

Guidance for new Governors

On behalf of Worcestershire Local Authority may we take this opportunity to congratulate you on your recent appointment as a school governor in one of our Local Authority Maintained settings. You will be joining one of the largest volunteer workforces in the county and an increasingly important one. Although a volunteer, you will be expected to develop a professional approach to your role as governor and Babcock Prime Governor Services will support you by providing guidance and advice.

In his introduction to the Governance Handbook (1), John Nash, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools) writes:

‘Governing boards are the strategic decision makers and vision setters in every school and academy. They play a vital role in ensuring the best possible education for every child by creating robust accountability for school leaders. Crucially, that means using and being familiar with objective data on the performance of pupils, teachers and finances to ask the right questions and ensure resources are allocated to school priorities. It also means ensuring that schools prepare pupils for life and the workplace by building their character and resilience and by implementing their Prevent duty to protect them from the risks of extremism and radicalisation.’

Governors need to be well informed on a range of issues and to be clear on their role and the boundaries of that role. The Governance Handbook, November 2015, provides comprehensive advice and exemplification on the roles of governors and is an essential resource for all governors.

Governor Services works hard to support and assist governors and clerks. Each year we publish a substantial programme of training for governors and we invite you to apply for any courses which you, or your governing body, feel are relevant to your requirements.

Details of these courses are to be found in the published programme that accompanies this pack. A popular and comprehensive introduction to governance is provided by our three session New Governor Induction training programme where we outline the roles and responsibilities within a framework of recent government guidance, and provide an opportunity to answer queries (please see enclosed sheet or page 6 of the Governor Development booklet for more information).

Welcome to your role as a school governor

- Being a school governor is a privilege – you are a small but very important part in an educational system with a very long history.
- The decisions you make will have a huge impact on children’s lives.
- You are creating the future, changing the present and protecting the past.
- You get the chance to work in a good team and learn many new skills as a result of this experience.
- You develop as a person and may even find that your experiences as a governor influence future career and life choices.
- You make friends and meet many people from all walks of life whom you probably would not have otherwise encountered.
- Above all, being a governor is rewarding, and it’s certainly character-building!

Many Governors, whether new to the role or not, can feel overwhelmed. You may feel the following are among the challenges of the job. These are concerns shared at times – don’t worry you are not alone!

- It’s time consuming – you have to make time in a life that may already be very busy.
- There are hard decisions to make and you will soon become aware that you can’t please all of the people all of the time.
- Meetings are never ‘at the right time’ and if you miss more than one meeting in a row you run the risk of being disqualified as a governor.
- There’s loads of paperwork to read, to understand, to remember to bring to meetings and to store.
- Sometimes it can keep you awake at night – the decisions you help to make affect the welfare and the lives of all the children, staff and parents of your school.

Fortunately the positives outweigh these concerns. We value your contribution and willingness to become involved.

Guidance for your new role

This section will help you understand your position and get to know your school.

You have chosen to be a governor no doubt because you care about young people, their education and welfare. Further you clearly have a sense of community responsibility by giving up valuable time to this very necessary commitment. To prepare you to carry out this commitment effectively and, hopefully, efficiently begins here! This information is for you to read at home and is in three sections:

Expectations

1. What is expected of governing bodies and of you as a governor?
2. The corporate responsibility and liability of the governing body
3. The key responsibilities of the governing body
4. Features of effective schools

Readiness for your first meetings

1. Contacts
2. Gather information
3. Meeting and procedures

How the governing body of a school is organised

You don't need any special qualifications to be a school governor. What you do need is a genuine interest in working with schools to be the best they can for ALL our children.

Expectations

What is expected of governing bodies and of governors

You are joining a governing body of between 9 and 20 governors. The members of the governing body, your colleagues, have been elected or appointed to represent those in the school and wider community who have a key interest in the education and welfare of the pupils or students.

The governing body is accountable:

To conduct the school to the highest standards of educational achievement for all pupils

This principle becomes the test of the work of the governing body – has it undertaken all reasonable means and action to fulfil its obligation to ALL the pupils? The focus is on the benefit of organisation and practice in the school to pupils, and not the self-interest of any party in the educational enterprise. Further, the achievement of ALL pupils must be considered, whatever their background or ability.

