend meetings by virtue of holding a particular office
	Exclusion	pupils removed from schools for serious misconduct, either for a fixed period or permanent
	Extended services	a range of services or activities offered before or after the normal school day for the pupils, families and wider community

F	FE	Further Education
	FTE _x	Fixed Term Exclusion
	FOI	Freedom of Information
	Foundation governor	a governor appointed by the founding body of a voluntary controlled or voluntary aided school
	Foundation stage	curriculum followed by children below statutory school age, in schools and nursery/pre-school provision
	FSM	free school meals
	FTE	full-time equivalent

G	GCSE	general certificate of secondary education. A public examination usually taken by students at 16
	GNVQ	general national vocational qualification
	GTC	general teaching council

H	H&S	health and safety
	HE	higher education
	HLTA	higher level teaching assistant
	HMI	her majesty's inspector
	HMCI	her majesty's chief inspector
	HSE	health and safety executive

I	IBP	Individual Behaviour Plan
	ICT	information and communications technology
	IEP	individual education plan, drawn up for children with special needs
	IIP	Investors in People
	IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
	INSET	in service education and training for staff
	Instrument of government	the legal document setting out the composition of the governing body
	ISR	individual school range
	ITT	initial teacher training

J	JAR	Joint Area Review
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K	KS	Key Stage - the national curriculum is divided into four key stages, key stage one pupils aged five to seven, key stage two aged seven to 11, key stage three 11 to 14 and key stage four aged 14 to 16
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L	LA	Local Authority
	LAC	Looked After Children
	LEA	Local Education Authority
	LMS	Local Management of Schools where schools manage their own budgets
	LSA	Learning Support Assistant
	LSC	Learning and Skills Council

M	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
	MAT	Multi-Agency Team
	Mixed ability	teaching group in which children of all abilities are taught together
	MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulty
	MPS	Main Pay Scale
	MSB	Mainstream Support Base

N	NAHT	National Association of Head Teachers
	NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers
	National curriculum	the curriculum required by law to be taught in all schools. The governing body shares with the LA and the Head Teacher the responsibility of ensuring that it is implemented
	NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
	NGA	National Governors Association
	NGFL	National Grid for Learning
	NRT	National Remodelling Team
	NRwS	New Relationship with School
	Notice to improve	OfSTED judgement
	NPOH	National Professional Qualification for Head Teachers
	NTA	Non-Teaching Assistant
	NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
	NUT	national union of teachers
	NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
.....		
O	OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education. The body which arranges and sets education standards
.....		
P	PANDA	performance and assessment data
	PFI	Private Finance Initiative
	PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
	PI	Performance Indicators
	PIVATS	performance indicators the value added target setting
	PLASC	Pupil Level Annual School Census
	PM	performance management
	PoCA	Protection of Children Act
	PPA	planning, preparation and assessment time for teachers (10% guaranteed non-contact time)
	Prospectus	information about an individual school. Must be published annually
	PRU	pupil referral unit
.....		
Q	QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
	QTS	qualified teacher status
	Quorum	the minimum number of members at a meeting for decisions to be made

R	RA	record of achievement
	RAISE	Reporting and Analysis for Improvement Through School Self-Evaluation
	RE	religious education
	Risk assessment	assessment of the risks to health and safety pupils and staff are exposed to whilst undertaking specific activities
.....		
S	SAT's	standard attainment tasks used to assess attainment at the end of key stages of the national curriculum
	School profile	an online report to parents
	SCITT	School Centred Initial Teacher Training
	SDP/SIP	school development plan/school improvement plan
	SEF	self-evaluation form
	SEN	special educational needs
	SENCO	special educational needs coordinator. The teacher responsible for coordinating SEN provision in the school
	Secondments	the release of staffing on a temporary basis for work elsewhere
	SIMS	schools information management system. A computer software package to assist with managing information on pupils, staff and resources
	SIP	School Improvement Partner
	SLA	service level agreement
	SLD	severe learning difficulty
	SMT	senior management team
	SOC	school organisation committee
	Special measures	a school which, when inspected has failed to provide an acceptable standard of education
	Special school	a school for children and young people whose needs cannot be met in a mainstream school
	Stakeholders	person or group of people with an interest in a particular organization, for example a school, stakeholders being parents, staff, pupils, governors, the community etc
	Supply teacher	a teacher who works in the school on a temporary basis to cover staff absence
.....		
T	TDA	teaching and development agency
	TLR's	teaching and learning responsibilities
	TTA	teacher training agency

U	Unauthorised absence	absence by pupils from school which is not otherwise authorised
	UPS	upper pay scale
.....		
V	VA	voluntary aided. Schools set up by and owned by a voluntary body usually the church body largely financed by the local authority. The governing body employs staff, controls pupil admissions and religious education
	Value-added	the progress schools help pupils make relative to their individual starting points
	Voluntary controlled	usually a denominational school maintained by the local authority with certain residual rights regarding religious worship
	Virement	the transfer of certain sums of money from one budget heading to another



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