



Yew Tree Primary School

CHAIR ROLE DESCRIPTION

There are eight elements of effective governance:

- The right people around the table
- Understanding the role and responsibilities
- Good chairing
- Professional clerking
- Good relationships based on trust
- Knowing the school – the data, the children, the parents, the staff, the community
- Commitment to asking challenging questions
- Confidence to have courageous conversations in the interests of the children

The role of Chair & Vice Chair (whether this is for the whole governing body or for one of its delegated committees) is therefore vital in ensuring that the governing body fulfils its three core **strategic** functions as determined by the Department for Education (2013):

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. Holding headteachers to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent

What is the difference between strategic and operational?

STRATEGIC: *Where are we now, where do we want to be and how will we get there?*

This involves setting the values, ethos and direction of the school; long and medium term priorities; oversight and accountability of performance (including setting the measurable targets for the strategy priorities and the culture for performance management); agreeing a budget to support the priorities; major spending decisions; agreeing only the principles and strategic direction of policies.

OPERATIONAL: *Delivery of the agreed strategy.*

This is the day-to-day management; short term planning; spending within agreed budget headings; recruitment and deployment of staff below the leadership team; discipline in relation to individual staff or children; supporting the improvement of teaching and learning; ensuring the performance management and continuing professional development of staff; developing and implementing policies and procedures to deliver the vision.

NGA, The Chair's Handbook 4th Edition

THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR AND THE VICE-CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

“The chair, with support from the vice chair, is responsible for ensuring the effective functioning of the board. It is the chair’s role to give the board clear leadership and direction, keeping it focused on its core functions.”

DfE School Governance Regulations January 2014

The role of the chair can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the governing body. Therefore, it is important to elect someone who is a good organiser or someone with vision, someone who manages time well and ensures that meetings are conducted efficiently and legally with each governor playing a full part. No one employed at the school or anybody who is an associate member is permitted to take the role of chair.

THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR

There are several areas for the chair to consider. These are outlined further in the NGA 4th Edition of 'The Chair's Handbook' but include:

- Ensuring a strategic focus
- Leading and developing the team
- Leading school improvement
- Leading governing board business

Specifically, the role of the chair (whether it is of the whole governing body or a committee) should ensure that they:

- Construct and agree the agenda for meetings with the head teacher and/or clerk, taking account of the recommendations of the head and requests from other governors;
- Plan and keep good order in meetings;
- Ensure governors' participation in and between meetings;
- Ensure governors receive all relevant information and materials at the appropriate times;
- Ensure that decisions taken by the Governing Body are clear, understood by all, and are enacted;
- Ensure that governors know and follow the rules and codes of conduct that keep governing bodies democratic;
- Listen and be a "critical friend" to the head teacher;
- Ensure that decisions of the Governing Body are reported to parents, staff and others as necessary;
- Coordinate the Governing Body role in Ofsted Inspections and LA reviews;
- Monitor the work of the school and the governing body (delegating aspects where appropriate, e.g. through Link Governor roles);
- Welcome new members to the Governing Body and ensure they are able to develop their role fully by engaging with appropriate training and development;
- Represent the school in public events and parents' meetings;
- Attend briefings arranged by the local authority and others, as appropriate;
- Involve the vice-chair so that he/she is in a position to act if necessary;
- Undertake any duties that have been delegated by the Governing Body.

What makes a good Chair?

It has been recognised by the governing body that a good or effective chair will:

- Lead the Governing Body in organising its structure and planning the workload in order to meet its statutory responsibilities;
- Empower other governors to participate fully;
- Developing an understanding of other governor's strengths and weaknesses and provide appropriate support/training as necessary;
- Share their vision and involve others in achieving it;
- Demonstrate objectivity in discussions even if they hold a particular view;
- Be prepared to delegate;
- Ensure good time management and run meetings to agreed timings;
- Summarise discussions and move to a decision;
- Ensure everyone has participated in meetings;
- Ensure meetings are of reasonable duration with a good pace;
- Develop a knowledge of the education system and legislation;

- Keep in close contact with other governors, the head teacher, the clerk and the school between meetings;
- Be seen in the school regularly – to praise and support often, listen sympathetically, but address problems when necessary, e.g. courageous conversations;
- Establish a complementary role for the vice-chair;
- Share as much as possible with the vice-chair of governors i.e. not confidential matters that would affect their impartiality later on;
- Take action only if specifically requested by the Governing Body or in exceptional circumstances when urgent action is needed and there is no time to call a meeting. ***“Urgent” is defined in the relevant legislation as – delay being seriously detrimental to the interests of the school or an individual connected with the school. Some powers cannot be delegated;***
- Share information and documents received with the Governing Body as appropriate;
- Act as contact point and spokesperson on the behalf of the Governing Body;
- Be known and available to governors, parents, staff and others as appropriate;
- Ensure all governors are ‘loyal’ to corporate decisions;
- Attend briefings and meetings for chairs of governors;
- Participate in training.

THE ROLE OF THE VICE-CHAIR

The vice-chair of the Governing Body acts as chair if the chair is unavailable. If the chair of governors resigns the vice-chair will act as chair until the next governors’ meeting, when a chair of governors will be elected.

The following has been designed to ensure that the vice-chair can play an important role in an effective Governing Body. There may be some functions in this list that are carried out by the chair or are delegated to other governors and this should be taken into account in any individual situation.

- Support the chair in the conduct of meetings;
- Ensure that decisions taken by the Governing Body are clear, understood by all, and are enacted;
- Ensure governors’ participation in and between meetings;
- Welcome and induct new governors;
- Ensure that committees and working parties are working effectively and to their terms of reference;
- Stand in for the chair when necessary;
- Listen and be a critical friend to the chair;