

Information and guidance for new governing board members

2021-2022

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About this guide

It uses edited information from the Department for Education, Ofsted, National Governance Association, and the Governor Support Service (GSS). It is designed to help you as a guide to understanding the basics of the governance role.

There are hyperlinks to other documents and websites which will provide further information when you click on the links.

Your school will provide you with bespoke governance information about your school and its context.

About us

The GSS is an independent service offering governor training, advice, guidance, and support to all Hillingdon Schools. With over 20 years' combined experience working within local authorities in Governor Support roles, we can offer local and legislative advice, support, and training to school governors, boards, and clerks.

The support we provide aims to enable governors to focus on their key roles and responsibilities – therefore assisting you to enable your school to deliver a good quality education.

Our support services and training can be purchased by schools on an annual basis (service level agreement) or on a pay as you go basis.

The role of a school governor

Edited extracts from Welcome to Governance, published by the National Governors' Association (NGA) and guidance published by the Department for Education.

What does a governor do?

The role of a school governor is to contribute to the work of the governing board 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.**

Expectations of the role

As a governor you are expected to:

- Have a real interest in education and developing positive outcomes for all children
- Get to know the school: its needs, strengths and areas for development including visiting the school occasionally during school hours
- Prepare for, and attend meetings (full governing board, committees and working groups)
- Actively contribute as a member of a team
- Speak, act and vote in the best interests of the school
- Use your personal and professional skills to support the school
- Respect all governing board decisions and to support them in public
- Act within the framework of the policies of the governing board and legal requirements
- Observe and follow the governing board's code of conduct and confidentiality requirements
- Attend induction training and regular relevant training and development events.

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

1 Contribute to the strategic discussions at governing board 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 board 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 board 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 board 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 board 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).

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 common for governors to undertake additional volunteering roles over and above governance.

Your main task is to attend meetings and contribute to the work of the governing board. Meetings of the full governing board normally take place once or twice a term and each committee normally meet once a term but may meet more frequently depending on its remit and the school's circumstances. Each school is different in respect of their schedule of meetings. You should clarify with your governing board the time commitment required.

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 because of fulfilling their role as governor, and NGA recommends that a governing board should have such an expenses policy. Payments can cover incidental expenses, such as travel and childcare, but not loss of earnings.

The 'Seven Principles of Public Life'

It is vital that from the offset as a new governor that you understand that all governors are public volunteers and as such are subject to the same Nolan Committee rules on public life as Councillors and MPs. The Nolan committee rules are known as the 'Seven Principles of Public Life'. The principles are given below.

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands this.

Honesty

Holders of public office must declare any public interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Your role as a governor

The Governor Support Service hopes you will enjoy the role and that you will feel that you are able to make a positive difference in your school through your contributions at a strategic level.

The role of a school governor is very much like that of a non-executive director, bringing an independent voice to issues of strategy, performance, and resources.

Effective governing boards ensure that they use the skills of all members and this guidance is designed to help you play your part as a governor.

To put your work in context, the role of the governing board is strategic, not operational in terms of the day to day running of the school. All governors contribute by decision making at a strategic level and then any decisions made are implemented at an operational level by the headteacher and senior leadership team.

The governing board must be closely involved in:

- monitoring and evaluating the outcomes and longer-term impact of all strategic plans and policies
- accounting to all key stakeholders for the school's performance.

Sharing the workload and to work to the strengths and interests of individual governors is key to achieving an effective governing board. Governors should be willing to bring their personal and professional skills to the governing board.

Professional development

The opportunity to work as a governor, influencing all strategic decisions, will provide you with excellent leadership, training and team working experience. As a governor you are expected to undertake induction and other relevant training to support you in the role and enhance the skills on the governing board.

Term of office

You will have a 4-year term of office unless the governing board has agreed a shorter term of office for your category of governorship. The clerk to governors will confirm this for you. You may resign at any time by giving written notice to the clerk to governors.

Governor category

As a governor, you are representative of a stakeholder group (category) on the governing board, i.e. parents, staff, and local community. You are not a representative of that group, and as such, cannot be mandated to take any course of action or vote in a specific way at meetings. This can often be misunderstood.

Communication

You can provide relevant information to the governing board about the general views of the stakeholder group you are representative of on items on the governing board's agenda. However, if an issue comes to a vote, you should vote based on what you consider to be in the best interests of the school.

As a governor you can report back to colleagues and stakeholder groups with the consent of the governing board and if you are sure that the information you are presenting is accurate. You are advised to check with the clerk or chair of governors before making any comments publicly. You would be breaching the confidence of the governing board if you reported how individuals voted, comments made by individuals, or individual discussions. You should only report back on decisions made by the governing board. When reporting on decisions taken by the governing board you should use 'we' and

not 'they' as you are part of the decision-making group. Even if you personally voted against the final decision you must support the corporate decision-making process and take ownership of the outcome.

Meetings

Joining a well-established team can be daunting for even the most self-confident person. Many governors have confessed to being slightly bemused at their first few meetings and wished they had prepared themselves more by doing some background reading first. For each meeting, every governor is expected to have read the previous set of minutes and any relevant paperwork distributed prior to the meeting. This will give you time to prepare questions to raise during the meeting. If you are unsure of meeting protocols, then ask the clerk to governors for more information.

Being active in the role

Attending meetings and contributing to discussions, reading and research is just part of the role. Governors must also visit the school in action to help them in getting to know the school. Governors need to know the strengths of the school and its areas for improvement.

Governors should visit during a school day so that they can see how the strategic decisions made by the governing board have worked at an operational level. Governors never visit the school unannounced. As good practice each governing board will have a protocol for governor visits to school which should be read prior to any visit taking place. Governors do not visit school to inspect it. Often governors will be invited by the headteacher to attend school events such as assemblies, plays and sports days.

Governors can also link with a specific area of school life which they monitor closely against policies and liaise with the staff. For example, a governor who is linked with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) will liaise with the school's special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) on at least a termly basis.

Confidentiality

The work of the governing board is reported in the minutes which should be made available to all interested parties, except for confidential items, and should be made available in school to all staff and parents e.g. via a notice board copy and website.

School complaints

Dealing with complaints is not easy and often it is a governor who is individually contacted when a particular concern is raised about a child or a member of staff. As a governor you should advise all complainants to obtain a copy of the school's complaints policy directly from the school. All schools are required to have one by law. Most will publish theirs on the school's website for easy access. Do not agree to solve or become involved in the problem, the policy is the route for resolving all such issues.

Finally

All members of a governing board have equal status in the responsibilities they share, however, there are just a few exceptions. The exceptions are:

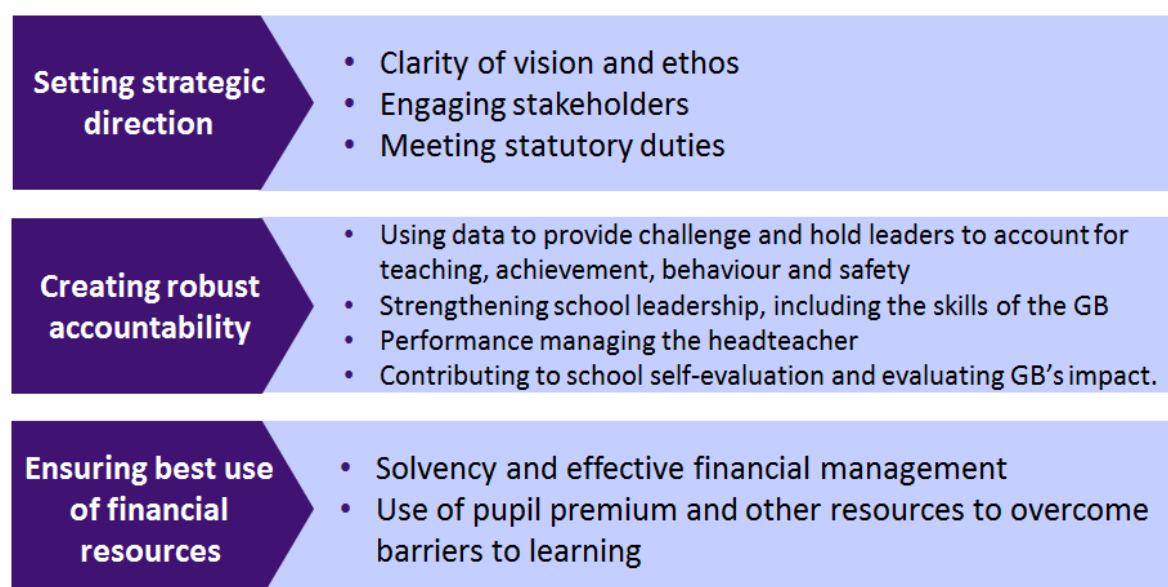
- Staff employed at the school cannot hold the office of chairman or vice-chairman of the governing board.
- Staff employed at the school must withdraw and not take part in discussions relating to the appraisal or pay of any school employee
- All governors need to withdraw if they have a personal, business, or other interest in any item under consideration by the governing board.
- Staff governors cannot take part in the headteacher's performance management.
- The headteacher cannot be a member of any staff dismissal or staff dismissal appeal committee or the pupil discipline committee which the governing board chooses to establish.

The role of the governing board

Governing boards are the strategic leaders of our schools and have a vital role to play in making sure every child gets the best possible education. This is reflected in the law, which states that the purpose of (maintained) school governing board is to ‘conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement at the school’.

The principles of school governance are the same in every school no matter whether the school is an academy, free school or maintained school. They are all state funded schools.

All governing boards should operate as non-executive boards, focussing on three core strategic functions.



In exercising their strategic functions, the governing board shall:

- act with integrity, objectivity, and honesty and in the best interests of the school; and
- be open about the decisions they make and the actions they take and shall be prepared to explain their decisions and actions to interested parties.

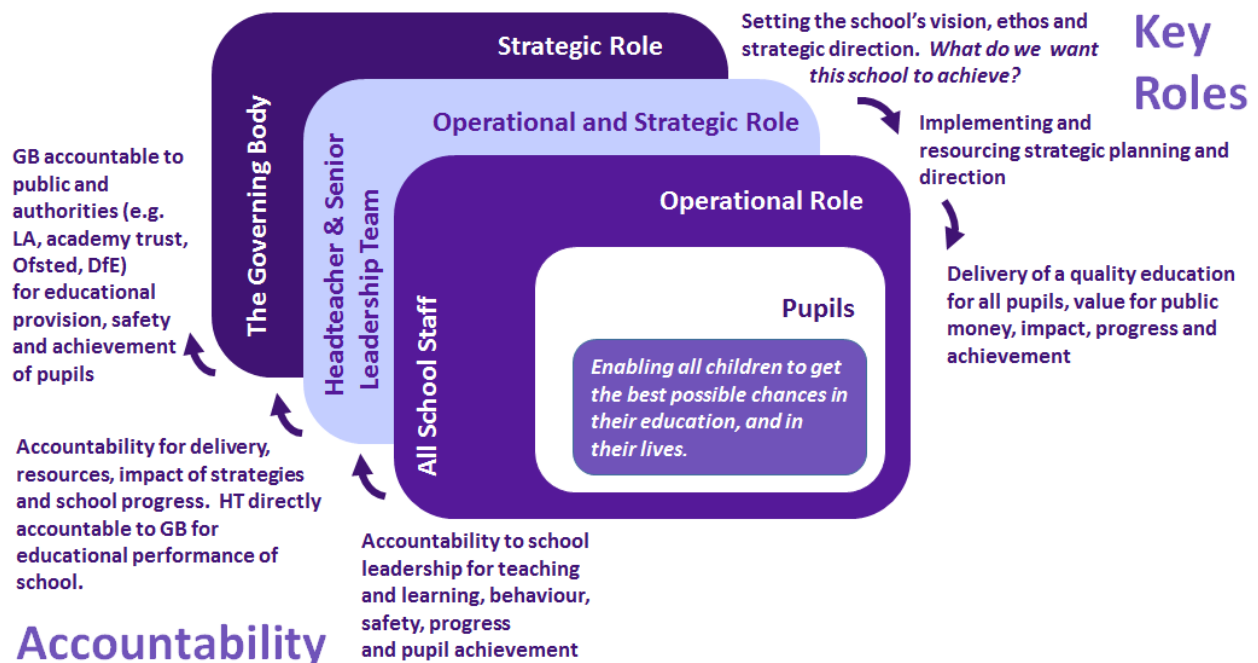
Accountability of governing board

Maintained school governing boards are legally responsible for the conduct of their school. For academies and free schools, responsibility rests with the Trust, which will delegate some or all the responsibility to a school governing board.

Every person who volunteers to help improve their school by being a governor is highly valued. How well a governing board does its job has a real impact on the success of a school. So, although they are made up of volunteers, governing board cannot afford to be amateur and must be held to account for their effectiveness.

Strategic and operational roles

A governing board plays a strategic role **not an operational one**. The headteacher is responsible for the day to day management of the school (operational) and the headteacher and staff are responsible for implementing plans and policies established by the governing board. **Understanding what this means is probably the most important thing to learn about being a governor.**



It is vital that governors understand that their role is strategic rather than operational.

Effective governance is critical to the success of the school. It is reliant upon a strong professional working relationship between governors, the headteacher and the school's senior leadership team, where all parties know and understand both the extent and limits of their respective roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- the educational performance of the school
- the internal organisation, management, and control of the school
- formulating aims and objectives, a school development plan, and a wide range of policies for the governing board to consider adopting
- advising on and implementing the governing board's strategic framework
- giving governors all the information and data that they need so that they may consider the most effective ways and use of resources to help the school raise its standards and achievement
- reporting on progress on all areas of school life to the governing board on a regular basis
- ensuring that governors receive timely financial information

Corporate responsibility

A governing board acts as a single person with an identity separate from its members. Responsibility for the actions and decisions of the governing board lies with the whole governing board rather than individual members. This is known as corporate responsibility.

Governors must never carry out a duty in the name of the governing board without the consent of the governing board. Governing boards must act as a group/corporate board. Individual governors have no power outside the governing board and cannot act on behalf of the governing board unless authorised to do so or, in special cases, where emergency action is needed (chair of governors).

The chair of the governing board will only be able to exercise the power to act in an emergency if “the circumstances are that the chair is of the opinion that a delay in exercising the function would be likely to be seriously detrimental to the interests of the school; any pupil at the school, or their parent; or a person who works at the school”. This wording is defined by law.

The work of the governing board

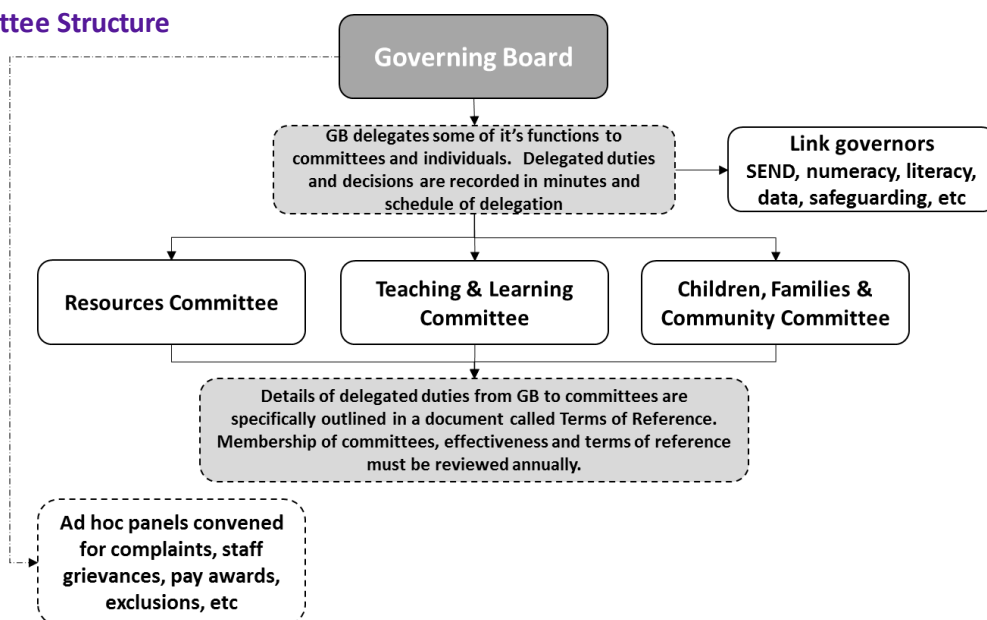
Much of the work of a governing board is conducted in meetings. Almost all the powers and responsibilities of governing boards are held collectively, and this means that the governing board must meet to make its decisions.