The governing body is expected to work in close partnership with the headteacher who is the responsible leader and manager of the school – this does not imply “rubber stamping” actions or recommendations but sensible endorsement, scrutiny and support based on carefully weighed evaluation of those actions and recommendations. Equally the governing body should consult the headteacher and other relevant members of the leadership team or the staff when making decisions.

As a governor you may consider that, as you are only a volunteer, perhaps a non-professional and/or have limited experience in the educational field and therefore unqualified, it is daunting to take on the responsibilities outlined above. After all you and your colleague governors will make decisions which will shape the lives of future generations.

As a governor it is expected that you will:

- apply common sense, to bring a community or broader perspective, perhaps to reflect some of the views of a specific group eg parents, business, or an endorsement to the necessary decisions of the core responsibilities of the governing body.
- be enthusiastic and committed to the core principle of working to improve the quality of the education the school provides to the highest degree. This of course implies not only improvement in academic standards but also opportunities, values and welfare
- take a share of the workload and contribute your knowledge and skills to benefit the school
- give time to preparation for, and attendance at, general meetings and at committees on which you have agreed to serve
- work as part of the team by valuing others’ contributions, asking questions constructively and in a non-confrontational manner
- stand by collective decisions, to follow any agreed Code of Conduct, and especially to respect confidentiality of information about individuals and items which are agreed as confidential
- visit the school when possible to become familiar with its work and issues where possible (following arrangement with the headteacher)
- promote the school to the community – if you have concerns share them first with your governing body
- attend relevant training
- keep up to date with developments in education

You will find it helpful to scan the “Seven principles of Public Life” which links your governor role to other public offices. They apply individually and of course corporately.

Selflessness

Holders of public office should make decisions solely in terms of the public interest i.e. in schools in the best interests of the pupils. They should not do so for personal, family, financial or other material benefits.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any obligation to others which might influence their decision making.

Objectivity

Holders of public office should make decisions regarding for example appointments or contract on the basis of merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must be prepared to have their work scrutinised eg Ofsted Inspections.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about decisions, reasons and actions. Confidentiality should be applied only in the public interest or proper protection of an individual pupil's or adult's privacy.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any personal interest which may affect their public responsibilities and resolve conflicts in a way to protect the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by example.

The corporate responsibility and liability of governing bodies and governors

Governing Bodies should play a strategic role and leave the running of the school to the headteacher they have appointed. It is the governing bodies' role to support and strengthen the headteachers' leadership and hold them to account for the performance of pupils and staff.

The governing body has an independent overall responsibility to the wider community for the work of the school.

Corporate responsibility

The governing body is responsible CORPORATELY for all its decisions.

This means:

- All governors are equal in their power and responsibility
- Authority rests with the whole governing body not with any individual governor (see below)
- The governing body makes its decisions collectively
- The governing body as a whole decides which responsibilities to delegate (some cannot be)
- Delegated decisions remain the collective responsibility of the governing body
- No individual governor can act alone or speak for the governing body unless lawfully delegated by the governing body
- Individual governor votes are not recorded (a secret ballot may be requested eg votes for Chair)
- The Chair may act on behalf of the whole governing body in an emergency when not to do so would be detrimental to the welfare of a pupil or adult – this action must be reported at the earliest opportunity to the governing body where it can be debated.

Governing bodies' core functions

We have high expectations of governing bodies. They are the strategic leaders of our schools and have a vital role to play in making sure every child gets the best possible education. This is reflected in the law, which states that the purpose of maintained school governing bodies is to 'conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement at the school'.

The DfE Governance Handbook for governors in maintained schools, academies and free schools is a key document for governors and highlights their roles and responsibilities.

In all types of schools, governing bodies should have a strong focus on three core strategic functions:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction, and
- holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff, and
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

These functions are reflected in regulations for maintained schools (September 2013) and in the criteria Ofsted inspectors use to judge the effectiveness of a school's governing body.

Some governing bodies, including all academies, have additional functions and responsibilities. Depending on the type of school, they may own land, act as employers, admission authorities, or boards of charitable trustees and company directors.

This amounts to a demanding role for governing bodies but the majority manage this very well.

For core features of effective governance see section 2 of the Governance Handbook.

Other Support

Support for governing bodies may also be available from:

- Governor Services – please see back page for contact details
- SGOSS – the governor recruitment charity funded by us to help governing bodies recruit highly-skilled new governors
- commercial governor support organisations
- umbrella bodies such as the National Governors Association (NGA), Freedom and Autonomy for Schools - National Association (FASNA) or Independent Academies Association (IAA).

