

## **Taken from the National Governor Association guidelines**

### **What does a governor do?**

Role of a school governor: To contribute to the work of the governing body in ensuring high standards of achievement for all children and young people in the school by:

- Setting the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

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 student 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 students of the school – if you want to work directly with children, there are many other voluntary valuable roles within the school;
- Fundraise – 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.

### **Qualifications and disqualifications:**

A governor must be aged 18 or over at the time of his or her 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 (not applicable to ex officio governors);
- is subject to a bankruptcy restriction order or an interim order;
- has had his or her estate sequestrated and the sequestration order has not been discharged, annulled or reduced;
- is subject to:
  - i) a disqualification order or disqualification undertaking under the Company Directors Act 1986
  - ii) a disqualification order under Part 2 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1989
  - iii) a disqualification undertaking accepted under the Company Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002

iv) 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 Criminal Records Bureau for a criminal records certificate.

A person is disqualified from election or appointment as a parent governor of a school if they are an elected member of the Local Authority or if they work at the school for more than 500 hours in any consecutive 12 month period (at the time of election).