Due to the vast array of duties that governing boards have, it is most likely that the governing board will use its powers of delegation to distribute its workload to ensure matters are dealt with appropriately. It may choose to delegate duties to a committee or an individual.

Nearly all governing boards will have committees to help distribute the governing board's duties among those members who have skills or interests in a particular area of school life, for example, finance, staffing or curriculum. Governing board committees can discuss delegated duties in further detail and report back to the full governing board about their findings, recommendations, or decisions.

Every committee is required to have a 'Terms of Reference' document which outlines what functions the committee has, what its membership is and what duties have been formally delegated to the committee by the governing board. This must be reviewed annually along with membership.

Example Committee Structure



Some of the governing board's duties in a specific area can be delegated to an individual often known as a 'link governor'. For example, safeguarding is an area often delegated to a safeguarding link governor. Link governors must report back to the governing board about the duties that they have undertaken. Link governors should be given a clear description of their specific role and the duties that have been delegated to them so that professional boundaries are not breached. These duties are defined and agreed by the governing board.

School Improvement Plans

The most visible way in which governors exercise their strategic role is through their contribution to the School Improvement Plan (SIP). You may also hear the SIP referred to as the School Development Plan (SDP). SIPs usually cover a three-year rolling period.

The whole point of a SIP is that it should record the agreed strategic direction for the school for the next few years, in a form that can be used to guide more detailed operational decisions.

Any resources that the school will need should be documented in the SIP and have financial details included to show how the school's budget is being used through strategic planning.

Governors bring a wealth and variety of knowledge and skills to their role, but this is often not from an educational setting. Therefore, knowing what is required in a good and effective School Improvement Plan for them to carry out their monitoring role can be a challenge.

All the significant things that need to be improved should feature in the School Improvement Plan.

Many governing boards routinely monitor progress on sections of the school improvement plan through their committee structure. This takes the form of discussion around the progress made on a section of the plan, reviewing a different section each term. The discussion will normally be led by the headteacher or deputy head with responsibility for that aspect of the plan.

Overview of school governance

Key activity	Supporting evidence
<u>Understand our school</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pupil attainment and progress▪ Pupil behaviour, attendance and safety▪ Teaching quality and staff development	← <ul style="list-style-type: none">Performance dataOfsted reportsSelf-evaluationSchool visits
<u>Set our school's strategic direction</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Champion our vision, values and ethos▪ Set priorities for school improvement▪ Consider future aspirations for school	← <ul style="list-style-type: none">Local aspirationsNational floor standardsParent and pupil voice
<u>Commission action</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Agree improvement targets and strategies▪ Agree allocation of resources▪ Agree how to monitor and review progress	← <ul style="list-style-type: none">School improvement plansBudget data
<u>Performance manage our school leaders</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Appoint headteacher and support their leadership▪ Hold school leaders to account for progress▪ Ensure financial probity and efficiency	← <ul style="list-style-type: none">Performance dataFinancial dataSchool visits
<u>Check we are fit for purpose</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Clarify our role and purpose▪ Review constitution and ways of working▪ Ensure members have necessary skills and training	← <ul style="list-style-type: none">Policy contextOfsted criteriaSelf-evaluation

Please note the reference to "National Floor Standards" no longer apply

School and governing board organisation

The principles of school governance are the same no matter where you volunteer, however it is important to be clear what type of school you are a governor at as the responsibilities of the governing board between the different categories differ on matters concerning land and premises, employment of staff and pupil admissions.

The types of state funded schools

School type	Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community schools Foundation schools Voluntary controlled schools Voluntary aided schools Trust schools 	These schools are maintained by the local authority. The LA has a duty to ensure that these schools deliver an acceptable standard of education for pupils and the LA can intervene where necessary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single academy trust Multi academy trust Sponsored academy Umbrella trust Free school University technical college Studio school 	<p>These schools are not maintained by the local authority and are directly accountable to the Secretary of State for Schools.</p> <p>An academy trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee.</p>

The different categories of governor

The table below shows the different categories of governor on each type of school governing boards.

Categories of governor	Which type of school?					
	Maintained schools					Academy /Free school
	Voluntary-controlled	Voluntary-aided	Community	Foundation	Trust	
Parent governors Elected to post	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Staff governors Elected to post	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Headteacher governor By virtue of office	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Local authority governors Appointed into post	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Flexibility to shape their own structure.
Foundation governors Appointed into post	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	
Partnership governors Appointed into post	No	No	No	Yes	No	
Co-opted governors Appointed into post	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

The governing board can appoint Associate Members to serve on one or more governing board committees. Associate Members can attend full governing board meetings but may be excluded from any part of a meeting where the business being considered concerns a member of school staff or an

individual pupil. They are appointed for a period of between one and four years and can be reappointed at the end of their term of office. Associate Members are not governors and they are not recorded in the Instrument of Government.

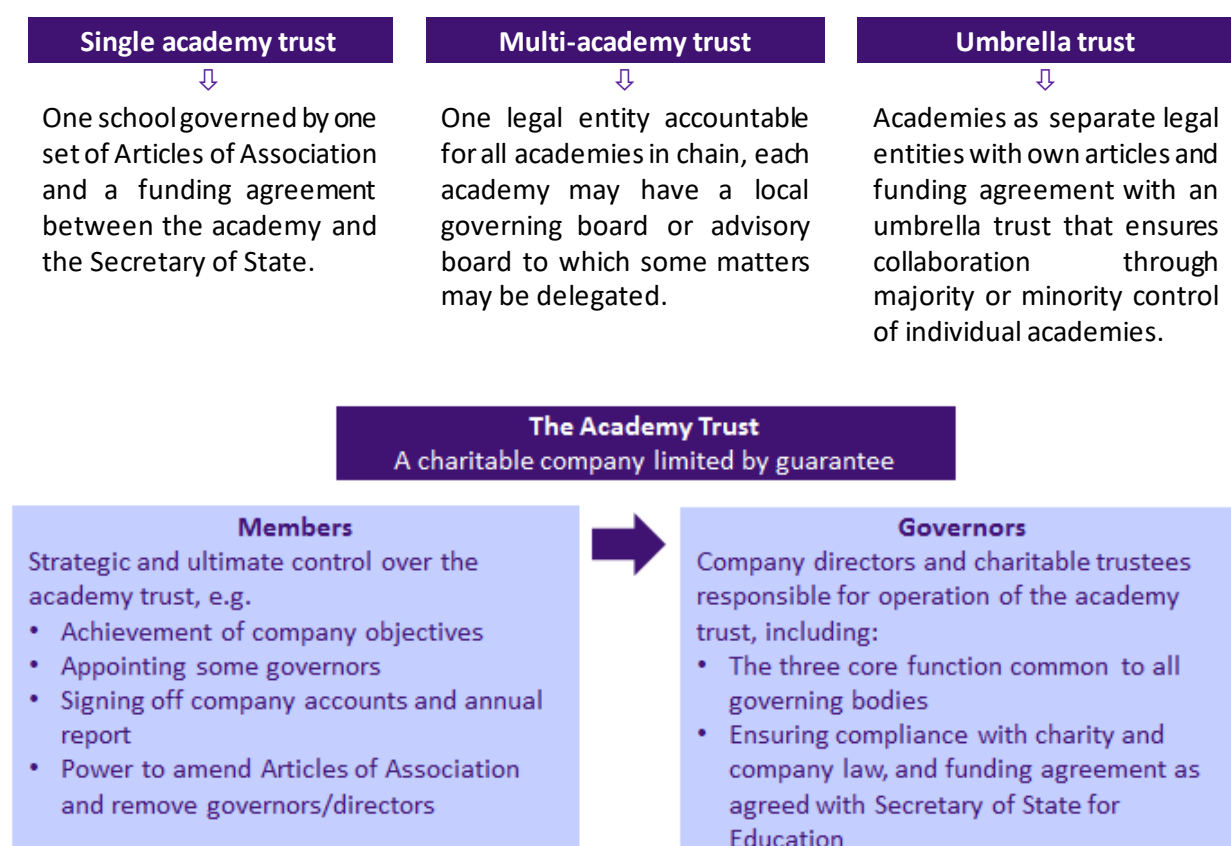
The definition of Associate Member is wide and pupils, school staff and people who want to contribute specifically on issues related to their area of expertise (for instance, finance) can be appointed as Associate Members.