Training provided to governors in maintained schools must be free of charge to the individual governor. Governing bodies are responsible for approving the school budget and, within that, they should make provision for meeting their own training and clerking needs.

DON'T FORGET, TAKE ACTION

For you as a governor this means you may need to ask for information or clarification, especially in the early stages of your period of office to show that:

- You are fully involved in the work of the governing body - there are no second class governors of any category. You will need to declare any personal interest or the governing body may decide that you have a personal interest and it is inappropriate for you to be involved in certain elements of decisions.
- You have sufficient information through which to make a contribution and decision – a “friend” or mentor may be helpful here.

Governing body and governor liability

The governing body and individual governors cannot be held personally or financially responsible for the outcomes of decisions provided that decisions and actions have been taken in good faith and that LA advice has been followed. (Where this is not so, the school budget could have to bear costs which could severely affect the school's provision for pupils.)

Governors have a real job to do and it is interesting, challenging and rewarding.

Powers and duties- The key responsibilities of the governing body

The list of responsibilities below clearly shows that the governing body is central to the core leadership.

Your key duties by law and on which you will make decisions are:

- The vision and direction of the school (stated through school policies)
 - Deciding the mission statement of the school
 - Deciding the priorities for school improvement as spelt out in the School Development Plan, working in close consultation with the headteacher
 - Regular review of policies
- The curriculum
 - Ensuring that the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, and the curriculum for religious education, personal social and health education, including citizenship, are in place
 - Agreeing curriculum policies (but not writing them)
 - Setting the times of school sessions
 - Setting the Teacher education (training) dates for the coming year
- Finance
 - Setting and agreeing the overall budget
 - Over-viewing and, where necessary, revising the budget
- Staffing
 - Deciding, in consultation with the headteacher on the staffing number and structure
 - Agreeing a staffing and pay policy
 - Appointing the headteacher
 - Ensuring the headteacher's performance is monitored and assessed
 - Appointing the senior management team
 - Receiving reports on the performance management of teachers and its impact on the quality of teaching and learning
 - Deciding on pay levels for teaching and support staff
- Standards and Targets
 - Agreeing annual attainment targets for relevant pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4
 - Reviewing pupil performance in national tests and examinations and setting subsequent targets
- Discipline
 - Agreeing the procedures for the management of pupil behaviour
 - Agreeing a policy for staff conduct
 - Statutory setting of a complaints procedure
- Publicising information and reports
 - Publish specified information on website (School Prospectus is optional except for Nursery Schools)
 - Provide an Annual Report to Parents (Maintained Nursery schools)
 - Publish the Complaints procedure
- Premises and health and safety
 - Over-viewing risk assessment

- Budgeting some maintenance and capital expenditure Please note: Voluntary Aided schools are responsible additionally for:
- Determining the religious character of the school
- Ownership of the land
- 15% of capital and external maintenance work
- Admissions policy (The LA has this responsibility in all other schools)

The LA is responsible for:

- Budget delegation
- Inspection and advisory services
- Admissions
- School transport

Governing bodies are not expected to:

- Act as inspectors or report on the quality of teaching
- Decide how subjects are taught
- Determine which pupils are excluded
- Write policies or Ofsted action plans on their own – they may contribute or amend
- Sign off day to day expenditure (the head does this but consults the governing body beyond the agreed level) (see finance policy)

What is expected of parent and staff elected governors?

They have the same powers and responsibilities as all other governors – it must be emphasised there are no second class governors.

- Elected governors must take their own view as to what they consider is the right course of action for the best interests of the school and its pupils, in the light of the information they have. They cannot respond to the spectrum of opinion of those who elected them in taking a decision and may well have a wider knowledge of the issues at stake.
- Elected governors can ensure other governors are aware of views and concerns of their electorate where this is relevant to governing body understanding and decisions.
- Staff governors or any governor employed to work at the school cannot be elected Chair of the governing body
- The headteacher cannot clerk any meeting

DON'T FORGET, TAKE ACTION

Parent governors are often in a front line position to be aware of individual and general parent concerns, especially in a primary or first school and you need to be prepared to respond appropriately.

