

Induction Booklet

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Introduction

In becoming a school governor, you are taking on one of the most important and valuable roles in education – the strategic leadership of a school. To help you understand your role, you will be given a good deal of information. It is important that you don't feel swamped by this, but see it as background and reference to help you fulfil your undertaking.

The headteacher of the school and officers of the local authority (LA) can provide professional advice and support. Governors can develop their own knowledge through training schemes and other materials available locally and nationally.

Wiltshire County Council offer:

- New Governor training seminars on a regular basis at different locations around the county
- information available on the South West Grid for Learning website
- an A-Z Guide for Governors
- access to cluster training and a programme of courses

Induction

Some principles

- induction should be seen as an investment, leading to more effective governance and retention of governors
- it should be welcoming, informative and helpful in getting a feel for the roles and responsibilities of the governing body
- it should promote the partnership between governing bodies, teachers, parents, pupils and the local education authority (where appropriate)
- it might offer a generic introduction which leads on to specific areas of responsibility

As a new governor it is reasonable to expect

- an informal, friendly talk with the headteacher, followed by a more extended visit and tour of the school – in the working day, if possible
- a phone call from the chair, welcoming you and giving an update on current issues
- a governor mentor, starting with a cup of tea and a chat. He or she accompanies you to the first meeting and lends helpful books and materials

Ideally at your first meeting

- the Chair introduces all governors, informally, including brief background details
- governors wear name badges
- the Chair or your mentor explain all acronyms and jargon and explain the context of each major agenda item
- you might be asked to join a committee with the reassurance that there is no expectation that you will play a leading role just yet

What do you need to know?

Some or all of the following documents could be included:

- a plan of the school
- a list of staff and their responsibilities
- an events calendar
- recent school newsletters
- a prospectus
- the school profile

- the school development plan
- the school mission/vision statement
- OFSTED report
- an induction pack or programme
- guidelines on visiting the school
- calendar of governors' meetings, inc. committees
- brief description of how meetings are conducted
- outlines of current issues relating to e.g. personnel, curriculum, finances, premises
- where to get help
- description of committees with associated terms of reference
- summary of school policies
- summary of the FMSiS
- A-Z Guide for Governors
- A Guide to the Law for School Governors

Once you become a governor, fellow governors, teachers and the headteacher will be a great source of support to you. Governors can learn a lot by visiting the school and talking with the staff and pupils.

What if you're not offered any induction?

Try one or more of the following:

- Ask the Chair when your induction is going to start
- Seek out a mentor from among the newer governors
- Write an induction policy for your governing body and seek their endorsement of it

What is a governor?

Someone who is part of the largest volunteer group in the country for a start!

What do they do?

The purpose of the governing body is to help the school to provide the best possible education for its pupils. They set the school aims and policies together with the head. The head is responsible for day-to-day management. Governors have responsibilities in such areas as curriculum, finance, personnel and special educational needs. No individual governor has any power unless delegated by the governing body. The governing body as a whole is responsible for any decisions made.

What kind of people are governors?

It's a common misconception that all governors are 'professionals'. Although governing bodies do find it helpful to have governors with skills in particular areas (e.g. finance or management skills) most members are 'ordinary' members of the public.

Who cannot be a governor?

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

- is detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 during their period of office
- fails to attend the governing body meetings – without the consent of the governing body – for a continuous period of six months, beginning with the date of the first meeting missed (not applicable to ex-officio governors)
- is subject to a bankruptcy restriction order or an interim order
- has had their estate sequestrated and the sequestration order has not been discharged, annulled or reduced
- is 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
- an order made under section 492(2)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986 (failure to pay under county court administration order)
- has 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 34 of the Charities and Trustees Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 from participating in the management or control of any body
- is included in the list of people considered by the Secretary of State as unsuitable to work with children
 - is disqualified from working with children or subject to a direction under section 142 of the Education Act 2002
 - is disqualified from registration for childminding or providing day care
 - Is disqualified from registration under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006
 - has 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
 - has received a prison sentence of 2.5 years or more in the 20 years before becoming a governor
 - has at any time received a prison sentence of five years or more
 - has 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
 - refuses to allow an application to the Criminal Records Bureau for a criminal records certificate.

What type of governor could I be?

The make up of a governing body is determined by the stakeholder principle. This means that key groups of people with an interest in the school are represented fairly. The governing body can change the number of governors within set limits, but must always observe the proper proportions of each stakeholder group. The composition of governing bodies is shown in the Instrument of Government for each school. Visit www.sgoss.org.uk/indgovtypes.htm for information about different categories of governor. Governors are appointed for a period of between 1 and 4 years (usually 4 years).

Liability

Although being a school governor may at first seem a heavy responsibility, you need to remember that an individual governor has no responsibility or power unless it is delegated to that individual by the governing body. The governing body is a corporate body of which you are a part. Personal claims against school governors are very rare indeed. Governors acting honestly, reasonably and within their powers will not incur personal liability.

