



The Federation of The Annunciation Catholic Schools Governors Induction Handbook



The Federation of The Annunciation Catholic Schools

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The Federation of The Annunciation Catholic Schools

"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire"

St. Catherine of Siena

Dear Governor,

I am writing to welcome you to your new role as a school governor and would like to thank you for the commitment you are making. School governors are an intrinsic part of the Government's aim to build an education system that is not only universally excellent, but universally responsive to its users too.

As a new governor there may seem to be a significant amount to learn about schools and education. Whatever your background and whether you are appointed or elected, you and other governors will take strategic decisions about our schools and ensure that the schools are accountable to all stakeholders.

I know you will want to do all you can to preserve and develop the Catholic ethos, raise school standards and give every child in our school the opportunity to progress, succeed and fulfil their potential. I am delighted that you have decided to give your time, energy and commitment to The Annunciation Catholic Schools I and wish you every success in your new role.

Yours sincerely,

Anne O'Shea
Chair of Governors

Who Can Become a School Governor?

Anyone can apply to be a school governor, however:

A governor must be aged 18 or over at the time of their election or appointment.

A person cannot hold more than one governorship at the same school.

A person is disqualified from holding or from continuing to hold office as a governor if they:

- Are at any time during their period of office detained under the Mental Health Act 1983.
- Have failed to attend the governing board meetings for a continuous period of six months, beginning with the date of the first meeting they failed to attend, without the consent of the governing board (not applicable to ex officio governors)
- Are bankrupt
- Are subject to a disqualification order or disqualification undertaking under the Company Directors Act 1986, a disqualification order under Part 2 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, a disqualification undertaking accepted under the Company Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, or an order made under section 492(2)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986 (failure to pay under county court administration order)
- Have been removed from the office of charity trustee or trust for a charity by the Charity Commissioners of High Court on grounds of any misconduct or mismanagement, or under Section 7 of the LAW Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990 from being concerned in the management or control of any body.
- Are included in the list of teachers or workers prohibited or restricted from working with children or young people.
- Are disqualified from working with children.
- Are disqualified from being an independent school proprietor, teacher or employee by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.
- Have received a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months (without the option of a fine) in the five years before becoming a governor or since becoming a governor.
- Have received a prison sentence of 2.5 years or more in the 20 years before becoming a governor
- Have at any time received a prison sentence of five years or more
- Have been fined for causing a nuisance or disturbance on school premises during the five years prior to or since appointment or election as a governor.
- Refuse an application being made to the Criminal Records Bureau for a criminal records certificate.

(DBS) Check

This is primarily available to anyone involved in working with children or vulnerable adults. A DBS Disclosure shows current and spent convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings held on the Police National Computer.

As you are going to work as a volunteer for an organisation where your work will bring you into contact with children, you will be asked to apply for a DBS check. A governor's appointment is subject to satisfactory clearance through the (DBS) procedure.

A governor who refuses to undertake a DBS disclosure is disqualified from holding office.

What being a school governor involves?

- Formal Meetings of the Governing Board — the law requires governing boards to meet at least three times a year.
 - Reading — between meetings, governors need to read minutes of the last meeting, agenda of the next meeting, supporting papers and documents.
 - Committee meetings or working parties — most governing boards have established committees to undertake various aspects of their work.
 - School visits — governors need to visit their schools regularly — say once a term — to see the school in action.
 - Training courses — governors should aim to keep themselves well informed and up to date by attending relevant courses arranged by Westminster Diocesan Education Service and London Borough of Barnet. You will receive an invitation to attend induction training, which is held termly.
 - Staff appointments — governors may serve on staff appointment panels.
 - Pupil exclusions — governors may sit on panels to consider pupil exclusions.
 - Staff grievance and disciplinary panels — on rare occasions governors may serve on panels to hear staff grievance and disciplinary issues.
 - General Support to your schools concerts, prize giving, plays, fund-raising events etc.
 - Your contributions — the most important quality that you bring is an interest in the schools and in the education of young people, together with the skills and knowledge that you have acquired through your life, such as parenting and/or some expertise in a particular.
- Most governing boards have established committees and appointed link governors to carry out the detail of their work. The areas generally covered by committees are premises, health and safety, curriculum, staffing, finance and admissions and they offer an ideal way to put any particular skills that you have acquired to good use.

Governing Board Meetings

Frequency, notice & duration of meetings

You will usually be given a schedule of meetings for the academic year. You should receive your papers seven days before the meeting. The papers set out details of the date, time and place.

At certain times of the school year governors have particular business to settle, for example the budget. These occasions are built into the planned schedule of meetings, which are set out at the start of the year.

Agenda

The agenda will list all the items that are to be discussed at the meeting. Consider the agenda carefully before the meeting and make notes where there are items of particular interest or importance to you or where you want to ask a question.

Quorum

Governing Board and committee meetings must be quorate.

Minutes

The clerk takes minutes of the meeting which are a record of what happens at that meeting. All governors receive a draft version of the minutes and are given the opportunity to suggest amendments and raise matters arising at the next meeting.

