HILLINGDON
LONDON

London Borough of Hillingdon

School Governance Guidance and Best Practice for Maintained Schools

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1. Introduction

Under The London Borough of Hillingdon's statutory school governance duties for all Maintained schools the following services and activities are provided to schools at no charge:

- General information, advice and guidance for all school governance queries
- LA briefing sessions for Clerks and Governors on a variety of subjects which may include, Safeguarding, Finance, Attendance, Complaints, Exclusions, SEND, Ofsted, Governance and other LA services as required
- Support with a legal change to formal constitutions (Instrument of Government)
- Staff / parent governor election procedures and templates
- Recruitment and nomination of LA governors and support to recruit other governors
- Removal of LA governors causing concern guidance
- New LA governors information to support induction

Maintained schools must:

- Contact the LA to trigger statutory support as described above.
- Share the minutes of each Full Governing Board after each meeting.
- Update the LA on all changes to the Governing Board's membership and contact details on a termly basis.
- Schools must publish information online about their governing body and Committees, What maintained schools must or should publish online – GOV.UK

Additional training and development
School leaders are encouraged to ensure that all governors have access to quality training to support the effectiveness of governance practice in schools. This aspect of governance improvement and development is not provided within the LA statutory duty. Governing Boards are therefore free to choose any commercial national or local provider to support the development of their governors.

Contacting the London Borough of Hillingdon's Governance Team
The Governance Team is committed to supporting the effective governance of schools and the personal development of governors. We hope that the information within this handbook will be of assistance in helping governors to fulfil their role and responsibilities.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the team using the details below:
Email:schoolgovernance@hillingdon.gov.uk

2. Categories of governors

The most effective schools have broad and balanced Governing Boards that have a range of diverse skills, knowledge and experience (not necessarily in school governance). Ofsted inspection reports repeatedly note that the most effective schools demonstrate effective leadership and management, driven by the Governing Boards. By acting as critical friends and challenging schools, governors will be able to improve educational standards so that children and young people have the chance to reach their full potential.

Governing Boards are corporate bodies and as such, no individual governor has any special powers, except for the Chair of Governors who may act on behalf of the governors in cases of urgency.

The power that lies with Governing Boards does so collectively and decisions are reached by a majority of governors present in a meeting voting following any discussion.

Maintained schools governance guide is the DfE guidance on the strategic leadership and governance of local-authority-maintained schools .
This non-statutory guidance is a reference document for those involved in local-authority-maintained school governance. It brings together essential information from a range of sources on the governing body's roles and legal responsibilities.

- Maintained schools governance guide - Guidance - GOV.UK
- The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013 – referred to throughout as the Roles, Procedures and Allowances Regulations (as amended)
- The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 – referred to throughout as the Constitution Regulations 2012 (as amended)

The Regulations allow Governing Boards considerable flexibility to determine the structure (i.e. the numbers of governors in each category) of their own Board in a way that best suits their school. Section 20 of the Education Act 2002 requires all maintained schools to have an Instrument of Government (IoG) which determines the constitution of the Governing Board and other matters relating to the school. This IoG document can be reviewed and varied at any time to address the needs of the school by the Governing Board or Local Authority.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is automatically a governor because of their position as Headteacher – sometimes referred to as an 'ex-officio' governor. Headteachers can resign their position on the Governing Board if they choose (rare) and withdraw their resignation, in both cases by notifying the Clerk in writing, but the role can't be filled by any other staff member.

Their role is to provide information to the Governing Board as requested. Full Governor Board Meetings or Committee Meeting is the primary forum where the Headteacher reports to the Board.

Parent governors

Parent governors are elected by other parents in the school. All parents or carers of registered pupils at the school are eligible to stand in a parent governor election.

- The DfE defines parents as:
- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

Grandparents would only be eligible to be parent governors if they care for the child on a full-time, settled basis or if they are the legal guardian of the child.

Their role as a parent governor provides a parent's views to the Governing Board, but isn't there as a parent representative nor as an advocate for their own child

Staff governors
Staff governors are elected by other staff members. All staff who are employed to work at the school at the time of election are eligible to stand for election as the staff governor. This includes teaching staff, support staff, senior leaders and part-time staff. If there are no candidates, the position on the Governing Board remains vacant and an election should be held as soon as an eligible candidate is identified.