All governors if approached by parents should heed the following:

- Don't try to answer on behalf of the school or the governing body – however you may be able to offer explanation of a situation
- If the concern is of a child's progress or the manner in which s/he has been managed, check whether the concern has been investigated with the class teacher and direct the parent down this avenue first - be understanding but don't take sides
- Check whether the parent is aware of the school's complaints procedure (all schools must have a published complaints procedure) and refer them to the Headteacher
- Remember: Any governor who has knowledge of a parental complaint would not be eligible to sit on the Complaints Panel
- Never raise concerns about your own child individually in a governors' meeting – you need to keep your governor and parent role separate!

Features of effective schools

A governing body's main responsibility is to maintain continuing improvement to the quality of the education and provision in their school.

Yardsticks by which to gauge the quality of their school come from successful schools. The following questions help you to check what you see and hear (but be careful not to jump to conclusions. It will take some time before you understand fully how your governing body works):

- Professional leadership and management
 - Have you, your colleague governors, the headteacher and all staff a clear understanding of the vision and priorities for the school's improvement?
 - Are these clear to pupils and parents?
 - What is the evidence of clear high expectations in the work and contribution of all?
 - Are pupils well cared for and their rights respected?
 - Are pupils encouraged and expected to take personal responsibilities?
 - Is there positive reinforcement of discipline and celebration of good behaviour?
 - Is the home-school partnership fostered and strong?
- Concentration on teaching and learning
 - Do governing body meetings concentrate on the impact decisions have on pupils' progress and welfare?
 - Are the school priorities focused on improvement?
- Rigorous monitoring and evaluating of progress
 - Does the governing body regularly check the progress of its plans and priorities, and act accordingly?
 - Does the governing body evaluate the short and longer-term impact, together with cost effectiveness of its decisions and choices in policies, purchases and investment in training?
- A learning organisation
 - Are the governing body and the school strengthening its knowledge and capability?

Readiness for your first meetings

Receiving this pack means that following your appointment or election, Governor Services have officially recorded you as being a governor for whichever category to which you were appointed eg Parent, Staff, Community, or LA. You have some ideas of what you are taking on from the first section. In any new situation we tend to be cautious and watch what everyone else does – sometimes incorrectly! In this section we look at the practical measures to get you started in working confidently and effectively as a governor.

If you are used to taking up new responsibilities, serving on committees and following procedures much of what follows will be familiar to you. However, each activity has its own quirks and processes and we hope it will be generally applicable to bring you up to speed.

Most of the work of governing bodies is achieved in meetings, through reviewing information, discussion and decision making. It is very important therefore that you get to know people and have good sources of information to start to carry out that work.

Preparation - contacts

The first task is to get to know people and become familiar with the school – you may already know the school well as a parent, member of staff or as a member of the community. However, you will now be looking at the school from a different perspective – that of a governor.

Talk to the headteacher

If the headteacher has not already contacted you (good practice) arrange a convenient time to meet him/her and, if at all possible, visit the school to familiarise yourself with the building and the head's perceptions of the everyday issues.

Talk to the Chair of Governors (the school can give you the telephone number or help with contact)

Sometimes the first contact a governor has with governor colleagues is at the beginning of the first meeting when all is often strange and there is a sea of new faces. If the Chair has not contacted you (good practice) make contact and introduce yourself. The Chair will then be able to brief you and begin to have some ideas to help you integrate into the work of the governing body. A good suggestion is that an experienced governor be asked to act as a mentor to coach you through your initial time as a governor.

Contact the Clerk to the Governors

The clerk is a valuable contact. S/he is not a governor but is responsible for:

- Issuing agendas and information
- Maintaining records
- Keeping the governing body informed about regulations and procedures

Early access to the dates of meetings will help keep your diary straight. In addition to this, the clerk will be able to give you much of the basic information you need.

Arrange to visit the school to see the school at work (if possible)

Introductions – an opportunity to introduce yourself, your background and interests is always helpful and breaks the ice!

Gather information

DON'T FORGET, TAKE ACTION

Complete this “Information I need to know about my school” section which ensures you have contact data and information about the school and the governing body. (The school secretary, headteacher or the clerk to Governors can help with this.) Some governing bodies have an introductory handbook for new governors with the information readily prepared.