Attendance

Any governor who, without permission, is absent from meetings of the full Governing Board for a continuous period of six months will cease to be a governor. If you need to offer apologies for a meeting this should be done through the Chair or the Clerk in advance of the meeting with the reason for your absence noted.

Confidentiality

Governing board meetings are not open to the public.

Governors observe confidentiality regarding proceedings of the Governing Board in meetings and from their visits to school as governors. How an individual governor votes should always be regarded as confidential.

The minutes of any part of the meeting that are confidential should be kept separate. In the main confidential items will be those where the privacy of an individual needs to be respected.

The regular full Governing Board meetings are important for:

- determining strategy;
- fulfilling statutory obligations;
- making decisions;
- reviewing performance
- considering school problems
- encouraging the Governing Board to work as a team

Meetings are effective when:

- they start on time;
- items on the agenda are properly introduced and explained;
- the governors have all read the reports to be considered, and prepared their comments on the reports;
- everyone is encouraged to participate and is listened to;
- it is clear what actions are taken, by whom and when.

You can play your part by:

- preparing well for the meeting — read the agenda and other papers;
- taking papers with you to the meeting;
- making relevant contributions to the discussions;
- listening to the contributions of others;
- accepting that decisions made by the Governing Board are a collective responsibility;
- noting any tasks you have agreed to carry out and then fulfilling them.
- joining a committee and /or becoming a link governor and taking a special interest in a particular area of school life. You might be asked, on rare occasions, to sit on a pupil or staff discipline committee.

Please remember that if you are unable to attend a meeting you should always tender your apologies to the Clerk/Chair

- **Link Governors:** are appointed by the Governing Board to take interest in a particular area of the school such as special needs or health and safety, and to keep governors up to date on the issues.

Getting to know your school

Visiting the school

Governors need to get to know their schools if they are to do their job effectively. As a new Governor, you will want to make an introductory visit as soon as possible to help you get to know the schools. Visits should be arranged through the Headteacher, who will welcome your visit.

All governors are encouraged to visit the schools on a regular basis to see them in operation and to meet the staff and pupils. Visits should be planned and purposeful and should contribute to the work of the Governing Board. You can ask about your Governing Board's arrangements when you make your first visit or at the first meeting you attend.

Governors need to be clear about their role when carrying out a school visit. The visit should not be undertaken in the role of a school inspector, but rather to gain information about certain aspects of the school in order to help the Governing Board to support the school and to make informed decisions.

Most visits will take governors into classrooms. Governors will want to introduce themselves to staff and pupils, and to find the opportunity to have a few words with the member of staff before leaving. It is worth remembering that the presence of a visitor does change things, and governors should bear this in mind.

Governors should report back to the Headteacher, preferably before leaving the school. This gives them a chance to report on their impressions and to ask any questions arising from the visit.

A governor's visit should ultimately enrich the whole Governing Board's understanding of the school as well as the visiting governors. The Governing Board should receive a report of the visit at the next meeting.

Governor Dos and Don'ts

Governing Boards Do:

- set the overall budget for the school
- decide on the number of staff
- decide on the level of pay for teachers
- help to decide the priorities for the school when the school improvement plan is being developed
- ensure the national curriculum is taught to all pupils
- set targets for pupil achievement
- publish national test and exam results
- compare the performance of their school to similar schools
- receive information about the quality of teaching in the school
- have a published strategy for dealing with parental complaints and concerns
- ensure health and safety issues are addressed
- set the times of school sessions
- consult the Head Teacher when making decisions
- ask challenging questions
- help develop school policies and procedures
- consider the repair and maintenance of school buildings
- consider the use of school premises outside school hours
- appoint committees of governors to look at specific issues such as finance, staffing, curriculum and premises.

Governing Boards Don't:

- inspect the school
- report on the quality of teaching after visiting the school
- authorise all expenditure
- share concerns about staff capability
- decide on how pupils are taught different subjects
- have the right to exclude a pupil
- write the school's policies on their own
- rubber stamp recommendations from the Head Teacher
- automatically approve all apologies for absence for meetings sent by governors
- need to be aware of the performance objectives which had been set for individual teachers
- write the Ofsted action plan

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR GOVERNING BOARD

1. Categories of schools

Schools use various descriptors, e.g. infants, junior, primary, secondary, but the Governing Board's powers are more affected by the school's category. There are three categories of LA maintained schools — Community, Foundation and Voluntary. Voluntary schools may be Aided or Controlled. There are many similarities between responsibilities of the Governing Boards in different categories of school; for example, all are eligible to receive a delegated budget. The main differences are set out below. Since 2014 the number of schools categorised as Academies has increased significantly. Different rules of Governance apply to Academies and to Multi-Academy-Trusts (MATs). Some schools are part of a Federation. Governor responsibilities relating to Academies are not covered in this document

a) Community Schools

LAs own the land and buildings and retain legal responsibility for staffing. In practice Governing Boards exercise those functions under delegation.

b) **Foundation Schools** own their land and buildings and are the direct employers of staff.

c) **Voluntary Controlled Schools VC schools** are established by a voluntary body, usually the Church. Collective worship in these schools is in accordance with the Trust Deed. In appointing a Headteacher, the Governors may appoint someone who is able to preserve and develop the religious character of the school.

d) **Voluntary Aided Schools** Established by a voluntary body, usually the church, and consequently generally have a religious character. The Governing Board is responsible for the religious education and worship policy, and foundation Governors are in a majority. Trustees own the land and buildings, and the Governing Board is the legal employer of staff. It is also responsible for 10% of the cost of capital and external maintenance works, and for the admissions policy.