Staff governors should bring a unique staff perspective to the Governing Board, but they do not represent the staff. They're also not there to be held to account by the Board.

Local Authority governors
Local authority (LA) governors are nominated by the LA. The LA will work with the Governing Boards to identify suitable candidates who can be either accepted or rejected whether they have the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school. If the Governing Board chooses to reject the candidate they will have to explain their decision to the LA and have a suitable nomination in its place.

The LA governor serves as the link between the LA and the school but isn't a political appointee. A local authority governor, like any other governor, must govern in the interests of the school and not represent or advocate for the interests of the local authority.

Co-opted governors
Co-opted governors are appointed by the Governing Board. Anyone is eligible to become a co-opted governor and Governing Boards are free to decide which skills they're looking for by using their skills audit. This can include parents.

Staff can also be appointed as co-opted governors, but the number of staff members on the Governing Board must not be more than 1/3 of the total membership of the Governing Board (when counted with the staff governor and the headteacher).

For example, if you have 12 governors, you can't have more than 2 staff members appointed as co-opted governors.

Co-opted governors are appointed by the Governing Board if it believes they have the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school. They'll often have specialised knowledge in subjects such as: Management, HR, Data analysis, Law or Education.

Foundation governors
Foundation governors are required in foundation schools with a foundation or a trust. There are no restrictions on who can be a foundation governor. It would be up to the appointing board to decide who to appoint. This is usually the diocese, the school's founding board, or a trust.

There are 2 types of foundation governors:

- Appointed – the appointing body selects them for the Governing Board
- Ex officio – they're appointed by virtue of their office, e.g. clergy members

Whether appointed or ex-officio, their role is the same. Foundation governors are appointed specifically to "preserve and develop the character of the organisation, including any religious character" (The constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools page 16).

They're also responsible for making sure the school operates as required by the foundation's governing documents, including the trust deed where appropriate.

However, the handbook warns that foundation schools still need to understand the diversity within the communities they serve, so the Board should be aware of the risk of being dominated by one particular mindset, be it faith or something else.

Partnership governors
Partnership governors are similar to foundation governors, but they're in foundation schools without a foundation.

The Governing Board must first try to appoint partnership governors from those nominated by:

- Where the school has a religious character; by the "appropriate diocesan authority" in the case of a Church of England or Roman Catholic school, and
- The "appropriate religious body" in any other case, and
- Where the school does not have a religious character, by the parents of registered pupils at the school and "such others in the community served by the school as they consider appropriate" (for example; staff,community orgainsations and other local bodies).

Like LA governors, the Board still has discretion in whether to appoint nominees. The decision should be based on whether they have the skills needed to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school.

Governing Boards must meet at least three times every year, as a *Full Governing Board*, where the ongoing business of committees and the school are discussed, reported on and where decisions are ratified.

Associate members
Associate members are appointed by the Governing Board to serve on one or more Governing Board committees. They may also attend full Governing Board meetings. They are not governors and therefore do not have a vote in Governing Board decisions, but may be given a vote on decisions made by committees to which they are appointed

3. Governance Support and the governance professional (clerk)

All governing bodies **must** have a clerk, who is the governing body's governance professional. The governing body **must** listen to the independent advice the governance professional provides and have regard to that advice when exercising its functions.

Strong governance support and an effective governance professional will help to:

- contribute to the governing body's efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and compliance
- support an understanding of the governing body's role, legal responsibilities, strategic activities, safeguarding and organisational culture
- provide administrative and organisational support
- offer guidance to ensure that the Board works in compliance with the appropriate legal and regulatory framework and understands the potential consequences for noncompliance
- advice on procedural matters relating to the operation of the board

Clerks to Governing Boards should carry out their duties in line with the seven principles of public life (Nolan principles).

The role of the Clerk and arrangements for their appointment may vary from school to school. It remains the responsibility of the Governing Board to decide who should act as Clerk and to appoint the Clerk. The Governing Board will also need to appoint a Clerk to the statutory committees (usually the same person).

The Clerk convenes the Governing Board meetings and keeps a record of the important matters discussed and decisions taken during the meeting (the record is called the "minutes"). The Clerk also ensures that each governor receives proper notice of forthcoming meetings and makes sure that the work of the Governing Board is well organised, as well as maintaining a register of governors and reporting on any vacancies

They should also be mindful of their responsibilities under equality legislation, recognising and encouraging diversity and inclusion, and should understand the impact of effective governance on the quality of education and on outcomes for all children and young people.