Each maintained school will have a legal document called an Instrument of Government setting out the constitution of the governing board. The document states the type of school and how many governors there should be in each governor category. Schools can choose to vary their Instrument of Government at any time. Schools are strongly advised to keep their constitution under review to ensure it is still fit for purpose.

More information on the constitution of maintained school governing board can be found online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/constitution-of-governing-board-of-maintained-schools>

Academies and free schools have their constitution set out in a legal document called the Articles of Association. The Articles of Association set out the internal management, decision making and running of the academy trust and its liability. The memorandum and articles of association for your school will be added as an annex to the funding agreement for each academy.

Academy schools have structural differences in their governance depending upon the type of academy. The academy types are given below.



Academy model memorandum and articles of association can be found online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-model-memorandum-and-articles-of-association>. If you are a governor at an academy or free school, please ask the clerk to governors for a copy of the Articles of Association which is where you will find the constitution of the governing board. You should also ask for the most current Annual Governance Statement.

In the interests of transparency, all schools and academies must publish, including on their website, up to date details of the structure of the governing board and any committees, together with the names of their governors and their roles and responsibilities within that structure. They should also publish an annual statement setting out the key issues that have been faced and addressed by the governing board over the last year, including an assessment of the impact of the governing board on the school. For academies, these details of their governance arrangements must also be provided within the governance statement of their published annual accounts.

The legal responsibilities between types of schools

Some governing boards, including all academies, have additional functions and responsibilities. Depending on the type of school, they may own land, act as employers, admission authorities, or boards of charitable trustees and company directors.

Legal responsibility	Which type of school are you a governor at?					
	Voluntary-controlled	Voluntary-aided	Community	Foundation	Trust	Academy/Free school
Admissions authority	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Employer of staff	No ^a	Yes	No ^a	Yes	Yes	Yes
Owner of land and buildings	No ^b	No ^c	No	Yes (usually) ^d	No ^c	In certain cases,
Revenue funding	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA	Secretary of State
Charitable Status	Exempt charity ^e	Exempt charity ^e	No	Exempt charity ^e	No	Exempt charity ^e

^a While the LA employs staff, the governing board undertakes employer responsibilities

^b In most cases the charitable foundation owns some or all of the land

^c Usually a charitable foundation owns the land and buildings

^d With a foundation - land and buildings are usually owned by a charitable foundation. Without a foundation - the governing board owns the land and buildings

^e An exempt charity is one that is not regulated by, and cannot register with, the Charity Commission

Declaring business and personal interests

There is no comprehensive definition of what constitutes a business interest, but declarations should include any links with individuals, businesses, contractors, directorships, shareholdings or other appointments where the school may purchase goods or services from or who are directly employed by the school. It should also include interests of related persons such as parent, spouse, co-habitee, child or business partners where influence could be exerted by that person over a governor or a member of staff. Governors and trustees must also declare details of any other educational establishments that they govern.

Where a governor or member of staff or related person has any interest, either pecuniary or non-pecuniary, in a matter to be discussed at a governors' meeting the governor or member of staff must declare their interest and withdraw from that part of the meeting.

A declaration of interest's form must be completed by individual governors and reviewed annually, however, if their circumstances change, they should inform the clerk. The completed declaration forms collectively make up a register of interests.

If you are unsure about what to include on your declaration form, it is usually better to declare, at the very least seek the advice of the clerk.

Under the local authority's Scheme for Financing Schools, maintained school governing boards must maintain a register of interests. For academies, the latest edition of the Academies Financial Handbook requires them to publish the register.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-financial-handbook>

Local Authority Associated Persons (LAAP) in Academies

Academy trusts must ensure that they are not local authority influenced. An academy trust is deemed to have influenced status if 20% or more of its members or trustees are 'associated persons'. Associated persons are current elected council members (councillors), current council officers, or anyone who has been a council member within the past 4 years in a local authority that the Academy Trust is influenced by. This would normally mean the local authority with competence for education in which they are located and may also include the local district, parish or town council if they have influence over land/planning issues associated with the academy. An officer of the local authority includes any person employed as a director by the local authority, a local authority clerical officer or any other employee of the local authority such as cleaners, kitchen staff if employed directly by the local authority. Headteachers of community schools, voluntary controlled schools, community special schools and maintained nursery schools are also associated persons. The academy trust must ensure that the local authority does not have more than 19.9% of the voting rights or seats on the board of trustees.

School organisation - Stages of school life

Maintained schools are obliged to follow the National Curriculum. It is organised into blocks of years called 'Key Stages'. There are four key stages as well as an 'Early Years Foundation Stage' and '14-19'.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) covers education for children before they reach five (compulsory school age). Academies are not bound by legislation to deliver the National Curriculum although they may choose to follow it. The governing board determines the curriculum with the professional guidance of the Principal and senior leadership team.

Age	Key Stage	Year
2-5	Early Years Foundation Stage	
4-5		Reception Year
5-6	Key Stage 1	Year 1
6-7		Year 2
7-8	Key Stage 2	Year 3
8-9		Year 4
9-10		Year 5
10-11		Year 6
11-12	Key Stage 3	Year 7
12-13		Year 8
13-14	Key Stage 4	Year 9
14-15		Year 10
15-16		Year 11
16-19		Post 16

More information about teaching and learning can be found online:

<https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/curriculum-qualifications>

The national standards for teachers can be found online at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards>. These standards set the minimum requirements for teachers' practice and conduct.

Getting to know your school

Where do you begin?

It is important that as a new governor you begin the process of getting to know your school so you can be effective in supporting it to provide the best possible education for its pupils.

The following will assist you in getting to know your school better.

An organised visit to see the school in action

You should agree this with headteacher and chairman of the governing board. *Governors never visit the school unannounced.* Every school should have a protocol on visiting the school as a governor as there are some key points you need to know before going to school. Please ask your clerk for a copy of this document.

Join one or more committees of the governing board

This will give greater depth for involvement and contribution, whilst providing a real insight into specific areas of school life. If you have expertise in a particular area, e.g. finance or personnel, your skills will be greatly valued.