2. **Number of pupils** Check how many pupils there are on roll at your school and the standard annual intake as well as the number of classes and teachers.

3. **Size and Composition** of Governing Board. The Instrument of Government is determined by the Governing Board and may vary in size from 9 to 20 Governors. (Regulations for Instruments of Government approved after 2012 are slightly different.) Every new Governor should receive a copy of their school's Instrument of Government, which states the current size and composition of their Governing Board. You will notice that there are different types of Governors representing different groups of people or are co-opted by the rest of the Governors as Co-opted Governors.

a) Types of Governor

The composition of a Governing Board should reflect a wide range of groups from the community.

Parent Governors are elected to be representative of the parent body. They should keep in touch with those who elected them but make up their own minds on how to vote on any specific issue. No one who works in the school for more than 500 hours in any 12-month period commencing 1 August and finishing 31 July is eligible for appointment or election as a parent **Governor**. **Similarly, elected members of the Local Authority are disqualified.**

Staff Governors include the Headteacher (who must be counted in the staff Governor category whether or not he/she has resigned his/her Governorship), teaching and non-teaching staff. With the exception of the Headteacher, staff governors are elected and should communicate with those who elected them. All staff governors should make up their own minds on how to vote on any specific issue.

Local Authority Governors are appointed by the Local Authority that maintains the school. Positions can be filled to reflect the local political balance, but this is not obligatory. As with all other Governors they should be appointed with a view to their commitment to raising standards. They should keep in touch with those who appoint them but should vote according to the best interests of the school. No one who is eligible to be a staff Governor can be appointed as an LA Governor.

Foundation Governors are normally appointed by either the Diocese or the local church, or by some other foundation body.

b) **Clerk to Governors.** The Governing Board appointed the Clerk to Governors. The Clerk is not a Governor. The person appointed is paid for the work they do, plus expenses for postage etc. The Clerk should be able to advise the Governing Board on constitutional and procedural matters, powers and duties as well as:

- noting the decisions made at Governing Board meetings;
- receiving correspondence and bringing it to the attention of Governors;
- issuing correspondence on behalf of Governors;
- circulating notice of meetings and other information to Governors;
- preparing and sending out papers before and after Governing Board meetings and committee meetings, in consultation with the Chair.

c) **The Headteacher is responsible for:**

- the internal organisation, management and control of the school;
- formulating aims and objectives, policies and targets for the Governing Board to consider adopting;
- advising on and implementing the Governing Board strategic framework;
- giving Governors the information they need to help the school raise its standards.

d) **Chair of Governors**

The Chair of Governors has a key role on the Governing Board. It is the Chair's responsibility to:

- ensure the business of the Governing Board is conducted properly, in accordance with legal requirements;

- ensure meetings are run effectively, focussing on priorities and making best use of time available, and ensuring that all members have an equal opportunity to participate in discussion and decision-making;
- establish and foster an effective relationship with the Headteacher based on trust and mutual respect for each other's roles. The Chair has an important role in ensuring that the Governing Board acts as a sounding board to the Headteacher and provides strategic direction.

e) Meetings of Governing Board

The law says that the full Governing Board must meet at least three times a year. It is up to the Governing Board to decide how often they meet beyond this.

If an issue of serious concern arises, three governors may call for an extra meeting to take place. They must give written notice to the Clerk that summarises the business to be conducted. The Clerk has to arrange the meeting. There must always be at least seven days' notice of a meeting unless the Chair decides there is an urgent need to call a meeting at short notice.

A meeting schedule for all meetings of the Governing Board is published before the beginning of the school year. Although there may be some changes to meeting dates, every attempt is made to keep changes to a minimum.

f) Committees of Governing Board

The Governing Board can delegate some of its decision-making powers to committees. These committees take decisions on relevant matters and report back to the Governing Board what they have done. The Governing Board must decide the remit of each committee and this must be stated in the committee's terms of reference.

The Committee structure at The Annunciation Catholic Schools

Pupils, Parents and the Community Committee

Religious Education, Teaching and Learning Committee

Finance and Resources Committee

Admissions Committee

Staffing Committee

1. Be a Representative not a Delegate Governors are elected or appointed by particular groups of people. However, this does not mean that governors have to vote in a particular way because they have been pressed to do so by members of that group, for example:

Example 1

Parent governors will listen to the views of parents. They will talk to various parents about important decisions that have to be made, but when it comes to making those decisions the Parent Governors must act in the best interest of the schools. They should, however, make the views of those parents known to the whole Governing Board.