The Clerk is not a governor of the school and is not eligible either to participate directly in a debate or to vote. Usually, the cost of the Clerk is met from the school's budget.

4. Support and Training

There is a wide range of training and support available for school governors to assist in carrying out your duties effectively. Governing Boards hold many responsibilities and the need, therefore, for training has never been greater. Your school may buy into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with a provider so please speak to your Clerk for more information.

It is particularly important for new governors to take advantage of the induction training that is available. These courses will provide an introduction to the major responsibilities, roles and tasks of the Governing Board. Some training events may also be targeted at officers of the Governing Board, i.e. the Clerk or the Chair of the Governing Board, to help them carry out their roles more effectively.

Governing boards and should make sure all governors confirm that they have read KCSIE, which is updated each year Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK and should receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training at the point of induction which should be updated regularly, ideally on an annual basis.

Governors should also undertake Prevent training. Regional Prevent education co-ordinators - GOV.UK

Safer recruitment training is also required as at least one member of a selection panel must have completed this.

5. What do governors need to know?

The purpose of governance is to provide confident and strong strategic leadership which leads to robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance.

The 3 core functions to the Board:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Hold executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- Oversee the financial performance of the organisation and make sure its money is well spent

6. What exactly do governors do - the accountable role

Governing Boards have a strategic responsibility for the progress of pupils in schools and ensuring that all pupils receive the best possible education. Governors monitor and evaluate performance through analysing data.

In addition Governing Boards can monitor and evaluate performance through the information that Headteachers present in a regular report.

As the accountable body, the Board is the key decision maker. Each individual governor is a member of a Governing Board, which is established in law as a corporate body. Individual governors may not act independently of the rest of the Governing Board and all decisions are the joint responsibility of the Governing Board.

The Governing Board may delegate operational matters to executive leaders and governance functions to committees or in some cases to individuals, but the Board as a corporate entity remains accountable and responsible for all decisions made and executive leaders operate within the autonomy, powers and functions delegated to them by the Board.

In most cases it is for the Board to decide whether to task individuals to take a particular lead interest to support decision making in certain areas.

Safeguarding is one of the most important duties that governing boards fulfil is to ensure that their school or trust is creating safe environments for pupils.
Governing boards **must** comply with the duties outlined in statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE).
All governors and trustees **must** receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (that includes online safety). This should form part of any governor induction and take place regularly thereafter (recommended that safeguarding training takes place on an annual basis).The governing board's role is to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are compliant and implemented effectively, that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities and can discharge them, and that the board has sufficient knowledge and capacity to fulfil its safeguarding responsibilities.

To further help meet these obligations, the governing board is **required** to appoint a governor or trustee to take leadership responsibility for safeguarding arrangements in their school/trust.
Governors should also undertake Prevent training. Regional Prevent education co-ordinators - GOV.UK
Safer recruitment training is also required as at least one member of a selection panel must have completed this.

SEND is a whole-board responsibility, so every governor/trustee should know what their legal duties are and understand SEND and inclusion (ensuring that no child is excluded because of their SEND) in the context of their school. Statutory guidance, the SEND code of practice, SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK is clear that boards should appoint a link governor/trustee (or a sub-committee) to lead on the board's monitoring of support for pupils with SEND. However, the board itself retains collective responsibility. In practice, SEND link governors and trustees work closely with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) in their school or trust.

Boards should welcome and develop a sufficiently diverse range of viewpoints as open debate leads to good decisions in the interests of the whole school community. Boards must ensure they understand the full diversity of the cultural and religious context of the school and the community that it serves. Having some people on the board who have no close ties with the school, or who come from outside the faith or ethnic group of the majority of pupils, can also help ensure that the board has sufficient internal challenge to the decisions it makes and how it carries out its strategic functions.

Good decision making can only happen by being well informed by both available evidence of what works or is likely to be effective, and by the views and needs of key stakeholders, particularly parents. The board as a whole should take steps to understand parental views, while acknowledging that anyone on the board who is a parent themselves has valuable knowledge and perspectives about the school, while helping to guarantee that there is always a link between governance and the parent community.

