

GOVERNORS' GUIDANCE – WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A GOVERNOR?

The role of a board of governors is to work with the school on strategic planning, developing policies and keeping the school under review. Its responsibilities and powers must be exercised in partnership with the headteacher and staff. Boards have specific legal responsibilities.

This document covers the qualities and commitment a school has a right to expect from the members of its board.

When someone is appointed or elected as a governor at whatever type of school, they not only assume a number of collective corporate legal responsibilities, but also a range of personal commitments. These will vary somewhat according to the phase, type, size and circumstances of the school, but broadly they can be outlined as follows.

The role of a governor

- All governors, especially the chair and vice-chair, should make sure that they understand their statutory responsibilities and duties, including those related to equality and safeguarding.
- A governor is not an inspector or judge.
- No governor has any individual power or authority (except the chairman under certain circumstances).
- Authority is vested corporately in the board as a whole
- All governors have equal status.
- Governors must subscribe to the principle of open government.
- Governors are not representatives or spokespersons. They are appointed or elected as full governors in their own right and need not feel they must vote at the behest of any interest group. Rather they should weigh all factors and make decisions according to what they believe to be the best interests of the school and its pupils.
- They should however, when appropriate, make the board aware of the views and feelings of the people who elected them.
- Governors must always keep parents informed and take account of their views.
- Governors are involved in the strategic direction of the school and should not interfere in its day-to-day operations which are the responsibility of the headteacher.
- Governors are, however, responsible for determining, monitoring and keeping under review the broad plans, policies and procedures of the school.
- It is not their role to assess the quality and methods of teaching.
- They should not meddle in the implementation of the curriculum.
- Governors have no automatic right of entry to the school.

Commitment

- Being a governor does involve giving up significant amounts of time and energy.
- Governors are not ciphers – they must be active and involved, attend regularly and share tasks such as serving on committees, monitoring pair visits and panels (where required).
- Governors must take every opportunity to get to know ‘their’ school, and try to attend as many activities as possible.
- They should also undertake clearly focused personal visits to the school.
- Governors must take responsibility for their own learning and development as governors, and should attend training whenever possible.
- It is crucial to read all on-line material or paperwork and prepare properly for meetings.
- Governors need to be broadly aware of the contents of seminal documents, such as the school improvement plan, Analysing School Performance (ASP) data, the data dashboard, school performance tables, Fischer Family Trust data and the school’s own website.
- All governors must be prepared to undertake regular self-evaluation and be involved in whole school self-evaluation.
- Governors should be loyally supportive to the headteacher, but at the same time be prepared to challenge and hold him/her accountable for school performance.

Confidentiality

- It is vital that governors observe complete confidentiality when required to do so by the board, especially in matters related to individual pupils or staff.
- Governors must not divulge information about members of staff or pupils.
- The opinions expressed by governors and the way they have voted on an issue should not be divulged to anyone outside the governing board.
- It is important that governors exercise great discretion if a potentially contentious issue concerning the school arises outside the board.
- Governors are expected to declare an interest if an item under discussion at any full or committee meeting of governors impinges on their personal, family, financial or business position.
- Governors must remember that matters raised at board meetings must not be discussed until minutes have been produced and agreed.
- Confidential un-minuted items should never be divulged outside the meeting.

Conduct

- Governors must work as a team at all times and be loyal to collective decisions.
- It follows that governors will not speak out against majority decisions in public or private outside the board.
- Governors should not feel they can act on behalf of the board unless they have delegated authority to do so.
- When responding to or making criticism or complaints affecting the school, governors must follow agreed procedures as agreed with the school leadership and management.
- School visits should conform to the code of conduct agreed between the headteacher and the board of governors.
- It is the duty of governors always to be mindful of their responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the school.
- It is incumbent on governors to seek to develop effective working relationships with the headteacher, staff and parents, and other service providers as well as the local community.
- Governors must be aware of their role in the context of the Equality Act 2010 in that they must at all times act fairly, and without prejudice.
- Governors must be aware of their duty to uphold fundamental British values.

References

- [DFE Governance Handbook](#) (September 2015) section 1 and section 2.