Example 2

Staff governors do not have to vote in a particular way simply because a group of teachers feel strongly about an issue although they should make the views known to the whole Governing Board.

Governors are there to ensure that different stakeholders have a voice on the Governing Board. Common sense and sensitivity to the range of views people have will ensure that decisions will have a wide base of acceptance.

2. Collective Not Individual

Governors operate as a team, and they should tackle problems together. If everyone is prepared to get involved, the workload can be shared out evenly. When decisions have to be made and action taken, make sure that your Governing Body has clarified each governor's individual role.

3. Accountability

An important part of a Governing Board's role is to ensure that the schools are providing quality education for all children. The best way governors can fulfil this role is to ask the right questions on issues that concern the life of the schools. Governors should always concern themselves with the welfare of the schools. Above all, you want to be a supporter and critical friend of the schools, helping them to achieve for the children.

The Headteacher is responsible for the internal organisation and management of the schools, but will look to the governors for support and challenge. It is the duty of the governors, working with the Headteacher, to keep under review the way the schools are developing.

4. The Purpose and Roles of Governing Boards

a) To help schools to provide the best possible education for their pupils by:

- Preserving and developing the Catholic ethos
- setting the schools' values, vision and strategic aims, agreeing plans and policies, and making creative use of resources;
- monitoring and evaluating performance, acting as a critical friend to the Headteacher to support and challenge them in managing the schools.
- ensuring that the schools are accountable to the children and parents they serve, to their local community, to those who fund and maintain them, as well as to the staff they employ.

b) Governing Boards working strategically:

- focus on raising standards of achievement, establishing high expectations and promoting effective teaching and learning, so that pupils achieve to their potential;
- decide what they want the schools to achieve (the vision), and make plans to get there;
- ensure that all those who have an interest in the success of the schools contribute when the values, vision and aims are being agreed;
- help to set and keep under review the policies that provide a broad framework within which the Headteacher and staff should run the schools.
- support the schools in implementing their self-evaluation strategy and ensure that weaknesses identified are addressed in the school improvement plans;
- ensure the effective and efficient use of all resources to achieve the schools' priorities and secure value for money;
- ensure that there are systems in place to check that progress is being made towards targets and that evidence is gathered;
- use that evidence to review overall progress against targets, to see whether policies and practice are effective, and to check on their schools' achievements and progress over time and in comparison, with similar schools;
- manage their workload so that their agenda/work schedule is consistent with the schools';
- take advice on all of this from the Headteacher before making their own decisions.

In many circumstances the Headteacher will bring issues to the Governing Board which have solutions that everyone accepts. The Governing Board collectively endorses the way in which such an issue is to be tackled. The place for debate about contentious issues is in the Governing Board or committee before any decision is taken. Once a decision is taken governors have a collective responsibility to try to ensure, as far as possible, that the decision is acted upon. If something really is very contentious and you cannot agree with it, you can ask for your dissent to be minuted. While governors should always be prepared to explain their decisions and keep them under review, it is unhelpful and often very destructive when an issue has been decided upon, to re-open debate outside the Governing Board.

5. Confidentiality

Discussions that the Governing Board has regarding a member of staff, their individual pay and conditions and any personal issues they have brought to the attention of governors are strictly confidential. Matters relating to the circumstances of a particular child are also confidential. It may be tempting to talk to other governors about such issues outside the formal Governing Board meetings but this should be avoided.

b) Controversy

There are occasions when governors have to discuss matters that are difficult to resolve. The fact that an issue is controversial and difficult to resolve is not sufficient reason for the matter to be deemed a confidential item, as this could stifle discussion. When controversial decisions have to be made, it is important that people see them being dealt with in a manner that is open and fair and that governors are consistent in their practice. In many Governing Boards, issues are generally resolved by discussion, which leads to general agreement and formal votes are rarely taken.

7. Supporter of the School

Every governor is there to lend their support in ensuring that the schools are doing their best for all children. There are many ways in which governors can offer their support, so:

Work as a team!

Be supportive of the Headteacher and staff by:

- offering your skills;
- giving time to the schools;
- making purposeful visits;
- delegating tasks sensibly;
- preparing to volunteer.

Be well informed by:

- reading school, LA and DfE documents as identified;
- attending governor training;
- visiting the schools;
- listening to others;
- Observing how things are done.

Develop good relationships by:

- talking to teachers, parents and pupils;
- maintaining contacts with your community;
- talking about the schools and their success;
- attending school events and bring others along;
- being a good ambassador for the schools;
- being a critical friend to the schools.

8. Being a 'Critical Friend'

The Governing Board provides the Head and staff with support, advice and information, drawing on its members knowledge and experience. In these ways the Governing Board acts as a critical friend to the schools; critical in the sense of its responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the schools' effectiveness, asking challenging questions and pressing for improvement; a friend because it exists to promote the interests of the schools and pupils.