Gather the “Tools of the trade”

As we indicated at the very beginning of this training pack most of the work of governors is carried out through reviewing information and making decisions at meetings. It is important, therefore, for you to be as well briefed as possible or to know where to access significant information. You should ensure you have copies of the following essential documents as soon as possible (contact the Clerk to Governors and/or the headteacher):

- The minutes of the two previous meetings (including the Head's report) – to see what's current in the school.
- Copy of the governing body's agreed procedures, standing orders and terms of reference for committees – to give you a good start to meetings.
- The School Development Plan (SDP) or School Improvement Plan (SIP) – an essential document which itemises the current priorities for school achievement and development and should guide the content of meeting agendas to gauge school progress.
- Your school should also share the school summary of self-evaluation. This is a very useful document for governors and will summarise the school's view of itself
- A copy of the 'Governance Handbook' published by the DfE in electronic form. It will give to an answer to almost all queries on the law and regulations which determine how governing bodies must operate. This may be accessed online via www.education.gov.uk (when in doubt don't hesitate to ring Governor Services).
- Sections 1, 2 & 3 are essential reading for governors
- A copy of the Governor Development Programme – attached with this pack.

Additionally, you may:

- Look at the last Ofsted report (available on the Internet via www.ofsted.gov.uk) and the school's Action Plan.
- Look at Ofsted's data dashboard for your school
- Check the information about curriculum, teaching & learning and pupil premium on the school website
- Keep up to date with developments in education and governance via our Governor Services website.

Our ultimate goal is for every child to reach their full potential. Governors are there to ask questions. We need to be really clear about where decisions we take are leading us.

“Information I need to know about my school”

It would be useful for you to find out the following information about your school, most of which you will find in the current school prospectus. By far the best way of finding out what makes a school ‘tick’ is to visit it during working hours in consultation with the headteacher and governing body. Governors are entitled to a ‘reasonable amount of time off work in order to carry out a ‘public duty’” (see ‘A Guide to the Law’). If you really are unable to visit during school hours, try to attend parents’ or open evenings and weekend events, as well as regular meetings of the governing body, and collect written information.

NAME OF SCHOOL:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE:

HEADTEACHER:

DEPUTY HEADTEACHER:

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR/

SECRETARY:

BURSAR (IF APPLICABLE):

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ADVISER:

TYPE OF SCHOOL:

AGE RANGE: **to**

DfE NO:

NUMBER ON ROLL:

NUMBER OF STAFF:

PLANNED ADMISSION LIMIT (PAL):

SCHOOL DAY STARTS AT:

FINISHES AT:

BREAK TIMES:

WEBSITE ADDRESS:

It is important to get to know your fellow governors because you will be working together as a team. In time, you should become familiar with the strengths of other governors, the skills they possess, and the opinions they hold; and likewise, they will come to respect your experience, capabilities and views. In this way, the governing body of your school will be able to operate effectively and efficiently, with everyone sharing tasks and responsibilities. It would be useful for you to find out the following information about your governing body, most of which can be provided by the clerk to the governors.

Name	Address	Telephone	Governor Category
Chair			
Vice Chair			
Clerk			
Other Governors			

My governing body is a member of Worcestershire association of governors (wag).

Meetings and procedures

You should receive the necessary papers for the forthcoming meeting from the clerk. (Legally 7 days' notice in maintained schools and 14 days' notice for Academies unless otherwise stated in the Articles of Association.) These will include:

- The Agenda – the order of business for the meeting
- The Minutes of the previous meeting – these should be a clear record of the business of the last meeting, the decisions which were taken and the expected actions to be taken, by whom and when
- The Headteacher's Report – usually detailing pupil progress, the progress of the priorities in the School Development Plan, details of finance, premises, and staffing issues, recommendations for governing body decision, record of headteacher's actions
- Committee meeting Minutes
- Reports - from governor visits, working parties
- Other papers - supporting agenda items/ list of correspondence

DON'T FORGET, TAKE ACTION

Read the papers carefully, perhaps highlighting the important points, words, phrases or items you don't understand and items on which you wish to ask questions. As you get to know the school better the paper work will become more meaningful but don't hesitate to ask because you will in all probability be asked to vote on matters – don't join the turkeys and Christmas syndrome!