In order to make credible decisions that are in the best interest of pupils it is essential that the Board has an effective approach to conflicts of interest. All Boards should prevent conflicts of interest from affecting their decisions by removing them or managing them as appropriate. For example, it is unlikely that the conflict of interest that would arise from a close family relationship existing between someone on the Board and a senior executive leader could be managed fully, and hence in most circumstances this situation would be best avoided altogether. All Governing Boards should adopt a Code of Conduct based on the Nolan principles, which should include clear strategies for dealing with conflicts of interest.

It must be noted that the Board is legally responsible for the conduct of its school however individuals are generally protected from personal liability. As long as members act honestly, reasonably and in good faith, any liability will fall on the Board even if it exceeds its powers, rather than on individuals.

7. How do governors fulfil their responsibilities?

Governors should set the school's strategy and hold senior leaders to account. They shouldn't get involved in the day-to-day, operational running of the school. As part of the Governing Board team, a governor is expected to

- Contribute to the strategic discussions at Governing Board meetings
- Hold the senior leaders to account by monitoring the school's performance
- Ensure the school staff have the resources and support they require to do their jobs well
- When required, serve on panels of governors

The role of a governor is largely a **thinking and questioning role, not a doing role**. Governors need to confirm that the school is compliant with DfE Guidance in areas such as the following:

- Admissions
- Behaviour and exclusions

- Curriculum
- Finance
- Governance
- Parents and the community
- Health and safety
- Pupil wellbeing
- Safeguarding
- SEND
- Staffing
- Pay and appraisal

In order to perform this role well, governors are expected to:

- Get to know the school, including visiting the school occasionally during school hours and gaining a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses
- Attend induction training and regular relevant training and development events
- Attend meetings (Full Governing Board meetings and committee meetings) and read all the papers before the meeting
- Act in the best interests of all the pupils of the school behave in a professional manner, as set down in the Governing Board's code of conduct, including acting in strict confidence

8. Governor Roles

While there is no legal requirement to appoint link governors, they can be a very effective way to help the Governing Boards understand, oversee, monitor and develop a particular area of responsibility within the school.

Local Governing Boards need to ensure that one of the members takes on a specific role for them. These are outlined below:

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The Governing Board should have an SEN Governor to champion the issue of special educational needs within the work of the Governing Board and to have specific oversight of the school's arrangements and provision for meeting special educational needs. The Governing Board has some key responsibilities towards pupils with special educational needs. Governing Boards should, with the Headteacher, decide the school's general policy and approach to meeting pupils' special educational needs.

They must set up appropriate staffing and funding arrangements and oversee the school's work. In particular, the Governing Board has a legal duty to:

- Do its best to ensure that all pupils with special educational needs are appropriately catered for
- Appoint a 'responsible person' to oversee the assessment of individual pupils' needs and to make sure that all staff likely to teach pupils with special needs are aware of those needs
- Ensure that all teachers are aware of the importance of identifying and providing for any pupils with special educational needs
- Ensure that pupils with special educational needs have the opportunity to participate as fully as possible in all aspects of school life
- Ensure that parents are notified of a decision by the school that their child has special educational needs
- Establish an SEN policy which is publicly available and can be easily understood by parents; and review that policy on a regular basis

- Report on how the school's SEN policy is being implemented and how resources are allocated in the Governing Board's Annual Report to Parents
- Ensure that the SEN Code of Practice is followed

Human Resources Management

The staffing of the school is its most valuable resource and the large majority of the schools financial resources are used on ensuring the proper remuneration and management of the schools human resources. All governors, but especially those who sit as members of the personnel sub-committee will play an important role in the HR management of the school.

It is important that governors (and again especially those who sit on the personnel subcommittee) have a general understanding of the key employment policies, procedures and practices, and that they stand ready to support and/ or challenge the Headteacher in applying them in the day to day management of the staff of the school.

The role of governors in the delivery of secure and appropriate human resources management will vary somewhat between schools across the Trust because the Trust has inherited the majority of its staff on transfer arrangements from their former LA employers, and results in some variance between levels of involvement of governors. However in general the role of governors will be:

- To hold the Headteacher to account for having in place robust performance management arrangements for teaching and support staff.
- To determine the appropriateness of recommendations from the Headteacher for Performance Related Pay (PRP) increases and that they are based on a fair and transparent assessment procedure which accords with the school and Trust Pay Policy. This will include hearing of appeals brought by members of staff against the judgements of the Headteacher.
- To ensure that an appropriate staffing structure is in place for the school and to hold the Headteacher to account for the allocation of the school's financial resources for staffing so that it best delivers the teaching learning and support functions of the school. Where staffing restructures need to take place the governors involved in the reduction/redundancy process will hold the Headteacher to account for the proper and fair conduct of the redundancy processes.
- To ensure that the Headteacher provides the committee with appropriate reporting on the equal opportunities characteristics of recruitment to and make- up of the school and determines appropriate strategies to improve representation.
- To take part in recruitment and selection processes for some categories of staff at the school when determined, in liaison with the Headteacher.