By being a 'critical friend' to the schools' this an ideal way in which the Governing Board can help the schools to work towards their goals and implement their strategic plan.

This involves:

- Monitoring progress.
- Valuing and praising achievements.
- Challenging low performance and poor achievement.

Examples of challenging questions having received a report from the Headteacher or coordinator:

- How did you arrive at the conclusions contained within this report?
- Who have you consulted?
- What improvements are evident?
- How do you know?
- Has progress been as intended?
- What are the main areas for further development?
- Who is responsible for further developments?
- What impact is intended and how will we know how well things are going?

For most governors this process will take place in Governing Board meetings where progress reports are received and questions asked. The skills of active listening and straight talking are essential in this process. If the role of 'critical friend' is to develop there has to be a relationship of trust based on shared goals and mutual respect.

For governors with specific responsibilities, i.e. the Special Needs Governor, Literacy Governor or Curriculum Governor, the 'critical friend' role may take place when working with members of staff or in committees.

It is not the responsibility of governors to understand the professional issues involved in teaching. Governors will monitor performance by looking at the results; the goals achieved, the confidence of pupils and ethos of the schools. Opportunities to 'value' and 'praise' achievement offer effective means of encouraging staff.

WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DO GOVERNORS HAVE?

1. Responsibility for Effective School Improvement Planning

a) Effective School Improvement Planning:

- states the agreed values, aims and objectives for the schools and focuses on raising standards of educational achievement;
- reflects local and national trends and initiatives that might impact on the schools e.g. rising/falling rolls and the priorities in the LA's Education Development Plan (EDP);
- is derived from rigorous self-evaluation
- is shared and understood by all concerned;
- has SMART targets (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-limited);
- has named people responsible for action;
- has explicit links to school budgets;
- identifies training and support needs;
- states the evidence that will demonstrate success;
- makes clear how, when and by whom progress will be monitored and evaluated;
- drives the agendas for the Governing Board meetings and the Headteacher's objectives.

So, what does Improvement planning involve?

Firstly, you need to review the current position by asking:

- Where are the schools now?
- How are things going currently?
- What is going well?
- What are the areas for development?
- Are there any urgent needs?

It is now possible to identify exactly what needs to be done by governors asking:

- Where do we want the schools' to be in X months (or X years) time?
- What are we hoping to achieve?
- By when?
- Which are the most important things our schools needs to do now?

Plans need action. It is important to work out how each priority set for the schools will be achieved, so governors will ask questions like:

- Who will be involved in this process?
- Is there enough staff time?
- Are there any existing resources that could be used?
- Can resources be re-directed to this priority?
- Is there a direct financial cost?
- What are the potential knock-on effects?
- Will this prevent something else from being done?
- Who will do what, by when and with whom?
- Who is monitoring and evaluating this part of the plan?
- What are the anticipated benefits?
- How will we know we have achieved what we set out to do?

All these issues need sorting out before the Governing Board decides whether to proceed with this priority or not. With all this information about each activity you will be able to discuss the relative merits of each one so that you can give an order of priority to each potential development.

Having established an order of priority for each activity it is necessary to see if the budget will permit some or all of them to take place, bearing in mind that:

- With these decisions made the budget can be set for the coming financial year.
- Some priorities may have to be deferred to another financial year because of budgetary constraints.

It is very important to decide now (i.e. before any action is taken) how you will measure success for each priority, in other words:

- How will we know we have done it?
- What information will have to be collected as we proceed?
- What will be reported back to the Governing Board?
- Have the benefits identified been achieved?

As the Action Plan is implemented for a particular priority it may be necessary to modify particular elements or even recast priorities. At the end of the financial year there needs to be a review of what has happened and where things need to go from there.

b) The Five-Stage Cycle for School Improvement



2. Responsibility for Finance

LAs fund their schools through the Fair Funding System, approved by the Secretary of State. Money delegated to schools comes from Central Government Grants and Local Government taxation.

School budgets are largely based on the number and age of their pupils (AWPU — Age Weighted Pupil Units). Governing Boards need to anticipate and plan for the effects of fluctuations in pupil numbers.

Approval/monitoring of the budget can be delegated to a committee but not to an individual. The budget must be spent and managed to ensure that the National Curriculum and Religious Education are taught and to meet other legal requirements, e.g. Personnel, Health and Safety.

Governors need to ensure that they achieve value for money in the use of resources. Value for money is about achieving the best possible outcomes for pupils in the cost-efficient way and at reasonable cost.

Governing Boards need to demonstrate that they are applying the four principles of best value in their management and allocation of resources. This means considering the 4 C's:

- **Compare** — how a school's performance compares with that of other schools
- **Challenge** — whether the school's performance is high enough, and why and how a service is being provided
- **Compete** — how the school secures economic, efficient and effective services
- **Consult** — seeking the views of stakeholders about the services provided

The Government has issued a standard framework of income and expenditure items for schools. This will enable all schools to benchmark and compare spending with similar schools. Data will be collected from maintained schools in England at the end of each financial year and placed on a benchmarking website that will allow school managers, governors, parents and Local Education Authority staff to benchmark. The site will also hold guidance on ways to benchmark and on sharing best practice.