Ofsted report

Read your school's most recent Ofsted inspection report which is publicly accessible online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

School performance data

Seek guidance from the chairman and/or headteacher on initially understanding the school's performance data. This may come in a range of sources such as

- National published data about your school: <https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>
- Analyse school performance (ASP): Information and guidance for inspectors and schools about Ofsted's inspection data summary report (IDSR) and inspection dashboard. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/using-ofsteds-inspection-dashboard>
- Fischer Family Trust Governor Dashboard – This presents a concise summary of school performance information for governors. It also provides some additional information including pupil progress and attendance by year group. Access is given by the school to governors. <http://www.fft.org.uk/>
- Education Endowment Foundation - <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/>

School Improvement Plan

Read your school's current School Improvement Plan to see how the school strategically plans to develop and drive forward school improvement in order to raise standards and pupil achievement. It may also be known as a School Development Plan.

School Self Evaluation Plan

Read the school's self-evaluation document. It should:

- convey a clear picture of how well the school is doing
- provide proof of how the school knows what it knows about itself in all areas of school life
- show what the school is doing to build on successes and remedy weaknesses.

School website

Familiarise yourself with the school's website. Schools must publish certain information online about the school by law. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online>. For academies and free schools, the detail about what must be published online is contained within the ESFA Academies Financial Handbook, section 2.50, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-financial-handbook>

Governing board minutes

Ask the clerk to provide you with the most recent set of governing board minutes. They will give you an idea of the most recent discussions and decisions.

Policies and protocols

Ask the clerk to provide you with information on key documents such as a code of conduct for the governing board and standing orders, which will help you get to grips with how your governing board operates. You will need to know what school policies exist and where they are kept. The statutory policies for schools can be found online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-policies-for-schools>.

School events

Ask the headteacher or chair of governors which school events governors are invited to, put the dates in your diary and make every effort to attend.

Attend training and other development opportunities

Ask the clerk to governors about new governors' training. Training will offer further clarity about roles and responsibilities and provide an opportunity to meet other new governors. The Governor Support Service offers an induction programme for new governors each term. The school may have already bought into this service therefore you can access it immediately.

Important publications to be knowledgeable about

Department for Education (DfE) Governors' Handbook, Competency Framework for Governance and Clerking Competency Framework. These are all essential guides to school governance for all types of school. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook>

Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

What to do if you are worried a child is being abused (DfE)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-a-child-is-being-abused--2>

The role of the headteacher

This edited extract from the DfE publication, 'Headteacher Standards' (October 2020), best describes the role of the headteacher and the skills and qualities they should have to fulfil their roles.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-standards-of-excellence-for-headteachers>

Headteachers (known as the principal in academies) are leading professionals and role models for the communities they serve. Their leadership is a significant factor in ensuring high quality teaching and achievement in schools and a positive and enriching experience of education for pupils. Together with those responsible for governance, they are custodians of the nation's schools. Parents and the wider public rightly hold high expectations of headteachers, given their influential position leading the teaching profession and on the young people who are their responsibility. The headteachers' standards set out how headteachers meet these high expectations. The standards are an important benchmark not only for headteachers and those who hold headteachers to account, but also for those who train and develop school leaders.

These standards replace the national standards of excellence for headteachers 2015. They are non-statutory and intended as guidance to be interpreted in the context of each individual headteacher and school. They are designed to be relevant to all headteachers.

The standards can be used to:

- shape headteachers' own practice and professional development, within and beyond the school
- support the recruitment and appointment of headteachers, including the development of job descriptions and person specifications
- underpin frameworks for the training of school leaders, including current and aspiring headteachers
- inform the performance management of headteachers

What governing board and school leaders should expect from each other

A joint paper on the professional relationship between governing board and senior school leaders (including the headteacher) has been produced nationally. It is very important that the roles are understood. You can access the document here <https://www.nga.org.uk/what-we-expect.aspx>.

The role of the chair of governors

The chair of governors has few powers as an individual, however, the chair can act without permission if urgent action is required. When the chair takes such action, he/she must report back to the governing board at the next meeting.

Role description for the chair of the board (edited extract by NGA)

The role of the chair of governors should be viewed in the same light as that of the chair of the board in any other sector. The role of the chair is demanding, complex and multi-faceted. The chair leads the governing board ensuring it fulfils its functions well. A good chair will ensure the board's focus is on the strategic. The culture of the board is largely determined by its chair. The chair is "first among equals" but has no defined individual power. A good chair works well with school leaders to advise and shape proposals to be discussed at the board meetings.

The chair should facilitate the governing board working as a team to challenge, support and contribute to the strategic leadership of the school. As well as leader of the board, the chair is at times a confidante, a manager, a critical friend, a cheerleader, an ambassador, an arbitrator, and possibly a mentor and coach; the balance of these roles adopted will depend on the situation at hand and in particular the experience and strengths of the headteacher.

Role Purpose: Leading governance in schools

To provide leadership to the governing board and ensure that governors/trustees fulfil their functions for the proper governance of the school(s).

Leading governance in schools

- To ensure that the governing board and headteacher have a shared sense of purpose.
- To ensure the governing board sets a clear vision and strategy for the school(s).
- To lead the board in monitoring the headteacher's implementation of the school strategy.
- Leading and developing the team
- To ensure the board has the required skills to govern well, and that appointments made fill any identified skills gaps.
- To ensure all governors/trustees receive appropriate induction, ongoing training as needed and have a thorough understanding of their role.
- To ensure members of the board act reasonably and in line with the board's agreed code of conduct.
- To develop a good working relationship with the vice chair, ensuring s/he is kept fully informed and delegating tasks as appropriate.
- To ensure that board members feel valued and encourage their development.
- To carry out a performance review of each governor/trustee.
- To ensure that there is a plan for succession for the chair, vice-chair, and any committee chairs, and that by recommending limits on office, there is always a mix of new and experienced members.

The chair, the headteacher and accountability

- To build a professional relationship with the headteacher which allows for honest conversations, acting as a sounding board and ensuring there are no surprises at meetings.
- To meet regularly with the headteacher, which in normal circumstances is likely to be monthly.
- To ensure that there are transparent and effective processes for the recruitment and induction of the headteacher.
- To ensure appropriate governor/trustee involvement in the recruitment of senior leaders.
- To ensure all governors concentrate on their strategic role, receive information fit for purpose and hold the headteacher to account.
- To oversee and participate in the headteacher's performance review, ensuring that appropriate CPD (continuing professional development) is provided.
- To ensure that the headteacher provides staff with an understanding of the role of the governing board and acts as link between the two.
- Where required, represent the governing board in its dealings with external partners and be an advocate for the school.
- To attend school functions (plays/sports days/prize giving) as appropriate and encourage other governors to do so.
- To ensure that complaints made to the governing board are dealt with in a timely and effective manner.
- The chair will also play a lead role in any decision to suspend the headteacher.

Leading school improvement

- To ensure the board is involved at a strategic level in the school's self-evaluation process and that this feeds into the key priorities.

- To ensure the board's business is focussed on the key strategic priorities.
- To take the lead in representing the governing board at relevant external meetings with agencies such as Ofsted, the Department for Education, and the local authority.
- To ensure the board has mechanisms in place to obtain and listen to the views of parents, pupils, and staff.
- To ensure the governing board adopts a visits protocol which is linked to monitoring key strategic priorities:
- The chair who should already have a good knowledge of the school will need to consider whether s/he needs to continue such formal monitoring visits or whether these are now best delegated to the team.

Leading governing board business

- With the clerk and the headteacher, to plan for the board meetings, ensuring that agendas focus on the board's key responsibilities and strategic priorities and reducing unnecessary paperwork.
- Chair meetings effectively and promote an open culture on the governing board that allows ideas and discussion to thrive whilst ensuring clear decisions are reached as quickly as possible.
- To collaborate with the clerk to establish effective working procedures and sound committee structures.
- To ensure that decisions taken at the meetings of the governing board are implemented.
- To ensure the governing board appoint a professional clerk capable of providing advice on the board's functions and that s/he is appraised and developed.

What skills/attributes should a chair have?

