

OVERVIEW FOR NEW OR PROSPECTIVE GOVERNORS OF RESPONSIBILITIES

This booklet gives an overview of a governor's responsibilities. If after reading this you are considering becoming a school governor, please refer to page 4 on what to do next.

What we hope you will get out of being a Governor

- the knowledge that you are helping schools and pupils
- the satisfaction of giving something back to the community
- a sense of purpose and achievement
- new skills which may be useful elsewhere
- broader horizons
- new friends and workmates
- training and support in order to help you fulfil your duties and responsibilities

What we hope you can offer

- time (research shows that most governors give an average of five to six hours per month for meetings, reading documents, visiting the school and attending training)
- commitment
- a willingness to learn
- a listening ear and an enquiring mind
- the ability to assimilate information, make judgements and take decisions
- flexibility
- tact
- ability to work as part of a team



Despite the age of the following quotation, these qualities for governorship still apply:

**"A general zeal for education breadth of view, business habits
administrative ability and the power of working harmoniously with others
tact, interest in schoolwork, a sympathy for the teachers and the scholars
residence in reasonable proximity to the school."**

Qualities needed for "School Manager" Royal Commission 1888

Responsibilities

Governors are appointed to provide

- strong links between the school and the community it serves
- a wide experience of the outside world
- an independent view
- a visible form of accountability for the headteacher and staff of the school
- a team focusing on long term development and improvement
- accountability to the community for the use of resources and the standards of teaching and learning in the school
- support for the headteacher and staff.

School governors are expected to



- attend the regular and special meetings of the governing body – there must be at least one meeting each term
- work as a member of the governing body (not as an individual) in the best interests of the school
- show an interest in school activities
- become well-informed about education in general and about their school in particular
- become familiar with the rules of school governance
- attend necessary training courses.

In addition, individual governors will usually be involved in some of the following activities often through groups or committees who report back to the main body

- staff appointments
- the financial management of the school
- pupil discipline
- the curriculum
- the Parents' Annual Meeting and contributing to the Governors Report
- community link

Governing bodies are the strategic planners of schools

In order to do this a governing body

- employs others to carry out the work
- has an operational manager (the headteacher) who is responsible for the day to day management of the school
- agrees policies and practice which allows the headteacher the necessary tools to carry out his/her responsibilities
- agrees targets for improvement
- acts as the critical friend of the school and headteacher
- receives and discusses reports on the resulting practice and conduct of the school
- reviews its own working practices
- holds an annual meeting of parents and sends out an annual report.



Decisions of the governing body are made in formal meetings, either with the full governing body, or in committees if their terms of reference allow.

All governing bodies have committees which

- carry out tasks specifically given to them by the governing body
- aid the work of the governing body
- report back to the governing body

The number of committees depends on the governing body and its needs.

All governors, once appointed, share the responsibilities and work as a team

- Individuals are part of the corporate governing body
- Duties are carried out as part of the team
- Governors are not legally liable as individuals.

Principles of Working as a Governor and as a Governing Body

Governors, once appointed, are holders of public office, and should be prepared to work to the same principles as any paid public official. This is true both as an individual and as a whole governing body.



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 obligations 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 interest 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. (The Seven Principles of Public Life from the *Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life* - The Nolan Committee CM3270 - 1 May 1996)

Supporting Our Governors

All schools have a governing body whose job it is to work with the headteacher, the local education authority and the Diocese for church schools, to ensure that the pupils receive the best possible education at that establishment.

Governing bodies can vary in size from nine to twenty governors, but they all have the same requirement - to work together with the headteacher in agreeing the aims and conduct of the school, ensuring that the pupils have a full entitlement to the agreed curriculum and managing the school within its allocated budget. There are regulations within which the governing body must work.

These are laid down by central government (Education Acts and Regulations) and the local authority (Instruments of Government and Schemes of Financial Management).

All schools receive support from the local authority and have a Link Adviser who takes a particular interest in the conduct and achievement of the school. The adviser is a regular visitor to the school and may attend governing body meetings when specific information is required.

The adviser also provides written reports to the school which, together with the headteacher's termly report and the annual tests, assessments and examinations, assist the governing body in knowing how the school is performing against specific targets and helps the governing body to set further targets for improvement.

Information and advice is readily available from the City Council's School Governor Services. This team also organises and delivers a training programme which is paid for by the school's training grant.

There is a special course for new governors, courses on specific topics and courses for different types of governors. Courses are offered during the day and the evening to accommodate individual commitments.

- The government's Department for Children, Schools & Families (DfCSF) (www.governornet.co.uk) provides Guidance and many other useful publications.
- National organisations such as The National governors' Association (NGA) (www.ngc.org.uk) and the Advisory Centre for Educate (ACE) (www.ace-ed.org.uk) offer information and advice. They also represent the views of the country's governors to central government.
- At a local level the Liverpool Governors' Forum (www.livgovforum.org.uk) provides a platform for discussion and mutual assistance as well as representing Liverpool's governing bodies at national level.



INTERESTED?

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NOW

If you think you have some of the qualities that are needed and would like to take matters further, please contact School Governor Services, Gina Smith, Clerk to Governors at Broughton Hall High School on 0151 228 3622 for advice and information.

Please also visit the Liverpool Local Authority Website (www.liverpool.gov.uk). To access the page for school governors:

Select: A – Z

> S

> School Governors

Any information you can give about your interests, skills and expertise, will be extremely useful. This should not be restricted to paid employment, and should include voluntary work, hobbies and any clubs and societies to which you belong or have belonged.

Safeguarding Checks

It is important that appropriate checks are made on anybody involved in a school to prevent unsuitable people from gaining access to pupils.

Prospective governors may be required to undergo background checks, including a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure, as part of the appointment/election process. Refusal to do this incurs automatic disqualification from being a governor.

More information on this matter can be obtained from the website of the Criminal Records Bureau (www.crb.gov.uk).

And Finally.....

- No one governor is expected to know it all.
- The strength of a governing body lies in its ability to attract and rely upon members from a wide variety of backgrounds, share out the duties amongst its members, and be able to take decisions as a group.
- No one governor is responsible for the governing body, not even the chair.
- All governors share the responsibility of making the governing body effective and efficient by setting the remit of the body and its committees, being well-informed and attending the meetings.



The role of the school governor is to

- support the school, but not uncritically
- explain its policies to parents and the community, but not blindly
- watch its standards, but with care, humility and an open mind
- help settle its disputes fairly and conscientiously
- oversee its policies and its use of the resources, but not in tiresome detail.

But you should do these things as a governing body, not as an individual governor, and in all such matters you should act with knowledge and understanding of the school.