



Yew Tree Primary School

GOVERNOR ROLE DESCRIPTION

Governing is a job – it just isn't paid! It is perhaps even more important for voluntary jobs than for paid ones to be clear about the parameters, expectations and limitations. It is important that the job description allows Governors varying types of commitment – there are many different ways of being a successful governor.

In 2013, the Department for Education (DfE) published its Governor Handbook, in which the government is encouraging governing bodies to 'focus on three core strategic functions':

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

Responsible to: Chair of Governors

Governors are expected to:

- Prepare for and attend meetings as per agreed schedule of dates
- Visit the School
- Serve on at least one committee
- Be attached to an area of the school's work as a Link Governor
- Participate in executive decisions of the Governing Body
- Undertake training and development
- Work within an agreed code of conduct
- Act as an ambassador of the school within the local community
- Consider community views within governing body discussions
- Maintain confidentiality as required

The purpose of the post is to contribute to the work of the governing body in raising standards of achievement for all pupils. This involves providing a **strategic** view for the school, acting as a critical friend and ensuring accountability. The individual governor has a responsibility, working alongside other members of the governing body, to the staff and pupils of the school, the parents and the school's wider community. Although some governors may represent particular constituencies they are not delegates of that group.

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.

Responsibilities include:

- Developing the strategic plan for the school
- Determining aims, policies and priorities of the school
- Setting statutory and non statutory targets
- Monitoring and evaluating the work of the school
- Appointment of staff and ensuring the implementation of a range of personnel procedures
- Management of the budget
- Securing high levels of attendance and good standards of pupil Behaviour
- Ensuring that all children in the school have access to a broad and balanced curriculum which is suitable to age, aptitude and ability, which prepares them for adult life
- Ensuring the health and safety of pupils and staff

Tasks include:

- Getting to know the school: its needs, strengths and areas for development
- Attending meetings (full governing body, committees and working groups)
- Working as a member of a team
- Speaking, acting and voting in the best interests of the school as one perceives them
- Representing the perspectives of constituencies, where appropriate
- Respecting all governing body decisions and supporting them in public
- Acting within the framework of the policies of the governing body and legal requirements
- Committing to training and development opportunities

What criteria are used when selecting a governor?

- Interest or background in education
- Appropriate availability
- Good communication / interpersonal skills
- Ability to work as part of a team
- Undertaking to participate in the governor's training programme
- A desire to support the school
- Other relevant experience

Governor conduct is underpinned by the following key principles:

- To act in the best interests of the school – this may require balancing short and long term issues, school and community issues
- To work as a member of a team at all times and be loyal to collective decisions made by the governing body
- To recognise that all governors have the same rights and responsibilities unless particular responsibilities are conferred on them by the full governing body
- To understand that no governor can act alone except in exceptional circumstances prescribed in the regulations – the power of the governing body rests in it acting as a single body

Governors must:

- Respect confidentiality
- Listen to and respect the views of others
- Express their own views clearly and succinctly
- Take their fair share of work / positions of responsibility
- Know, understand and work within the prescribed regulatory framework
- Report any evidence of fraud, corruption or misconduct to an appropriate person or Authority
- Prepare for meetings by reading papers beforehand
- Take responsibility for their own learning and development as a governor, including attending training
- Attend meetings promptly, regularly, and for the full time

DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) checking procedures

All Governors will be asked to complete an enhanced DBS check before commencing their term of office.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**How long a term do Governors serve?**

All Governors serve for 4 years from the date of their election or appointment.

Parent Governors serve out their term even if their child leaves the school in the meantime.

Staff Governor end their term if they cease to be employed at the school.

How does the Governing Body carry out its work?

Even though they have overall responsibility for the strategic direction of the school, Governors cannot possibly be expected to carry out all of the work involved in this themselves. Therefore, the Governing Body is supported by the headteacher and the clerk to governors. The school also has access to the Governor Development Services team.

It is the job of the headteacher and the staff to carry out all the detailed work of running the school. There are a number of committees on which both Governors and staff serve in order to support the work of the school. The work of the different committees is brought together at a full governing body meeting. Governors are involved in deciding the allocation of committees but all are expected to serve on at least one committee.

How much time will it take?

Each of the three main committees meets every term for about 1.5 - 2 hours. The Full Governing Body meets towards the end of each term for about two hours.

All members are expected to attend. If anyone governor is due to be absent for a meeting then apologies should be sent in advance with the reason stated. It will then be the decision of the Chair of the Committee/Governing Body whether or not to accept the apologies. The Chair of Governors monitors attendance and will take any necessary action where there are issues.

In addition most Governors take a general interest in the School and attend school events and activities like open days, concerts, stage productions, etc.

Link Governors make their own arrangements to meet with their contacts about once a term.