The chair should be able to demonstrate a good selection of the skills/attributes set out below:

- Commitment to the school
- Good understanding of the environment in which the school is operating and wider education policy
- Personal integrity
- Negotiation and diplomacy skills
- Good understanding of the legal responsibilities of the board as both individuals and a corporate entity
- Strong communication skills
- Good organisational skills
- Ability to think strategically
- Ability to prioritise
- Ability to chair meetings well
- Ability to have courageous conversations and make courageous decisions
- Ability to build and get the best out of a team
- Capacity to process information quickly and understand relevant data
- Ability to delegate

The role of the clerk to the governors

The clerk to the governing board is appointed by and accountable to the governing board. The clerk is responsible for advising the governing board on constitutional matters, membership, duties, and powers and works within the broad current legislative framework. He/she ensures the continuity of governing board business and observes confidentiality requirements. In maintained schools, the governing board have a statutory duty to have regard to advice from the clerk to the governing board as to the nature of the governing board's functions.

Key areas of responsibility

The clerk must have a job description from the governing board. The following are examples of some of the main duties a clerk undertakes.

Meetings

- Timely preparation of agendas and papers for meetings in accordance with the regulations.
- Take notes of the meeting, recording attendance, actions, and decisions to enable the preparation of accurate minutes.
- Advise the governing board on governance (legislation, procedural matters) at the meeting.
- Chair the part of the meeting where election of chairman takes place.
- Ensure minutes of meetings are distributed to all governors.

Membership

- Maintain records of the names, addresses, categories, and terms of office for all governors.
- Welcome new governors with information about the governing board and school.
- Supporting the headteacher with staff and parent governor elections.
- Keep the governing board and relevant external agencies informed of all membership changes.
- Maintain a register of all governors' pecuniary interests and review annually.

Advice and information

Acting as an 'information manager' for the governing board which will include:

- Advising the governing board on procedural and legislative matters.
- Ensure governors are kept up to date with relevant information and have a copy of relevant guidance,
- Ensure copies of statutory policies and legally required documents are maintained.
- Ensure records of the governing board's business and correspondence are maintained.
- Advise governors on relevant training.
- Keep up to date with current educational developments and legislation about school governance.
- Liaise with the Local Authority or external agencies where required.

In an academy, the clerk may also be known as the secretary to the governing board. They may also undertake the separate role of Company Secretary which means there are more responsibilities to undertake, particularly concerning company and charity law.

Making the most of meetings

Preparing for meetings

Effective meetings are ones where governors have prepared in advance.

- Read the agenda and all associated meeting papers. These will have been circulated at least 7 clear days in advance to give you time to prepare.
- Write down any questions you wish to ask and positive comments you would like to make and remember to take them with you to the meeting. You do not have to ask all or any of your questions, but it will remind you of what you wanted to know/say if it has not already come up in discussion.
- If the meeting papers contain acronyms or jargon you are not familiar with, ensure you ask for clarification. You may not be the only one who does not know!
- Make sure that you take everything that you will need, e.g. paper, pens, a calculator if finance or performance is on the agenda.
- Arrive in good time.
- Send apologies in advance of the meeting if you are unable to attend or, if you are going to arrive a little late, inform the clerk as this may impact on the order of agenda items.
- Come to meetings prepared to engage in discussion.

Being effective at meetings

- Know and practice the code of conduct for governor behaviour, particularly at meetings, that has been agreed by the governing board.
- Observe meeting protocols, e.g. signal to the chairman your wish to speak.
- Do not butt in, listen carefully, and think before you speak.
- Contribute positively to activities and discussions.
- Keep your contributions as short as possible.
- Stick to the point – do not raise irrelevant issues.
- Put the positive before the negative.
- Ask if there are things you do not understand.
- Be sensitive but assertive but do not be aggressive.
- Do not try to dominate.
- Praise more than criticise.
- Accept a share of responsibility for making the meeting work.
- Accept collective responsibility for what is decided.
- Understand where the boundaries of confidentiality lie.

What to do after a meeting

There are things governors should do after a meeting:

- Review the meeting. Did you play a useful part? If not, consider why and decide what you would want to do differently next time.
- Consider how and when you are going to follow up on any tasks you agreed to take on.
- Remember to observe the confidentiality of what you have seen and heard.
- Reflect upon what impact the governing board meeting will have upon the school in terms of the decisions that have been made.

Voting regulations for meetings

Quorate defines the status of the governing board required by law at meetings of the governing board for its members to validate any formal resolution made by voting.

Quorum is the rule to calculate whether the governing board meeting is 'quorate'.

The clerk's responsibilities

The clerk must ensure that the governing board is quorate before any formal resolution is put to a vote at a full governing board meeting. It is the clerk's responsibility to inform the chair if the meeting is inquorate.

The clerk will need to keep a close eye on who is voting. At full governors' meetings this must only be governors currently in post. Associate members and observers must not vote at full governing board meetings.

What are the quorum rules for meetings?

Maintained school	Academy
For any <i>governing board meeting</i> and vote, a <u>minimum of 50% of governors in post</u> (rounded up to a whole number) must be present at the meeting.	If one third of the number of governors in post equals more than 3 governors rounded up to the nearest whole number, then that is the quorum. If not, then the quorum is 3 governors. This is detailed in the Articles of Association.
The quorum for any <i>committee meeting</i> and vote must be three governors who are members of the committee or more, as determined by the committee	Some decisions affecting the appointment or removal of governors require a different quorum of two-thirds of the number of governors in post.

If the governing board is not quorate, then the voting must be deferred to the next meeting when the governing board is quorate. If this situation arises, the clerk must advise the chair and it must be recorded in the minutes. The clerk must be careful to note if governors leave the meeting early as this may render the meeting 'inquorate'. If this happens the clerk must advise the chair and it must be recorded in the minutes.

When is a vote needed?

Every question to be decided at a meeting of the governing board shall be determined by a majority of the votes of the governors present and voting on the question.

What happens if a vote is tied?

Where there is an equal division of votes the chair or, as the case may be, the person who is acting as chair for the purposes of the meeting (provided that such person is a governor – committee meetings only), shall have a second or casting vote.

Should every governor vote?

All governors are required to declare any 'interest' they may have in an agenda item and should and withdraw from that part of the meeting. Where there is any dispute as to whether a governor is required to withdraw from a meeting of the school and not vote, that question shall be determined by the other governors present at the meeting.

Questions for the governing board to ask

Strong governance is essential for good schools. In too many schools, governing boards are not effective or confident enough. One of a governing board's three key functions is to support and challenge headteachers; holding them to account so that pupils get the best possible education. But governing boards also need support and challenge.

Asking questions

The governing board needs to know its school's strengths and weaknesses.

Knowing your school well and asking challenging questions are elements of effective governance. Governing boards are not always as good as they could be at challenging the school effectively and constructively in a way that leads to improved practice and outcomes. It is intended that the questions below and online will help governors to do this.

Health warning: these questions need to be used appropriately. You need to consider the best time and place to ask any questions – it may be at the relevant committee meeting, rather than in a full governing board meeting, and must be pertinent to the discussion at hand. It is NOT intended that these questions should be handed over to the headteacher and an answer to each one sought. This is not a test for school leaders, but a tool to help governors.

1. Do we have a clear vision for the school?
2. What are the school's values?
3. What are we doing to raise standards for all children?
4. Are we making best use of the Pupil Premium?
5. Have we got the right approach to staffing?
6. How well does the curriculum provide for and stretch all pupils?
7. How does the school promote good behaviour to enhance learning?
8. Do we have a sound financial strategy, make the most efficient use of our resources, obtain good value for money, and have robust procurement and financial systems?
9. Are the buildings and other assets in good condition and are they well used?
10. Do we keep children safe and healthy?
11. How well do we keep parents informed and take account of their views?
12. Does the school offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities which engage all pupils?

