



Information for those thinking about becoming a Staff Governor

Being a governor

Being a governor is a highly rewarding role and a privilege. As a member of staff you are already committed to ensuring every child receives the very best education possible, the role of governor allows you to use this passion for education and the experience you have with a new audience to help the school have greater impact on every child. We are all there for the same reason.

A governor is a responsible role. You have the opportunity to make a difference, not only for children in school now, but for children in years to come.

The role of governors is to provide strategic direction. As a member of staff you will know that what happens in school on a day to day basis is the responsibility of the headteacher and SLT, not governors.

Governors are the point of accountability for the senior management of the school and governors are school leaders. How well education is delivered, the results achieved and how well the school is financially managed are all part of what governors regularly discuss.



Governors are most successful when they ask challenging questions that help the senior team to reflect on their decisions. The important questions to governance are “why” and “what”. We look at impact and the standards achieved. A typical question may be “£15,000 was spent on new laptops. What was the impact of that?”



Understanding both why a decision was made and the impact it has had on learning affects the decision making process. A reasonable question should always get a reasonable answer and if you are unsure or there was too much jargon, ask for an explanation. We all have been in the position where we are learning a new role.

Governors work as a team, always supportive of the collective decision. You must not express personal dissatisfaction at decisions to the wider school community. If you feel strongly, say so at the point the decision is being made. Rumours will result in damage to your school which is the last thing you want.

Always observe confidentiality. As a governor you will get to know a lot of highly sensitive and confidential information – don't discuss it with anyone outside meetings. Your LGC will have a code of conduct. One of the only ways of being removed as a governor is to reveal confidential information to someone else.

. A staff governor is not a shop steward so would not get involved in issues between an individual member of staff and the headteacher or LGC. As a governor you would refer the person to the necessary policy and advise them to seek advice, possibly from their union.

Staff governors are selected by the staff at their school. Anyone employed at the school can be a staff governor.



Being a staff governor is sometimes not easy. You can end up wearing many hats and having to be very careful how you react to a given situation. You may be a member of staff, parent, and member of the community or local politician. Only you can decide if you can reconcile these and be an effective governor.

Governors work as a team. No one is expected to know everything and your contribution helps the Local Governing Committee (LGC) to support the school to be the best it can be. All governors are unpaid volunteers and it should be recognised that you will give what time you can.

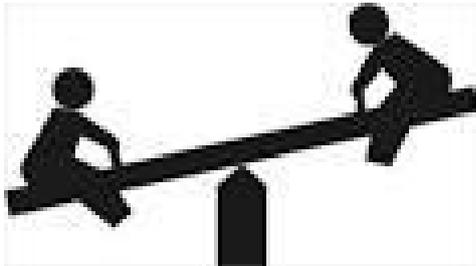


There are currently two LGC meetings a term and depending on the agenda, can last from between an hour and a half and three hours. In addition, if there are areas for development which it is appropriate for a staff governor to monitor, you would need to visit and discuss the position with the relevant staff and then prepare a written report.

Developing your role as a governor will take time. There is new jargon to learn, courses to attend and you will need to understand the way governance works.

Staff governors are:	Staff governors are not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well placed to understand staff views • able to remind the LGC how matters being discussed affect staff • able to vote on most decisions taking account of the relevant information you have been given • simply expected to represent the interests of staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the person who communicates LGC decisions to staff • equal in status to all other governors (when items concerning individual members of staff are discussed, you should be asked to leave) • expected to gather the views of other staff and take them to the LGC • expected to vote as instructed by other staff

What happens if you have a dilemma as a staff governor?



Staff governors are equal to all other governors. Everyone has one vote. The issue for staff governors is that they still have to work with the head and SLT so if you consistently vote against their ideas will your working relationship be affected? You can ask the clerk to have secret ballots when a vote is taken, that may resolve the issue for you.

Staff governors are excluded from some aspects of governance. They cannot take any part in pay decisions about staff. They cannot be chair or vice chair. They cannot be part of the headteacher performance management. They cannot make redundancy decisions.

Staff governors can be part of the headteacher recruitment process. They can be part of teacher recruitment. Both these depend on what the Trust Board and LGC decide.

Very occasionally the governing body could make a decision which you feel may affect you in a way you would not have chosen. If a difficulty arises, take a step back and think things through as objectively as you can. If you feel you can't be objective it's reasonable to leave the meeting while the discussion is held.

Make sure you don't break confidentiality when discussing your concerns outside governing body meetings.

Where to get help, advice and support

Everyone starts off as a new governor. There are many different places to learn about what being a governor means.

- From other governors.
- From the chair of governors.
- From the clerk – they know how things work
- Ask for a governor mentor or “buddy” to help you
- Attend any new governor training offered – being a governor is different from being a member of staff.
- There are several governor websites run by governors and a regular twitter meeting run by @UKgovchat – you don’t have to contribute but you can read what’s going on

db/dms

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