Safeguarding

Governing Boards are responsible for safeguarding children and child protection. Their responsibilities are outlined in the DfE guidance - keeping children safe in education.
The Children's Act 2004 places a duty on agencies to ensure that their functions are discharged having regard for the need to safeguard children and promote their welfare.
By safeguarding and promoting welfare we mean:

- Protecting children from abuse or neglect
- Preventing impairment of the child's health or development
- Ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Creating opportunities to enable children to have optimum life changes in adulthood

It is recommended that the Safeguarding and Child Protection Governor should not be a parent governor or teacher governor as this could lead to them being compromised in the event of a disciplinary matter.

- Safeguarding is one of the most important duties that governing boards fulfil is to ensure that their school or trust is creating safe environments for pupils.
- Governing boards **must** comply with the duties outlined in statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE).
- All governors and trustees **must** receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (that includes online safety). This should form part of any governor induction and take place regularly thereafter (recommended that safeguarding training takes place on an annual basis).
- The governing board's role is to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are compliant and implemented effectively, that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities and can discharge them, and that the board has sufficient knowledge and capacity to fulfil its safeguarding responsibilities.
- To further help meet these obligations, the governing board **must** appoint a governor or trustee to take leadership responsibility for safeguarding arrangements in their school/trust.

The safeguarding governor will:

- Meet with the DSL termly to discuss (without details of specific pupils) any safeguarding incidents; conversation should focus on the suitability of policies and whether any amendments are necessary
- Stay up to date on relevant guidance and policy, ensuring the board is made aware of any changes to their safeguarding responsibilities. Ensure that the Governing Board puts in place a suitable Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and associated procedures and be a champion for safeguarding and child protection issues within the school
- Report to the governing board following meetings with the DSL and any monitoring visits.

In addition all local councils have a Local Safeguarding Board (LSCB) with an independent chair and a governor member. The LSCB is an independent statutory body who has responsibility to ensure people work together to keep children and young people safe. This is implemented through the provision of training, policies and guidance, and learning. The LSCB brings together the voluntary sector, education, health, social care, services who work with adults, probation, police and housing. For more information, visit the Hillingdon SCP webpage.

Pupil Premium

Raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is very important. The pupil premium grant provides funding to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in state-funded schools in England. Pupil premium: overview - GOV.UK

Governing Boards may wish to consider a link Pupil Premium governor to monitor this. In determining how that role is carried out. See the information below to inform governors on what should be considered as the PP link governor.

The Importance of knowing your school

- Obtain information and data on and become familiar with the school's use of the pupil
- Know basic pupil premium facts for the school, such as how many pupils attract the premium, how this figure compares with other local and similar schools, and how the money is spent
- Meet termly with the staff responsible for performance data to discuss issues around under-performing groups, including those eligible for the pupil premium

- Challenge the allocation of the pupil premium grant if there is no clear audit trail evidencing appropriate use of the resources

Monitoring data

- Understand relevant school pupil performance data that shows progress of different groups over time
- Ensure the school is monitoring and reporting on spending of the pupil premium, ensuring the money is spent in identifiable ways to support target groups of pupils
- Ensure the school is monitoring and reporting on the attainment of different groups of pupils over time to provide evidence of how pupil premium pupils are progressing compared with others

Governing Board meetings

- Take an active part in any Governing Board or committee discussions when the allocation and monitoring of the pupil premium is discussed and decided
- Report back to the Governing Board on the school's use of the pupil premium

Attendance

Department for Education (DfE) guidance is clear that improving attendance begins at board level, Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK

• Governing boards are to take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set a whole school culture

• ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties

• ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance

• regularly review attendance data to ensure support is focused on the pupils who need it

Pupil attendance is important for learning in raising aspirations and standards of achievement. Governing Boards may wish to consider an