How are Parent Governors elected?

Parents are asked to put their own names forward to be a Parent Governor or support the nomination of someone else. If there is more than one nomination for each position an election by secret ballot is held, when all the parents of pupils at the School will have the opportunity to vote.

Who is qualified to stand for election?

Any person who is the parent or legally appointed guardian of a registered pupil at the school.

Who is NOT qualified to stand for election?

A governor must be aged 18 or over at the time of their election or appointment and cannot be a registered pupil at the school. 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 he or she:

- Is detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 during his or her 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
- 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 a 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 two-and-a-half 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 Disclosure & Barring Service for a criminal records check

This document is supported by the NGA's 6th Edition: Welcome to Governance' which states the following as part of their Governor Role Description.

Activities: As part of the governing body team, a governor is expected to

1. Contribute to the strategic discussions at governing body meetings which determine:
 - the vision and ethos of the school;
 - clear and ambitious strategic priorities and targets for the school;
 - that all children, including those with special educational needs, have access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
 - the school's budget, including the expenditure of the pupil premium allocation;
 - the school's staffing structure and key staffing policies;
 - the principles to be used by school leaders to set other school policies.

2. Hold the senior leaders to account by monitoring the school's performance; this includes:
 - agreeing the outcomes from the school's self-evaluation and ensuring they are used to inform the priorities in the school
 - development plan;
 - considering all relevant data and feedback provided on request by school leaders and external sources on all aspects of
 - school performance;
 - asking challenging questions of school leaders;
 - ensuring senior leaders have arranged for the required audits to be carried out and receiving the results of those audits;
 - ensuring senior leaders have developed the required policies and procedures and the school is operating effectively
 - according to those policies;
 - acting as a link governor on a specific issue, making relevant enquiries of the relevant staff, and reporting to the
 - governing body on the progress on the relevant school priority; and
 - listening to and reporting to the school's stakeholders : pupils, parents, staff, and the wider community, including local
 - employers.

3. Ensure the school staff have the resources and support they require to do their jobs well, including the necessary expertise on business management, external advice where necessary, effective appraisal and CPD (Continuing Professional Development), and suitable premises, and that the way in which those resources are used has impact.

4. When required, serve on panels of governors to:
 - appoint the headteacher and other senior leaders;
 - appraise the headteacher;
 - set the headteacher's pay and agree the pay recommendations for other staff;
 - hear the second stage of staff grievances and disciplinary matters;
 - hear appeals about pupil exclusions.

The role of governor is largely a thinking and questioning role, not a doing role.

A governor does **NOT**:

- Write school policies;
- Undertake audits of any sort – whether financial or health & safety - even if the governor has the relevant professional experience;
- Spend much time with the pupils of the school – if you want to work directly with children, there are many other voluntary valuable roles within the school;
- Fundraise – this is the role of the PTA – the governing body should consider income streams and the potential for income generation, but not carry out fundraising tasks;

- Undertake classroom observations to make judgements on the quality of teaching – the governing body monitors the quality of teaching in the school by requiring data from the senior staff and from external sources;
- Do the job of the school staff – if there is not enough capacity within the paid staff team to carry out the necessary tasks, the governing body need to consider and rectify this.

As you become more experienced as a governor, there are other roles you could volunteer for which would increase your degree of involvement and level of responsibility (e.g. as a chair of a committee). This document does not cover the additional roles taken on by the chair, vice-chair and chairs of committees.

In order to perform this role well, a governor is expected to:

- get to know the school, including by visiting the school occasionally during school hours, and gain a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- attend induction training and regular relevant training and development events;
- attend meetings (full governing body meetings and committee meetings) and read all the papers before the meeting;
- act in the best interest of all the pupils of the school; and behave in a professional manner, as set down in the governing body's code of conduct, including acting in strict confidence.

Time commitment:

Under usual circumstances, you should expect to spend between 10 and 20 days a year on your governing responsibilities; the top end of this commitment, which equates to about half a day per week in term time, is most relevant to the chair and others with key roles, such as chairs of committees.

Initially, we would expect your commitment to be nearer 10 days a year. However, there may be periods when the time commitment may increase, for example when recruiting a headteacher. Some longstanding governors may tell you that they spend far more time than this on school business; however, it is fairly common for governors to undertake additional volunteering roles over and above governance.

Under Section 50 of the *Employment Rights Act 1996*, if you are employed, then you are entitled to 'reasonable time off' to undertake public duties; this includes school governance. 'Reasonable time off' is not defined in law, and you will need to negotiate with your employer how much time you will be allowed.

Expenses:

Governors may receive out of pocket expenses incurred as a result of fulfilling their role as governor, and NGA recommends that a governing body should have such an expenses policy. Payments can cover incidental expenses, such as travel and childcare, but not loss of earnings.