Meeting procedures

Each governing body has its own traditions and style. The 2002 Education Act “deregulated” significant elements of the work of a governing body, giving the governing body control to manage its own work with some notable exceptions. (Please see the “Governors' handbook” for more information.) The important thing is that it works legally and to best effect for the pupils. There are some requirements:

- The governing body is required to hold a minimum of 3 meetings in a school year - in fact governing bodies hold at least 3 meetings plus committee meetings to which much work is delegated, eg curriculum, finance, staffing and personnel issues, premises.
- The governing body must elect a Chair – the procedure for election is not set but good practice should prevail; the length of the term of office may be 1-4 years. A staff governor, including the headteacher, cannot be Chair of Governors. Each committee of the governing body must also have a Chair.
- The governing body must appoint a Clerk to the Governors and ensure all meetings including committees are properly clerked and recorded.
- The governing body must decide whether to accept the reasons for the apologies of a governor – unaccepted apologies or absence of a governor for 6 months may lead to a governor being disqualified.
- The governing body must review their delegation, the structure and terms of reference of its committees annually.

The Chair leads the governing body, should liaise with the headteacher and is charged with ensuring the efficient and effective running of meetings, but has no greater powers than any other governor except in an emergency.

Quorum - a meeting of the whole governing body is quorate ie has sufficient members present at a meeting to make legal decisions, if at least half of the appointed/elected governors are present. A committee meeting is quorate to meet and vote providing a minimum of three governors who are members of the committee are present (or more if determined by the committee).

Minutes and confidentiality – Minutes of the governing body are public documents and may be published following formal approval. However, the governing body may determine that agreed matters are to be confidential and certainly any reference to individuals, including staff and pupils, must be only included in a confidential section of the minutes. How individuals vote is confidential – governors may of course vote for a secret ballot on any matter.

GOOD PRACTICE

Agendas of whole governing body meetings should be focused on the core work of the governing body i.e. issues for discussion and decision which affect policy, pupil progress and school improvement.

Reports/minutes of committee meetings or working parties, explanatory papers and governor reports should be circulated in advance in order for time to be spent on consideration of issues and action.

Candidates for office, e.g. chair, vice-chair, should withdraw during voting on the appointment.

Items of AOB (Any Other Business) should be approved for inclusion in the meeting, or for deferral, at the beginning of a meeting.

The Clerk is the conduit through which all correspondence should be circulated.

Committees

The governing body may delegate much of its core discussion and decisions to committees – but the governing body is still responsible for those decisions and may review or over rule them.

The governing body review structure and set and review annually the Terms of Reference for its committees. That is:

- what it expects the membership of a committee to be
- what a committee will be responsible to do
- what decisions the committee will take
- who will clerk the committee
- how and when decisions will be reported to the full governing body
- the committee quorum (at least 3 governors).

DON'T FORGET, TAKE ACTION

Provide the Chair of Governors with a note of your expertise, experience and interests to ensure you join committees to which you feel confident and happy to contribute.

Remember to ask questions regarding anything you don't understand – it is very probable that others don't understand it either but have kept quiet!

“Governor training has been very helpful and empowering for me. Governors are keen to show new-comers the ropes. We've all got the School's best interest at heart. We can all make a contribution.”

How the governing body of a school is set up

This section will help you to understand how your governing body comes to be made up as it is and who is who. Further detail can be read in the 'Governors' Handbook'.

It is traditional in the English democratic system to manage community affairs by giving responsibility and power to volunteers and amateurs, who are in turn advised in their work by professionals, for example councillors, magistrates – and so it is with education through governing bodies. This tradition has a long history covering charitable institutions through to the School Boards set up in the 1860s to the more modern Boards of Managers and currently the Governing Bodies. Over the past twenty years legislation has inexorably placed greater and greater responsibility at school level with the governing body holding the school to account for implementing policy and legislation and in turn being accountable to the community for the quality of the work of the school. This section describes how your governing body is made up as it is.

There are different types of school because of the service they offer or because of the body wholly or partly responsible for their buildings and character. Each school must have a governing body. Every school must follow the relevant national curriculum for the age range for which it caters. All schools come under the general supervision of the LA, which is responsible for ensuring the quality of the education and compliance with the law.

Types of maintained schools

The types of school are:

- **Community schools** – funded by the government and the Local Authority (LA) who own the land and buildings and are also the nominal employers of staff (in practice governing bodies undertake this through delegation).
- **Community Special schools** – as above but catering for pupils with the specific needs for which it was set up.
- **Maintained Nursery schools** - as above, catering for pupils of nursery age in the foundation stage, funded by the government and the Local Authority (LA) who are also the nominal employers of staff.
- **Voluntary Controlled schools** – established by a voluntary body; funded by the government and the Local Authority who are also the nominal employers of staff. The character of the school is determined by the Church or foundation, which historically is associated with the school.
- **Voluntary Aided schools** – established by a voluntary body, usually the church; funded by the government, the LA and the foundation (usually the church or trustees). The foundation is

responsible for the character of the school, part of the building costs and is the employer of staff. The foundation nominates the majority of governors and is responsible for admissions policy.