- Attendance link governor to monitor this. In determining how that role is carried out the following may be useful when reviewing who on the Governing Board could carry out that role:

An awareness of the school's attendance policy and Ofsted expectations

- A strategic understanding of the connection between attendance, teaching and learning, behaviour for learning, parent/carer pupil engagement and achieving high standards for all pupils
- An ability to interpret attendance data and challenge the headteacher and senior leaders to secure improvements through a range of interventions, as appropriate
- Check the school is regularly monitoring attendance, reviewing progress and taking action
- Meet termly with the school attendance lead to scrutinise plans on improving attendance including rewards for good attendance, escalation processes for those who struggle with attendance, links with external support agencies where additional challenge is required
- Make sure that parent/carer issues are addressed in liaison with the family liaison/support worker team
- Track the profiling of the importance of attendance in classrooms, around the school, on the school website, in communications with parents/carers
- Report to governors on the outcomes of discussions, identifying areas of concern as well as highlighting examples of effective practice

Health and Safety

The role of the governor with a lead role in monitoring health and safety in school is important both in terms of supporting school leaders but also in ensuring the Governing Board is supported in its role to monitor health and safety at the school.

Role considerations are:

- To take reasonable steps to make sure that the school is following their policy and procedures e.g. through regular discussion at governance meetings.
- Ensure that school leaders have supported staff through the receipt of adequate training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities.
- To help promote a sensible approach to health and safety, making use of competent health and safety advice when required.
- To report back to the Governing Board and its committee on how well the school is meeting its obligations and to ensure areas for improvement are highlighted and acted upon
- In overall terms the governor with the link role should work in close partnership with the Headteacher and senior management team to support sensible health and safety management and to challenge as appropriate

9. FAQs

Do I need qualifications to be a school governor?
No. Schools need volunteers with a variety of life experiences from all backgrounds and expertise. Ongoing training is always provided to governors.

T**he following personal skills and abilities are important:**

- A commitment to undertake mandatory new governor training and other supplementary training that may be identified in order to update knowledge and skills, which will enhance an individual's effectiveness as a governor
- A commitment to regular attendance at meetings of the Governing Board and any committees to which you are appointed
- A desire to raise the standards of education within the school
- A willingness to share skills and expertise within the context of the Governing Board.

What makes a good governor?

- You care about improving children's education
- You want to contribute to your local community
- You want to work as part of a team and can value the contribution made by other people
- You accept the need to receive training
- You are willing to ask questions
- You are open to ideas and willing to learn

I work full-time. Will I still have time to be a school governor?
Many school governors are in full-time work. Governors' meetings can take place during the working day but, very often, they are arranged for the evenings.

Can I take time off from my employer to act as a governor?
Governors are entitled to reasonable time off work for their work as a governor. Employers do not, however, have to grant time off with pay, although many organisations do.

Employers should encourage their staff to become volunteers to ‘give back’ to the community. They realise that the skills gained through being a school governor are transferable to the workplace.

Employment law gives people the right to reasonable unpaid time off and some employers give paid leave for school governor volunteer duties. Please check with your employer.

What can I offer?

- As a volunteer you should be committed and passionate about supporting children and raising aspirations.
- You can bring your personal and business skills to help govern a school.

- You may have local knowledge that will be valuable to understand the community.
- Parents may understand other parents' needs and help to improve engagement.

How does a Governing Board work?
- Works closely with the Headteacher
- Makes decisions democratically as a team
- Often delegates decision-making to committees or to individuals such as the Headteacher
- Meets at least once a term

The Governing Board conducts most of its business through meetings, making use of relevant papers, guidance and advice from the Headteacher and the Local Authority.

How much time does it take?
The amount of time that governors can give to the role will vary, but if you are serious about helping your school to help children, then you do need to:
- Be willing to prepare for meetings - there can be a lot of papers to read.
- Attend meetings - the Governing Board must meet at least once per term, however you will probably be asked to serve on at least one committee. How often these meet will vary, but it is not unusual for some committees to meet each half-term.
- Be able to get to meetings which, quite often, will be during the evening but which may be earlier during the day.
- Participate - if you cannot prepare for, and attend, meetings you will not be able to make an effective contribution to help the school.