Once the Governing Board has decided how to allocate the budget, the day-to-day management of that is passed to the Headteacher and staff. However, governors need to satisfy themselves that everything is in order, so you need to check that:

- Clear guidelines are in place that governors have agreed to.
- Clear lines of responsibility exist for financial matters.
- Spending limits and other financial controls have been agreed.
- Regular reports are made to governors to update them on the budgetary situation.
- Areas of concern are fully discussed.

4. Governing Boards and Staffing

In Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools the Governing Board is the legal employer of staff.

Governors of Church Schools have varying safeguards to appoint teachers and senior staff who will support the religious ethos, depending on the category of school. Voluntary Aided church schools have most autonomy, and governors of these schools may advertise for teachers (including Headteacher and Deputy) who are practising members of the relevant faith.

The Governing Board decides the number of staff (both teaching and non-teaching).

The Governing Board and Headteacher have separate and particular responsibilities for selecting and managing staff. In every school with a delegated budget, the Governing Board has extensive powers over staffing, and is accountable under employment law for these responsibilities.

Decisions about staffing are both important and complex, and Governing Boards will want to make sure that they make full use of the advice available to them. Such guidance is available from LAs, dioceses and the 'Guide to the Law for School Governors'.

Appointing the Headteacher

The appointment of the Headteacher is the most important decision a Governing Board makes.

The Governing Board should set up a selection panel for the appointment of the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher and the process to be followed is clearly defined. Many LAs and dioceses provide training to ensure that it is managed correctly. In addition, Governing Boards have a duty to consider advice from the LA before making a decision. This advisory role of the LA applies automatically in all maintained schools except Voluntary Aided and Foundation Schools where it should be agreed by the Governing Board. Beyond

this, the LA has a separate entitlement to make representations about any unsuitable Headteacher candidates. This applies to all maintained schools.

4. Appointing Deputy Heads

The Governing Board decides how many, and if any, Deputy Headteachers the school should have. The appointment process for Deputy Headteachers is almost identical to that followed for the Headteacher.

6. Appointing other Staff

The Governing Board will lead on appointments within the leadership group and the Headteacher will lead on the rest of the staff. The Headteacher may involve other governors in considering those matters but should remain in the lead.

7. Performance Management

Performance management of the Headteacher and teaching staff is a key process designed to raise standards in schools. It involves the setting of objectives for individual teachers by team leaders, the monitoring of progress, provision of relevant training and development, and a formal review of progress at the end of each cycle. The Governing Board has two key tasks:

- to ensure that the performance management policy is being implemented and is having a positive effect. Many schools have decided to apply the policy to all staff.
- to appoint two or three governors to agree performance management objectives with the Headteacher; to monitor progress and to formally review the overall performance of the Headteacher; to make recommendations to the governors dealing with decisions on the Headteacher's salary.

7. Dismissal of Staff

A Governing Board can ultimately decide that someone working at the school should be dismissed, though, from September 2003, the Headteacher would be expected to make the initial decision. In schools with a religious character, such as Voluntary Aided schools, this would involve a Foundation Governor acting with the Headteacher. The Governing Board would have to establish a committee to hear any appeals against dismissals.

A committee of the Governing Board would make the decision in the case of a Headteacher and would establish a separate committee to hear any appeal.

9. Other relevant parts of Employment Law

The main requirements for governing boards are that they:

- must not discriminate on the grounds of sex, race or disability in appointing staff; all staff must be given reasonable opportunities for training and promotion;
- must give the representatives of recognised, independent trade unions any information that would help them in negotiations with the Governing Board, where this would be following good industrial relations practice; an example would be providing information about the budget;
- must not force a member of staff to join or take part in union activities, or prevent him or her from doing so;

- must respect the rights of staff to return to work after leaving to have children;
- must respect the rights of safety representatives and officials of independent recognised trade unions to take time-off with pay for specified purposes.

10. Remodelling the Workforce

In January 2003, the Government, along with employers and the vast majority of school workforce unions, signed the National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload. The National Agreement sets out a number of measures designed to tackle teacher workload including a concerted attack on unnecessary paperwork and bureaucracy, a review of support staff roles, and a series of phased changes to teachers' contracts. For example:

- since September 2003, teachers can no longer routinely be required to carry out administrative and clerical tasks and those with leadership and management responsibilities must be given a reasonable allocation of time in which to carry out those duties;
- since September 2004 there has been an annual limit of 38 hours on the time that can be spent covering for absent colleagues;
- and since September 2005 teachers have been guaranteed at least 10% of their timetabled teaching time for planning, preparation and assessment; and they will no longer be required to invigilate external examinations and tests.