- **Foundation schools** – own the land and buildings and are direct employers of staff; funded by the government and the LA but with a foundation or board of trustees determining the character of the school.
- **Foundation Special schools** - as above but catering for pupils with the specific needs for which it was set up.

The instrument of government and constitution of a maintained school

Each school governing body must have an INSTRUMENT OF GOVERNMENT. This document describes the name of the school, the name of the governing body and the composition of the governing body in terms of the number of governors of each category (see below) – this is formally termed the CONSTITUTION of the governing body.

The makeup of the governing body and categories of governor of a maintained school

Under the terms of the 2002 Education Act the size of the governing body is determined by governing body agreement. The minimum number of governors is 7 and there is no maximum but the number of governors appointed or elected to each category must follow the strict proportions laid down in the regulations for the particular type of school. This ensures that whatever the size of the governing body, each interest group retains its voting proportion. The governing body will determine what it considers the most efficient size in order to meet its working arrangements. It can re-constitute ie change its size, providing the LA and, in the case of church schools, the diocese, agrees.

The categories of governor under the 2012 regulations which all schools adhere to are:

- **Parent governors** – who are parents, guardians and carers of pupils in the school and elected by the other parents, guardians and carers. Where no parent is nominated for a vacancy, the governing body may approach any parent, following the appropriate guidelines. Employees of the school who work more than 500 hours are not eligible.
- **Staff governors** – who are elected by all staff employed by the school and may be any members of that staff whether a teacher or member of the support staff. The headteacher is automatically a staff governor, but may choose not to be in which case the vacancy is unfilled.
- **LA governors** – are nominated by the Local Authority but appointed by the governing body.
- **Co-opted governors** – are appointed by the governing body in order to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school.
- **Foundation governors** – are appointed by the Foundation or Trustees named in the instrument of government.
- **Partnership governors** – exist in Foundation schools (including Foundation special schools) which do not have a named foundation or trustees.

Additionally, the governing body may appoint any number of Associate Members. They bring expertise and involvement to the work of the governing body. They have a right of attendance but not of voting at main meetings. (They may be excluded for confidentiality reasons.) The governing body may include them on committees and give them voting rights (although there are restrictions).

Terms of office:

The maximum and usual length of the term of office for a governor is four years. However, the governing body may determine the length of the term of office of any category of governor but this must be clearly stated in the Instrument of Government. Further, the term of office applies to all governors in that category and not to individuals.

Training for new governors

Training is available to help you be an effective governor.

Module 1

Working STRATEGICALLY by being active in:

- setting the vision, values and aims for the school
- planning the school's improvement
- exercising powers and duties

Module 2

Support and Challenge – 'Being a CRITICAL FRIEND' by:

- monitoring and evaluating the work of the school
- supporting the good work of the school
- knowing and visiting your school

Module 3

Managing ACCOUNTABILITY by:

- holding the school to ACCOUNT for its results ensuring that through reports, meetings and visits you are accountable
- being accountable as a governing body to the Community

Other courses are available. Bespoke training can also be arranged to meet the specific needs of your Governing Body – contact Governor Services for further details

Information regarding dates, cost and how to book these training is available in the governor services training directory and on the Governor Services website.

Governors' Helpline – available to schools that have purchased our SLA

Advice on all governing body matters can be obtained whenever questions or problems arise by contacting Governor Services for a speedy, friendly and confidential reply.

Governors' Resources - available to schools that have purchased our SLA

In addition to the items that your governing body may have collected and made available in your school, there are Notes of Guidance and other resources available through Governor Services. Should you wish to find out more contact Governor Services direct.

Named Officers

All Officers of the Local Authority can be contacted direct through the switchboard at County Hall on telephone 01905 763763.

The Officer leading Governor Services is Barry Newton and he can be contacted at Governor Services.

Email: governorservices@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

Telephone: 01905 846400

Governor Services, Worcestershire Children First, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester, WR5 2NP