Are teachers or staff governors eligible to stand for the position of Chair of the Governing Board?
You are not eligible to serve as a Chair or Vice-chair if you are:
- An associate member, or
- A governor who is employed by the school

How long can a governor remain as Chair to the Governing Board?
Elections take place annually at the first meeting of the Governing Board in the Autumn Term. Any Chair can stand for re-election as many times as he/she chooses. The chair is elected democratically by a majority vote of governors via a secret ballot where contested.

Can a Deputy Headteacher regularly attend Governing Board meetings and take part in proceedings?
They can attend Governing Board meetings as observers, but only with the permission of the Governing Board. This is good practice in case they need to step in as Acting Head teacher.

Every Governing Board has at least one teacher governor on its Governing Board and a Deputy Headteacher can stand for election. If the majority of the teaching staff vote to support the Deputy Headteacher he/she would become the teacher governor and entitled to attend Governing Board meetings.

How long can a governor serve on a Governing Board?
Each school sets a term of office for its governors which is normally four years. Many people choose to serve more than one term, however as a volunteer you can resign before your term is finished if your circumstances change.

Can I be paid for being a governor?
Governors and trustees are volunteers and so do not receive payment to carry out their governing duties, or to cover loss of earnings for attending meetings. However, they may be paid allowances or expenses to cover costs incurred while carrying out their role, such as travel and childcare costs. Reimbursement is made in line with a policy approved by the governing board.

Are the minutes of a Governing Board meeting confidential?

No, they are public documents unless any section is marked as 'Confidential' and this is for the governors to access only.

Can anyone attend a Governing Board meeting?

No one can attend a meeting of the Governing Board without the permission of the Governing Board.

Should a Clerk be appointed to every committee of the Governing Board?

Every meeting of the full Governing Board and its committees must be minuted. It is not necessary for the Clerk to governors to attend every committee meeting but in this instance one of the members of the committee must take on this responsibility. The Clerk to governors must minute every meeting of the Full Governing Board and the statutory committees.

How do I place an item on the agenda for a future Governing Board meeting?

A governor would need to approach the Clerk or the Chair to discuss agenda items..

How much notice do you need to give before adding an agenda item to a meeting?

Written notice must be given at least five clear working days in advance of a meeting. Exceptionally, the Chair may decide that there are matters requiring urgent attention and a shorter period of notice may be given.

What is the quorum for Governing Board meetings?

The quorum for a meeting of the full Governing Board or a committee is one half of the membership, excluding any vacancies, rounded up to the nearest whole number. For statutory committees the quorum is 3.

If a governor has missed meetings for a continuous period of six months, although apologies have always been sent to the Clerk in advance, can they be disqualified?

Only if their apologies were not accepted by the Governing Board and this fact was formally minuted.

Examples which could give rise to removal are:

- There have been repeated grounds for suspension.
- There has been serious misconduct. Governing Boards should decide what constitutes serious misconduct based on the facts of the case. However, it is expected that any actions that compromise the Nolan principles, if sufficiently serious, would be considered in scope of this reason for removal.
- A governor displays repeated and serious incompetence; for example where an elected governor is unwilling or unable, despite all appropriate support, to develop the skills to contribute to effective governance; or where attendance is so irregular that the governor is unable to make any meaningful contribution to the work of the board.
- The governor has engaged in conduct aimed at undermining fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- The actions of the governor are significantly detrimental to the effective operation of the Governing Board, distracting it from its core strategic functions; and/or the actions of a governor interferes with the operational efficiency of the school thereby wasting a significant amount of headteacher and /or senior leadership time.

Who can remove a governor?
The Governing Board may remove:

- co-opted governors
- an elected, parent or staff governor.

Local Authority governors may be removed from office by the Local Authority that nominated them. The Local Authority must give written notice of the removal to the Clerk to the Governing Board and to the governor concerned. The same rules apply to Foundation governors who may be removed by the body that appointed them.

For further information please see below for the non-statutory guidance as a reference document for those involved in local-authority-maintained school governance. It brings together essential information from a range of sources on the governing body's roles and legal responsibilities.

- **Maintained schools governance guide - Guidance - GOV.UK**
- **The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances)**
- **The constitution of Governing Boards of maintained schools**

Please also find below useful external links:

- **National Governance Association**
- **The Key**

Contact us
If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the London Borough of Hillingdon's School Governance team using the details below:
Email: schoolgovernance@hillingdon.gov.uk

This document is not exhaustive but is intended to give the reader a better understanding of school governance and local arrangements alongside links to government documents and other external bodies.