11. The School Profile

The School Profile, which replaced the Governor Report to Parents, has now also been scrapped but governors are still required to communicate this information to parents. The School newsletter and web site are used for this communication.

12. Special Educational Needs

Most governing boards appoint a governor or committee to have specific oversight of the schools' arrangements and provision for meeting special educational needs and disability (SEND). This guidance is intended to assist those governors who have been appointed to fulfil this role.

a) What are the things that the Governing Board must do?

The Governing Board must:

- Do its best to ensure that the necessary provision is made for any pupil who has SEND;
- Ensure that, where the "responsible person" (usually the Headteacher) has been informed by the LA that the pupil has SEND, those needs are made known to all who are likely to teach the pupil;
- Ensure that teachers in the school are aware of the importance of identifying and providing for pupils with SEND;
- Consult the LA and governing boards of other schools when it seems to be necessary or desirable in the interests of coordinated special educational provision in the area as a whole;
- Ensure that any pupil with SEND joins in the activities of the school together with pupils who do not have SEND. This is as far as is reasonable, practical and compatible with the pupil receiving the provision;
- Report to parents on the implementation of the school policy for pupils with SEND;

- Have regard to the SEND Code of Practice when carrying out its duties towards all pupils with SEND;
- Ensure that parents are notified of a decision by the school that SEND provision is being made for their child.

13. The Curriculum

Responsibility for the curriculum is shared between the Head, the Governing Board, the LA and the Secretary of State. Responsibility includes making sure that enough lesson time is provided for pupils to cover the National Curriculum and other statutory requirements. The Guide to the Law for School Governors gives the current recommended minimum weekly lesson times. The Governing Board must also make sure that only approved external qualifications and syllabuses are offered to pupils of compulsory school age. This includes off-site provision.

Example Questions to Ask

How is the National Curriculum covered? Which subjects are taught?

What proportion of time is spent on the various subjects?

What extra-curricular activities are offered?

Who is responsible for curriculum planning, monitoring and evaluation?

Is there a whole school curriculum policy or statement?

How was it drawn up?

When was it last reviewed?

What is the Governing Board's policy on Relationship & Health Education?

How does the school provide for children with special educational needs?

What are the arrangements for Religious Education?

How are resources allocated between different areas?

What do parents, pupils and staff think about the curriculum?

What targets have the Governing Board set for pupil achievement in National Curriculum subjects and in other aspects of their development?

Are standards of attainment broadly similar or different across all subjects?

Governing Boards of maintained schools providing primary education must decide how Relationship and Health (RHE) education should be included in their school's curriculum and, if so, what it should consist of and how it should be organised. They must keep a written record of their decisions.

All governing boards must have a written statement of whatever policy they adopt on Relationship and Health education and make it available free to parents. The LA, Governing Board and Headteacher must also make sure that any RHE is provided in a way that encourages pupils to consider morals and the value of family life. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of RHE education provided

(but not from the biological aspects of human growth and reproduction necessary under National Curriculum Science).



The Role of Governors and Safeguarding

For detailed guidance see: Governors' Handbook — Department for Education (2017)

The Governing Board has a duty to ensure that the schools meet statutory responsibilities and ensure that the children and young people attending the schools are safe. This applies equally to all school settings, including maintained schools, academies and free schools. Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, and regulations under section 157 relating to safeguarding pupils in Independent Schools (including academies), place a duty on the governing boards of maintained schools, and academy trusts, to have arrangements in place to ensure that they:

- carry out their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; and
- have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State
- in considering what arrangements they need to make for the purpose of that section

The statutory guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', places statutory requirements on all Governing Boards to ensure their school has policies and procedures in place and take into account any statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State, any local authority guidance and locally agreed inter-agency procedures.

Governing Boards will decide for themselves how they organise their strategic and monitoring functions. Although they may decide to allocate individual governors to be responsible for specific areas, e.g. Safeguarding or Child Protection, it is not statutory that they do so. Although not a requirement, it is helpful if all Governing Board members have training about safeguarding, whether the Governing Board acts collectively or an individual member takes the lead. This will make sure they have the knowledge and information needed to perform their functions and understand their responsibilities.

Attendance

In addition to the statutory responsibility to record the attendance of pupils, it is important that governors ensure that they understand the follow up processes for absence. An important risk factor in abuse and neglect is poor school attendance and tackling that is a key aspect of managing student safety.

School Security

Governing Boards are responsible for ensuring that the schools are safe places. Managing the school perimeter and access to buildings is a significant aspect of security, as is the management of staff and visitors to the schools. It is good practice for schools to aim for one entrance where reception staff can manage visitors. At this single point of entry, staff should be able to prevent access to the schools to visitors without satisfactory identification and a reason for their visit.

It is helpful if visitors to the schools can be readily identified and visitor badges should be worn. In this way anyone without a badge can be politely challenged. Many schools now use ID badges for all staff, particularly in higher risk situations, including inner city areas, large sites and special schools. Some schools also issue badges for pupils, particularly to sixth form students who may not be wearing school uniform.