20 questions for School Governing Bodies to ask

<http://www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Workings-Of-The-Governing-Body/Governance-Tools/Twenty-Questions.aspx>

Framework for School Governance

<http://www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Workings-Of-The-Governing-Body/Governance-Tools/Framework-for-Governance.aspx>

Eight elements of good governance

1. Right people round the table
2. Understanding role and responsibilities
3. Good chairing
4. Professional clerking
5. Good relationships based on trust
6. Knowing the school: the staff, the parents, the children, the community
7. Committed to asking challenging questions
8. Confident to have courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people

Key characteristics of an effective governing board

Edited extract from School Governance: Learning from the Best, Ofsted 2011.

- Positive relationships between governors and school leaders are based on trust, openness, and transparency. Effective governing boards systematically monitor their school's progress towards meeting agreed development targets. Information about what is going well and why, and what is not going well and why, is shared. Governors consistently ask for more information, explanation, or clarification. This makes a strong contribution to robust planning for improvement.
- Governors are well informed and knowledgeable because they are given high-quality, accurate information that is concise and focused on pupil achievement. This information is made accessible by being presented in a wide variety of formats, including charts and graphs.
- The role of the clerk to the governors is pivotal to ensuring that statutory duties are met, meetings are well organised, and governors receive the information they need in good time. Consequently, governors come to meetings well prepared and with pertinent questions ready so that they can provide constructive challenge.
- Outstanding governors can take and support hard decisions in the interests of pupils: to back the head teacher when they need to change staff, or to change the head teacher when necessary.
- Outstanding governance supports honest, insightful self-evaluation by the school, recognising problems and supporting the steps needed to address them.
- Absolute clarity about the different roles and responsibilities of the headteacher and governors underpins the most effective governance. Protocols, specific duties, and terms of reference are made explicit in written documents.
- Effective governing boards are driven by a core of key governors such as the chair and chairs of committees. They see themselves as part of a team and build strong relationships with the headteacher, senior leaders and other governors.
- In eight of the fourteen schools visited for this study, governors routinely attend lessons to gather information about the school at work. All the governors who were interviewed visit their schools regularly and talk with staff, pupils, and parents. Clear protocols for visits ensure that the purpose is understood by school staff and governors alike. Alongside the information they are given about the school, these protocols help them to make informed decisions, ask searching questions and provide meaningful support.
- School leaders and governors behave with integrity and are mutually supportive. School leaders recognise that governors provide them with a different perspective which contributes to strengthening leadership. The questions they ask challenge assumptions and support effective decision-making.
- Governors in the schools visited, use the skills they bring, and the information they have about the school, to ask challenging questions, which are focused on improvement, and hold leaders to account for pupils' outcomes.

- Time is used efficiently by governors because there are clear procedures for delegating tasks, for example to well organised committees. These committees have clear terms of reference, provide high levels of challenge, and use governors' expertise to best effect. Systems are in place for sharing information and reporting back to the full governing board. This does not merely reiterate what has already been discussed in detail by the committee but focuses on the key points and decisions.
- A detailed timeline of activities, maintained by the clerk and linked to the school development plan, provides a clear structure for the work of governors, and ensures that their time is used appropriately.
- Governors in the schools visited, use their external networks and professional contacts to fill any identified gaps in the collective skills of the governing board.
- There are clear induction procedures for new governors which help them to understand their roles and responsibilities and ensure that best use is made of their varied skills and expertise.
- The governing board constantly reflect on their own effectiveness and readily make changes to improve. They consider their own training needs, as well as how they organise their work.

Information and support

Useful websites for school governors

https://www.governor.support	Governor Support Service website
https://schoolshrcooperative.co.uk/Request_Registration	Register for first time as a new user
https://schoolshrcooperative.co.uk/Courses/GSSCourses	Governor Support Service Course Booker
https://twitter.com/govsandclerks	Governor Support Service on Twitter
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/	All regulations and statutory instruments
https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education	Department for Education (DfE)
https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statutory-guidance-schools	DfE Schools Statutory Guidance
https://www.gov.uk/education	DfE Schools Departmental Advice
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook	DfE Governance Handbook and competency frameworks for governance and clerking
https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency	Education and skills Funding Agency
https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/safeguarding-children	Information on safeguarding children
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2	DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education
https://www.governorsforschools.org.uk/	Governors for Schools (Volunteer recruitment)
https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted	Ofsted Website
www.nga.org.uk/	National Governance Association
www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/get-expert-training/	Safer Recruitment Training for Schools and Governors
http://schools.london.anglican.org	London Diocesan Board for Schools (CofE schools)
http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/schools	Catholic Education Service
http://rcdow.org.uk/education/governors	Diocese of Westminster: London Schools

Key terminology used in school governance

Effective means

- someone or something that is effective works well and produces the result that was intended (successful)

Improvement means

- a change, addition, or the process of making something better or of becoming better than it was before

Leadership means

- the ability to guide, direct, or influence people
- the position of being the leader or being a senior member of a leading team

Strategic means

- assessing and considering the options and carefully planning to achieve a particular goal

Challenge means

- to stimulate somebody by making demands on the intellect
- a questioning of something by requiring an explanation, justification, or proof

Critical means

- being necessary for the success of something
- considering something carefully in a detailed way, expressing an opinion, and deciding what the good and bad aspects are

Data means

- information, evidence, or facts used for making calculations or decisions

Evaluate means

- to consider or examine something to judge its value, quality, importance, extent, or condition
- think carefully before making judgment or decision. to think carefully about something before making a judgment about its value, importance, or quality

Monitor means

- to check something at regular intervals to find out what is happening, how it is progressing or developing
- to watch over somebody or something, especially to ensure that good order or proper conduct is maintained

Support means

- to give active help and encouragement to somebody or something
- to be in favour of something and wish to see it succeed
- to give assistance or comfort to somebody in difficulty or distress
- to approve of an idea or of a person or organisation and help them to be successful

Accountability means

- responsible to somebody or for something
- in a position where people have the right to criticise you or ask you why something happened

Report means

- a spoken or written account that gives information about a particular subject, situation, or event

Useful acronyms

- **ASP** Analyse school performance
- **AWPU** Age Weighted Pupil Units
- **AHT** Assistant Headteacher
- **BESD** Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties
- **CAF** Common Assessment Framework
- **CAMHS** Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- **CCG** Clinical Commissioning Group (NHS)
- **COG** Chair of Governors
- **CPD** Continuing Professional Development
- **DBS** Disclosure and Barring Service
- **DDA** Disability Discrimination Act
- **DFE** Department for Education
- **DHT** Deputy Headteacher
- **ECM** Every Child Matters
- **ESFA** Education and Skills Funding Agency
- **EWO** Education Welfare Officer
- **EWS** Education Welfare Service
- **FE** Further Education
- **FFT** Fischer Family Trust
- **FIS** Financial Information System
- **FSM** Free School Meals
- **FTE** Full Time Equivalent (pupil numbers)
- **GB** Governing board
- **GCSE** General Certificate of Secondary Education
- **HASH** Hillingdon Association of Secondary Headteachers
- **HLTA** Higher Level Teaching Assistant
- **HMI** Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Schools
- **HSE** Health and Safety Executive
- **HT** Headteacher
- **ICT** Information and Communication Technology
- **INSET** In-Service Education and Training
- **KS** Key Stage
- **LA** Local Authority
- **LAC** Looked After Children
- **LSCB** Local Safeguarding Children Board
- **NEET** [young people] Not in Education, Employment or Training
- **NGA** National Governors' Association
- **NPQH** National Professional Qualification for Heads
- **NQT** Newly Qualified Teacher (From September 2021 known as Early Career Teacher [ECT])
- **NVQ** National Vocational Qualification
- **OfSTED** Office for Standards in Education
- **PPG** Pupil Premium Grant
- **PRU** Pupil Referral Unit
- **PSHE** Personal, Social and Health Education
- **PTA** Parents and Teachers Association
- **PTR** Pupil to Teacher Ratio

- **QTS** Qualified Teacher Status
- **SACRE** Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
- **SATs** Standard Assessment Tasks
- **SDP** School Development Plan
- **SEAL** Social Emotional Aspects of Learning
- **SEF** Self-evaluation Form
- **SEN** Special Educational Needs
- **SEND** Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- **SENCo** Special Educational Needs Coordinator
- **SFVS** Schools Financial Value Standard
- **SIP** School Improvement Plan (also known as SDP)
- **SLT** Senior Leadership Team
- **TA** Teaching Assistant
- **TRA** Teaching Regulation Agency



Governor Support Service

Phone: 01895 717321

Email: office@governor.support

New Governors Welcome Checklist

Purpose:

- To welcome new governors to the governing board and enable them to meet other governors and members.
- To encourage new governors to visit the school to experience its atmosphere and understand its ethos.
- To meet the headteacher, staff and children.
- To explain the partnership between the headteacher, school and governing board.
- To explain the role and responsibilities of governors.
- To give background material on the school and current issues.
- To give new governors an opportunity to ask questions about their role and/or the school.
- To explain how the governing board and its committees work.
- To allow new governors to join the most appropriate committee(s).

