

What *does* a School Governor do?

Governance has never been more critical to the education of our nation's young people. As Minister for the School System I see at first hand the impact of governors and governance professionals. The governance duty is, above all, to drive relentless ambition for the young people served by our schools system, whatever the circumstances.

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Role of a school governor

The role of a school governor is an ideal opportunity for you to be able to contribute to your 'home' community and ensure that a school is delivering good quality education to all its pupils. All boards, no matter what type of school or how many schools they govern, have three core functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

As part of the governing board team, a governor is expected to:-

1. Contribute to the strategic discussions at governing board meetings which...

- set the vision and ethos of the school;
- have clear and ambitious strategic priorities and targets for the school;
- ensure that all children, including those with special educational needs, have access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- determine the school's budget, including the expenditure of the pupil premium allocation;
- define the school's staffing structure and key staffing policies;
- show appropriate regard for the wellbeing and mental health of the school leadership team and teaching staff;
- establish 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 board on the progress on the relevant school priority;
- 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 in business management, access to external advice where necessary, effective appraisal and CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and suitable premises. Governors then measure the impact of having these resources against the outcomes of children's learning.

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 board 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 board's Code of Conduct, including acting in strict confidence.

Time commitment

Generally, you would expect to spend around five to eight hours per month, although it may vary depending on the needs of the school and the role to which you have been assigned.

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 Head Teacher. 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 it is a statutory requirement that a governing board has such a policy in place. Payments can cover incidental expenses, such as travel and childcare, but not loss of earnings.

The Governor Services Team provides governors with help, advice, support and training. The team provides assistance with any aspect of school governance whether legal or procedural and will always be happy to answer any query you have on the nature of your role as a governor.

**For further information or queries, please contact the
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