

Guidance for Prospective Governors

Becoming a Governor

This guidance is particularly directed at parents and members of the local community who are thinking of becoming a governor. Hopefully this provides you with a good overview, the commitment required and the expectations of the role. If after reading this you would like to find out any more information please contact Mrs Stephanie Bevan, Clerk to Governors at clerktogovernors@northduffield.n-yorks.sch.uk

School governors are people who want to make a positive contribution to children's education. Governors are one of the largest volunteer forces in the country and have an important part to play in raising school standards. The role of the governing body is key to the effectiveness of a school. Repeatedly, Ofsted has noted that the most effective schools demonstrate effective leadership and management - including by the governing body.

What do governors do?

Being a school governor is both a rewarding and challenging experience. Governors provide strategic leadership and accountability in schools.

The governing body supports and works in partnership with the head and staff by positively promoting the work of the school, celebrating its achievements, and working to ensure the best outcomes for the pupils. Governors appoint the Headteacher and are involved in the appointment of other staff. Governors hold the main responsibility for finance in schools, and ask questions to check the performance of the school. Working with the Headteacher, governors make the tough decisions about balancing resources.

Each individual governor is a member of a governing body, which is established in law as a corporate body. Individual governors may not act independently of the rest of the governing body. Decisions are the joint responsibility of the governing body. So long as they act within the law governors are protected from any financial liability for the decisions they take.

What is the role of the governing body?

The role of the governing body is a strategic one. Governors are responsible for the conduct of the school and must promote high standards of educational achievement at the school. In all types of schools, governing bodies should have a strong focus on key strategic functions:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Hold the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- Oversee the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.
- Set the aims and objectives for the school
- Set the policies for achieving those aims and objectives
- Set the targets for achieving those aims and objectives
- Monitor and evaluate the progress the school is making towards achievement of its aims and objectives

- Be a source of challenge and support to the Head Teacher.

In order to do this, governors need to gain knowledge of how their school operates through attending meetings, reading school documentation, analysing data and engaging in regular visits to the school.

The role of the governing body is one of oversight and it is not involved in the day to day management of the school.

The Headteacher is responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school and the implementation of the strategic framework established by the governing body. The Headteacher role includes the educational performance of the school and operational responsibility lies with them.

Who can become a governor?

Almost anyone over 18 years of age can become a governor. There are no particular qualifications or requirements, other than a willingness to give time to the role and a capacity for working with other people.

What will I get out of being a school governor?

- The knowledge that you have played a part in improving children's education and supported the school's staff.
- A chance to develop new skills and to practice existing ones, such as chairing meetings, speaking in groups, asking questions, making suggestions and appointing staff.
- A chance to help other members of the team, perhaps because they are new, are not used to committee work or need help in learning about the school and about school governance.

What makes a good school governor?

- You care about improving children's educational attainment.
- You want to contribute to the local community.
- You can work corporately and value the contributions of other people who may hold alternative views to your own. You also understand the concept of corporate decision-making.
- You are willing to undertake training to enhance your skills and knowledge
- You are willing to ask questions.
- You are open to ideas and willing to learn.

What can you offer?

- Enthusiasm.
- Commitment.
- As a member of the school's community, your local knowledge will be valuable.
- Individual schools will find business or other professional skills particularly helpful.

Categories of School Governors

There are different categories of governor, the Governing Body of North Duffield School consists of the following:

- Parent
- Staff
- Local Authority
- Co-opted

The type of governor you will become depends on your situation; however all governors have the same roles and responsibilities once part of the governing body.

How the Governing Body Works

The full Governing Body at North Duffield School normally meets 6 times per year; we endeavour to keep these meetings to a maximum of 2 hours. In addition to these meetings governors, through their skills, also take responsibility on sub-committees. The Governing Body also appoints individual governors to be 'Link Governors' for areas of the curriculum and designated governors for SEN and Child Protection. The Link Governor is a governor appointed by the governing body to act as the link or liaison between the governing body and a specific subject, curriculum area or aspect of the work of the school.

Being a governor is a rewarding role where governors give support to the school, be a critical friend where questions are asked to ensure the best outcomes for the children are achieved.

Effective governors attend the school regularly to see and understand how the school operates. They undertake governor visits for a particular purpose and produce reports for their governor colleagues. Governors will be expected to receive and understand reports from the Headteacher and senior leaders so that they can question, challenge and support, thereby improving the quality of the whole educational provision.

The governing body operates a code of conduct which sets an ethos of professionalism and high expectations of governors. You will be provided with this as part of your induction into the school and will be expected to work within it, since a governing body operates as a corporate entity with corporate responsibility.

Skills and Experience

Governing bodies rely on a range of skills and experiences. You will need a strong commitment to the role, the inquisitiveness to question and analyse, and the willingness to learn and undertake whatever training or development activity is needed to fill any gaps in the skills you have to contribute to effective governance.

Good interpersonal skills, a basic level of literacy in English and sufficient numeracy skills to understand basic data are essential.

Training and Support

There is a programme of training available to assist you in your role. The governing body is committed to developing the skills and experience of governors to promote success in the role. As a new governor you will attend induction training and a programme of further training to help you fulfil the role.