New Governors will:

- Be welcomed to the governing board by the chair.
- Be invited by the headteacher for an introductory meeting and tour of the school.
- Have the opportunity to meet informally with the chair.
- Have the opportunity to review their first meeting with the *chair/mentor/buddy*.

New Governors will receive an Induction Checklist outlining information to be provided and action required during the first few months in the role. Information will be provided in various formats (paper, online, verbally) and will be annotated as received/actioned on the checklist.

New governors will receive a welcome letter from the clerk on behalf of the governing board and a pack of information with a copy or access to the following documents:

- Governor details form, governing boards may use as part of pre-appointment checks.
- Register of Business/Pecuniary Interests
- List of current governors and contact details (*if individuals have given consent*)
- Code of Practice/Conduct
- List of meeting dates
- Instrument of Government/Copy of Academy Trust Articles of Association
- Minutes of the last two governing board meetings
- List of committee membership, with terms of reference
- The Department of Education link to access the 'Governance' Handbook'
- School Prospectus (*if applicable*)
- Details of The Governor Support Service termly training and development courses

- Contact details for the school
- A calendar of school events
- Recent school newsletters
- Access to or a copy of the School Development Plan
- Access to or a copy of the last Ofsted report (and action plan if appropriate)
- Details of how to access all school policies
- Access to the school self-evaluation
- Plan of the school
- School staff list including subject areas
- Schools visitor policy
- Link to school website *(if applicable)*

Areas that the headteacher brief will include:

- Background to the school
- Current issues facing the school
- Visiting the school *(you may have a policy in place to make reference too)*
- The relationship between the headteacher and the governing board

Areas that the *chair/mentor/buddy* brief will include:

- An overview of the governors role
- How the full governing board and committee meetings are conducted
- Governors responsibilities regarding pecuniary interests
- How to propose agenda items
- Governor training

New governors will be asked to complete and sign the Induction Checklist

The Link Governor *(if you have one)* will provide support and information as required and will be responsible along with the new governors for ensuring the Induction Checklist is completed. A copy of the completed checklist will be kept in school and the original retained by the governor.

New governors will be required to apply for an Enhanced Criminal Record Certificate.

INDUCTION CHECKLIST

Please indicate when you have: -	Completed	Date
Been welcomed to the governing board by the chair		
Met with the headteacher for an introductory meeting and tour of the school		
Met informally with the chair or an existing governor		
Applied for an Enhanced Criminal Record Certificate		
Completed the 'Governor Self Declaration Form'		
Reviewed your first meeting with the chair/governor (if required)		
Completed the Governor Support Service 'Introduction to Governance' course		
Been allocated a 'buddy'		
Completed Safeguarding E-learning		
Completed Channel Awareness E-learning (Prevent Duty)		
Please indicate when you have received: -	Completed	Date
The Department of Education link to access the 'Governance' Handbook'		
School Prospectus (if applicable)		
Details of the governing board committees including their terms of reference		
Details of the Governor Support Service governor training programme		
Dates for future governors meetings		
Copies of the minutes from the last two full governing board meetings		
Details of how to contact other governors		
Contact details for the school		
A calendar of school events		
Recent school newsletters		
Access to or copy of the School Development Plan		
The latest OFSTED report (and action plan if appropriate)		
Details of how to access all school policies		
Plan of the school		
School staff list including subject areas		
Schools visitor policy		
A copy of the Instrument of Government (maintained schools only)		
A copy of or access to The Articles of Association (Academies)		
Code of Practice/Conduct		
Link to the school website		

Sample

Asking the right questions, 23 June 2022

This resource brings together a range of data to help boards analyse, discuss, and challenge the educational and financial performance of their school or academy trust.

Department for Education

[Understanding your data: a guide for school governors and academy trustees -September 2022](#) (Extract)

The [7 themes](#) bring together a broader range of information to help guide board discussions and provide a basis for challenge to ensure value for money is achieved, whilst focusing on educational outcomes.

Examples of typical questions on pupil numbers

- Arrangements on transition from primary to secondary schools
- Pupil projections/ future financial planning including considering those with additional needs that will require additional funding
- Differences between pupil projections and actual pupil numbers
- Number of service pupils/ pupils from traveller families/ seasonal employment trends

Examples of typical questions of absence levels by pupil characteristics

- Gender [different ethnicities](#) and first language
- Different year groups
- Free school meal (FSM) eligibility
- Those with special educational needs and disabilities, or long-term medical conditions
- Those who have needed a social worker (looked after children (LAC) and children in need (CIN))

Examples of typical questions about suspensions and permanent exclusions, those taken off roll and those on roll but attending education off site

- Effectiveness and consistency in implementing the school's behaviour policy
- Instances where pupils receive repeat suspensions
- Interventions in place to support pupils at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion
- rolling average of permanent exclusions to ensure they are used very sparingly
- Timing of moves and permanent exclusions, and whether there are any patterns including any indications which may highlight where policies or support are not working
- The characteristics of children who are suspended or permanently excluded, removed from roll, or educated off site, such as the proportion who have SEND, whether they are supported by social care and have needed social workers, and their ethnic background. This should include considering whether any groups are permanently excluded or moving out of school at a higher rate than others, discussing why this is and whether any changes to practice are required to address disparities
- Whether the placements of pupils directed off site into an Alternative Provision (AP) are reviewed at sufficient intervals to provide assurance the education is achieving its objectives and that the pupils are benefiting from it

Good Governance

[How to ask the right questions, June 2021](#) (Extract)

Being a good questioner is a key governance skill and one that all board members should possess and continually develop. It is all about asking the right questions at the right time.

It is important to be clear about what type of question you are asking. This boils down to the purpose of the question. Good questions are shaped before a word is uttered. Asking the right question is about being clear about what you want from the answer. Are you looking for facts? Expert advice? A well reasoned judgement?

Questions are excellent, multi-purpose tools. In the boardroom there are many different, key types of questions for different purposes and scenarios:

- Establishing the facts
- Developing understanding
- Clarifying
- Providing challenge
- Scrutinising
- Reframing an issue
- Stimulating new ideas or perspectives
- Aiding and assuring decision making
- Identifying risk
- Prompting discussion

Things to avoid

When asking questions because there are such things as bad questions. Asking questions intended to highlight an individual's shortcomings or lack of knowledge can be damaging. Not only can this elicit negative responses, it can create mistrust and disrupt group dynamics.

The Active Learning Trust

[Effective questioning: a toolkit for governors](#) (Extract)

To identify the right question, first and foremost, you need to be a good listener ... this includes

- Articulating – repeating what has been heard and understood – what I hear you saying is ...?
- Clarifying – checking out whether something heard is correct ... trying to achieve a better understanding of the context
- Being Curious – waiting for information before drawing conclusions and identifying solutions
- Silence – giving time - avoiding answering for others or finishing others' sentences