

# LITTLE HEATH SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY



## What does a Governor do?

The role of a school governor is to contribute to the work of the governing body in ensuring high standards of progress and 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.

### **Commitment:**

Governors are required to attend at least four full governing body meetings a year, and join one or two committees, which also meet regularly (at least once a term).

- Full governing body meetings are mostly held in the evenings and last for about three hours.
- Committee meetings are held before or after core school hours, either early mornings (8.00 am) or start between 4.40-5.00 pm and last for 1 to 1.5 hours.
- Non staff Governors are also linked to departments and senior staff, and arrange their own link meetings with department staff according to their own commitments and department/staff commitments (but at least twice a year).
- Governors will also be required to serve on Panels for: staff grievances and disciplinary matters, pupil exclusions, senior appointments and appraisal of the Headteacher (although staff Governors cannot appraise the Headteacher). These are arranged as and when necessary according to each governors availability.
- Governors will also want to support the school to celebrate school events and meet with parents and students in many guises eg Open and parents' evenings; learning walks.
- Attend regular training and briefing sessions arranged through Governor Services, West Berkshire Council. Some training is held during the day, but most is held in the evenings either at Pincents Manor or Shaw House, Newbury.

Under usual circumstances, you should expect to spend between 10 and 20 days a year on your governing responsibilities.

### **Skills required:**

The Governing Body requires a variety of skills overall to carry out its duties. These range from financial understanding as a member of the Finance Committee, to understanding data on pupil progress in all key stages on the Educational Performance Committee. The attached organisation chart shows you who currently sits on which committee.

Overall, our prime role is to act in the best interest of all the pupils at the school, and to do this in a professional manner, as set down in the governing body's code of conduct, including acting in strict confidence.

This all sounds very formal; indeed governors do need to take their role seriously. That said, if you are interested in the education of our next generation of young people, and want to help improve their life chances, it is very worthwhile and can even be fun (especially when we do actually meet the students themselves or watch them perform in some wonderful events).

## **The Local Authority, West Berkshire Governor Services, describes the role of a school governor:-**

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- Holding the Head Teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils;
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

'Governing bodies have a vital role to play in driving up school and pupil performance and ensuring that resources are used well to give every child the best possible education. I want all governing bodies to focus ruthlessly on these core strategic functions, and avoid getting distracted by more peripheral matters.'

*Governors' Handbook, by Lord John Nash, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools.*

### **Activities: As part of the governing body team, a governor is expected to:-**

#### **1. Contribute to the strategic discussions at governing body 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 body on the progress on the relevant school priority;
- listening to and reporting to the school's stakeholders: pupils, parents, staff, and the wider community, including local employers.

#### **3. Ensure the school staff have the resources and support they require to do their jobs well, including the necessary expertise 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.**

**To contact Governor Services:** 01635 519084 [governors@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:governors@westberks.gov.uk)

#### **4. When required, serve on panels of governors to:**

- appoint the Head Teacher and other senior leaders;
- appraise the Head Teacher;
- set the Head Teacher'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 body 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 body 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 body 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). This document does not cover the additional roles taken on by the chair, vice-chair and chairs of committees.

## **In order to perform this role well, a governor is expected to:**

- get to know the school, including by visiting the school occasionally during school hours, and gain a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- attend induction training and regular relevant training and development events;
- attend meetings (full governing body meetings and committee meetings) and read all the papers before the meeting;
- act in the best interest of all the pupils of the school and behave in a professional manner, as set down in the governing body's Code of Conduct, including acting in strict confidence.

## **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 Head Teacher. Some longstanding governors may tell you that they spend far more time than this on school business; however, it is fairly common for governors to undertake additional volunteering roles over and above governance.

Under Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996, if you are employed, then you are entitled to 'reasonable time off' to undertake public duties; this includes school governance. 'Reasonable time off' is not defined in law, and you will need to negotiate with your employer how much time you will be allowed.

## **Expenses**

Governors may receive out of pocket expenses incurred as a result of fulfilling their role as governor, and NGA recommends that a governing body should have such an expenses policy. Payments can cover incidental expenses, such as travel and childcare, but not loss of earnings.

The Governor Services Team provides governors with help, advice, support and training. The team provides assistance with any aspect of school governance whether legal or procedural and will always be happy to answer any query you have on the nature of your role as a governor. We regularly produce a newsletter focusing on what governors need to know and further details can be found on our website:

[www.westberks.gov.uk/governor](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/governor)