Safer Recruitment

A key aspect of safeguarding is the vetting of applicants and prospective volunteers working with children to make sure they are not unsuitable. Guidance about this is in *Governors' Handbook*, and in *'Keeping Children Safe in Education'*

Governing Boards must be clear about the checking and vetting processes, before shortlisting, during the interviews and afterwards. They should be assured there are effective processes in place for arranging checks, including DBS, identity, right to work in the UK and any required overseas police checks often called a 'Certificate of Good Conduct'.

The governing board or Academy trust must reassure itself that all appropriate suitability checks have been undertaken and that the school keeps a single central record, detailing the range of checks it has carried out on its staff.

When making appointments, governing boards and academy trusts will need to reassure themselves that mechanisms are in place within the school to check that any person employed to teach has the required teaching qualifications and has successfully completed any statutory induction required.

Allegations against staff and volunteers

Governing Boards must have a clear policy and procedures for managing allegations against staff. Chairs of governing boards are expected to work with the headteacher (unless the allegation concerns the headteacher) and local authority Designated Officer to confirm the facts about individual cases. They are also expected to reach a joint decision on the way forward in each case.

In cases that involve the headteacher, the Chair of Governors is the key person to deal with the allegation.

Referring cases to the NCTL and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Allegations of serious misconduct against a teacher may be referred to the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) when they have dismissed a teacher for misconduct, or would have dismissed them had they not resigned first.

A referral to the DBS must be made if someone has harmed, or poses a risk of harm to a child and who has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left. Referrals should be made to both the DBS and the NCTL in cases where there is alleged serious teacher misconduct as well as harm or risk of harm to a child.

Further details: DBS Referrals

Annual Report to Governors

"The Governing Board of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school." Education Act 2002 (Section 175) There is a similar duty on local authorities.

The school's Child Protection policy should be reviewed annually by the Governing Board.

Keeping Children Safe in Education says that governing boards should work with the Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure that safeguarding procedures and their implementation are updated and reviewed regularly.

It is useful therefore to use the review of the child protection policy, to monitor the schools' safeguarding compliance, highlight issues and plan for improvements. An annual report is an opportunity for governors to discuss safeguarding and child protection at a strategic level. Many schools report to governors on a termly basis.

Although, the safeguarding report is not a place for the discussion of individual cases and anonymity must be preserved, many DSLs and governors find it useful to discuss redacted case studies to help understand local issues, strengths and areas for development.

An annual report to governors on safeguarding can also provide information to the Local Authority, so that they can fulfil their statutory duty under section 14B of the Children Act 2004.

This Act states that schools and colleges must supply information to the Local Safeguarding Children Board in order to perform its functions and for monitoring the compliance of schools to safeguarding children and young people. This is frequently undertaken by means of an audit, often known as a Section 11 audit (under the Children Act 2004).

Some features of a safeguarding report to governors

- Period Covered
- Name of report author and date presented to governors
- Names of Designated Safeguarding Leads
- Training Record (of staff at all levels)
- Audit of relevant policies and review dates
- Number of initial referrals made, separated into physical, emotional, sexual and neglect
- Number of Meetings Attended by type:
 - initial Child Protection Conference
 - Professionals Strategy meeting
 - Child Protection Review Conference
 - Core Group Meeting
 - Common Assessment Framework — CAF
- Number of pupils subject to a Child Protection Plan
- Number of Children in Public Care
- Number of allegations made against staff
- Other comments on safeguarding issues or concerns
- Comparison information from previous year
- Trends and impact of any new legislation or guidance
- Any deficiencies in the safeguarding procedures and actions required to rectify them

That sounds rather a lot for one governor to take on!

All of these responsibilities rest with the full Governing Board not any single Governor.

Having a SEND Governor can help the Governing Board check that everything necessary is being done. In particular, the SEND Governors should aim to become very well informed about the school's policy and arrangements for SEND and, where appropriate, be able to bring any important matters to the attention of the full Governing Board.

Top Tips for Governors in the First 12 Months

By Judy Burgess (Educational Consultant for Governance)

- don't bring up issues about your own children at governing board level
- consider the best interests of the school
- remember you are equal to all governors
- remember decision-making is corporate, bring your view, but abide by the corporate decision
- you have no power, responsibility or liability as an individual
- get to know your school, speak to the Head Teacher, the Chair and the Clerk

- ask for a mentor governor as a first point of contact
- your volunteer status means getting summaries -don't allow governance to become a full-time job
- remember the governing board steers, the Head Teacher manages the rowing and the vessel
- if you are a member of a committee be familiar with its terms of reference
- find out about confidentiality
- don't be part of decision-making where a personal interest or occupation allows you to become biased - declare the interest and withdraw
- if you don't feel you have enough information to make a decision then say so - remember you can abstain
- prepare well for all meetings
- attend training where possible, ask about options including distance learning or online training from your Local Authority

School Prayer

Oh my God you love me; you're with me night and day.

I want to love you always in all I do and say.

I'll try to please you, Father,

Bless me through this day.

Amen