Responsibilities

Governors' responsibilities are detailed in *A Guide to the Law for School Governors (DCSF 2007)*.

The main areas of responsibility are :

- the curriculum
- children with special educational needs (SEN) and other vulnerable children
- the school budget
- staffing
- admissions (in some categories of school)
- equal opportunities
- discipline and attendance
- providing information
- inspection
- health, safety and welfare
- control and community use of school premises
- organisational changes to the school

Governors should act at all times with honesty and integrity and be ready to explain their actions and decisions to staff, pupils, parents and anyone with a legitimate interest in the school.

'A Guide to the Law for School Governors', Chapter 3 DfES 2007 should be referred to for a full explanation of the responsibilities of governing bodies. Please note that regular updates for this publication will be produced online only. Visit www.governor.net.co.uk/gttl to download the full document and the amendments.

Roles

Three key roles

Governing Bodies' responsibilities make best sense in the context of their three key roles:

Provide a strategic view

- focus on the future
- decide what they want the school to achieve
- set the strategic framework for getting there
- set suitable aims and objectives
- agree policies, targets and priorities
- contribute to, monitor and evaluate the school's strategic and development plans
- leave the day to day management of the school to the head

A critical (or candid) friend

Offers:

- support
- constructive advice
- a sounding board for ideas
- a second opinion on proposals
- help where needed

Should also:

- challenge
- ask questions
- seek information
- improve proposals
- seek to arrive at best solution for all

Ensure accountability

- the governing body is responsible for ensuring good quality education in the school
- it has the right to discuss, question and refine proposals while always respecting the professional roles of the head and other staff and their responsibilities for the management of the school
- in its turn, it is accountable to parents and the wider community for its actions and the school's overall performance

Roles of Clerk, Chair and Head

Clerk to the Governors

Every governing body must appoint a clerk. Clerks organise and minute meetings, maintain records of membership, attendance and appointments and should also advise the governors on constitutional issues, statutory duties and powers. Governors, associate members and the head cannot be appointed as clerk to the governing body.

Chair of Governors

The chair is elected for a period of one to four years by the governors. The chair leads the governing body and should ensure that it fulfils all its statutory responsibilities. A good chair will build an effective team, ensuring that all governors participate fully in meetings and committees and developing their knowledge, confidence and skills. He or she needs to have a close, supportive, though not exclusive relationship with the head.

The vice-chair acts as chair when the chair is unavailable, and assumes the role of chair if the current chair resigns between meetings. Chairs and vice-chairs should decide between themselves how the workload is divided between them according to individual areas of interest and expertise. Governors who are paid to work at the school cannot be elected as chair or vice chair.

Head

In a well-managed school, the headteacher and governing body work in close partnership. The head has responsibility for the internal organisation, management and control of the school and for implementation of the strategic framework established by the governing body. Governors are not expected to be involved in the detail of the day-to-day management of the school: that is for the head. A good governing body will delegate enough powers to allow the head to perform his/her management duties as effectively as possible. The head must report to the governing body regularly on how those delegated powers have been exercised.

Examples:

Area of responsibility	Governing Body	Head
Policies	Agree	Implements
Performance Management of head	Set objectives and review head's progress against them	Meets or fails to meet objectives
Appointments	Appoint head	Appoints other staff

The head is automatically a governor unless he/she informs the clerk at the first meeting of the school year that he/she does not wish to serve as a governor.

Meetings

Full governing body meetings

- There must be at least 3 full meetings each school year
- The governing body, the chair or any 3 governors can call an extra meeting
- The procedure for electing chair and vice chair shall be determined by the governing body to include the period of office (between 1 and 4 years). An employee of the school, associate member or a pupil at the school is not permitted to be chair or vice chair of the full governing body
- The Director, Department for Children and Education (or representative) has the right to attend all meetings to do with staff selection and dismissal in community schools
- The governing body decides who else may attend its meetings
- A governor can become disqualified from holding office on the governing body if, without the consent of the governing body, they fail to attend a full governing body meeting for a continuous period of 6 months starting from the date of the first meeting they failed to attend. Clerks are responsible for recording whether an absent governor(s)' apologies (if offered) are accepted by the governors present, at each meeting

Before

- Written notice of a meeting, the agenda and any associated papers should be sent to governors 7 clear days in advance. When urgent action is needed the chair may determine that a shorter time scale is necessary

During

- A decision can only be taken if one-half (rounded up) of current membership is present
- Where there is equal division of votes the chair (or acting chair) has a casting vote
- The head and clerk have the right to attend all meetings of the governing body and its committees unless it is to discuss possible disciplinary action against them or their pay

After

- The clerk shall ensure that minutes are drawn up and signed (subject to the approval of the governing body) by the chair of the next meeting

- As soon as is reasonably practicable after the meeting, the agenda, papers considered and minutes of the governors' meeting must be made available for persons wishing to inspect them

Governors' meetings are well organised and effective when

- there is a clear programme of meetings throughout the year
- meetings start and end on time and are purposeful
- the agenda and relevant papers are sent out well in advance
- the chair manages the meeting effectively and encourages the participation of others
- there is a balance between presentation, discussion and decision making
- the clerk has been trained and understands the role
- the minutes are clear, accurate and include actions and who is responsible for carrying them out and are sent out promptly

Committee meetings

- the governing body decides its own committee structure, timings of the meetings and terms of reference of those committees – this is contained within your Scheme of Delegation. See Governor Services' guidance: 'Working Together – getting it right' (Jan 07)
- an employee of the school or an associate member is permitted to be chair or vice chair of a committee.

Time and commitment

There are no laid down expectations but governors would be required to attend meetings (there are a minimum of 3 full governing body meetings per school year), read important papers, attend training and occasionally visit the school when it is open. Recent national research suggests governors devote around 60 hours per annum to this role. The standard term of office for a school governor is four years.

Training is not compulsory, but all governors, however experienced, need training to improve their effectiveness in the role and to keep abreast of developments that may affect their school and their role as governor. The Local Authority provides a portfolio of training that governors can access to help them carry out their duties effectively, and it is provided free of charge to the individual governor.

Governors are entitled to time off from work to carry out their role. Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 requires employers to permit employees who hold certain public positions **reasonable** time off to perform the duties associated with them. The employee and employer have to agree on what is reasonable time off. While there is nothing to prevent an employer from making payment to an employee for time off for public duties, there is no obligation for payment to be made.

Visit this site for a fact sheet about reasonable time off for public duties:

<http://www.governornet.co.uk/linkAttachments/Time%20off%20for%20Public%20Duties.doc>

PTA

The role of a Parent Teacher Association/Friends Association is to work in partnership with the school to help provide a wide range of events and activities for children and their families to enjoy. They may also raise funds to support the development of areas or activities in addition to the normal school provision.

The National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations (NCPTA), a registered charity, is the membership organisation for PTAs and other home school partnerships. Visit the website www.ncpta.org.uk

Inspection

Inspection by Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education) is intended to help schools to improve by highlighting their strengths and weaknesses, providing them with recommendations for improvement and promoting a culture of rigorous self-evaluation.

Schools receive between 2 and 5 days' notice of inspection by a small team who spend approximately 2 days in school. The interval between inspections is a maximum 3 years. School self-evaluation, recorded on the self-evaluation form (SEF) is crucial to the process, which is mainly validation of that self-evaluation.

Inspections are led by a member of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) who produce a short, sharp report of about 6 pages within 3 weeks of the inspection – though schools get an oral draft report by the end of week of the inspection. Any necessary actions to improve the school should be included in the School Development or Improvement Plan (SDP/SIP) rather than a separate action plan.

Schools are graded thus:

- Grade 1: Outstanding
- Grade 2: Good
- Grade 3: Satisfactory
- Grade 4: Inadequate

Grade 4 results in Special Measures or notice to improve.

Support and training available

When we take on a new role in life we would generally expect to be trained and supported so that we can fulfil that new role effectively. Being a governor is no different. There are a number of ways to get the help and support you require.

Wiltshire Governor Services is able to offer governors support and training through a helpline, training courses, distance learning material and various other materials. Access is free of charge to members of governing bodies that subscribe to the service. More details are available from your Clerk.

What Governor Services does

We send a 'welcome' pack which includes:

- a letter informing new governors where they can get help and advice and where to find key documents
- the "A-Z Guide for Governors 2008"
- this induction booklet
- an invitation to attend a New Governors course and receive the New Governors booklet
- information about accessing the on-line governors community on the South West Grid for Learning

Key websites

Audit Commission (help with school budgets)	www.schools.audit-commission.gov.uk
Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)	www.dcsf.gov.uk
Financial Management Standards in Schools	www.fmsis.info
Governornet (Information for school governors including DfES publications)	www.governornet.co.uk
Governorline (free professional helpline for governors and clerks)	www.governorline.co.uk
Independent Safeguarding Authority (working with the Criminal Records Bureau to help prevent unsuitable people from working with children)	www.isa.gov.org
National Governors' Association (NGA)	www.nga.org.uk
National College for School Leadership	www.ncsl.org.uk
Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)	www.ofsted.gov.uk
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)	www.qca.org.uk
Records Management Society (Retention Guide for Schools)	www.rms-gb.org.uk/resources/93
South West Grid for Learning Portal (online community for Wiltshire governors and clerks)	http://portal.swgfl.org.uk
Teachernet	www.teachernet.gov.uk
Teacher Development Agency (TDA)	www.tda.gov.uk
Times Educational Supplement (TES)	www.tes.co.uk
Wiltshire County Council	www.wiltshire.gov.uk
(to access the Wisenet docustore on the Wiltshire website enter the Wiltshire website as above, choose 'Education and Learning' and there is a Wisenet link on the right-hand side. Enter username (edadmin) and password (learn99). You can access all documents that have been sent to schools from the LA.	