

Model governor role description

Role of a school governor

To contribute to the work of the governing board in ensuring high standards of achievement for all children and young people in the school by:

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

Activities

As part of the governing board team, a governor is expected to do the following.

1. Contribute to the strategic discussions at governing board meetings which determine:
 - the vision and ethos of the school
 - clear and ambitious strategic priorities and targets for the school
 - that all children, including those with special educational needs, have access to a broad and balanced curriculum
 - the school's budget, including the expenditure of the pupil premium allocation
 - the school's staffing structure and key staffing policies
 - the principles to be used by school leaders to set other school policies
2. Hold executive leaders to account by monitoring the school's performance. This includes
 - agreeing the outcomes from the school's self-evaluation and ensuring they are used to inform the priorities in the school development plan
 - considering all relevant data and feedback provided on request by school leaders and external sources on all aspects of school performance
 - asking challenging questions of school leaders
 - ensuring senior leaders have arranged for the required audits to be carried out and receiving the results of those audits
 - ensuring senior leaders have developed the required policies and procedures and the school is operating effectively according to those policies
 - acting as a link governor on a specific issue, making relevant enquiries of the relevant staff, and reporting to the governing board on the progress on the relevant school priority
 - listening to and reporting to the school's stakeholders: pupils, parents, staff, and the wider community, including local employers

3. Ensure the school staff have the resources and support they require to do their jobs well, including the necessary expertise on business management, external advice where necessary, effective appraisal and continuing professional development (CPD), and suitable premises and that the way in which those resources are used has impact.
4. When required, serve on panels of governors to:
 - appoint the headteacher and other senior leaders
 - appraise the headteacher
 - set the headteacher's pay and agree the pay recommendations for other staff
 - hear the second stage of staff grievances and disciplinary matters
 - hear appeals about pupil exclusions

The role of a governor is largely a thinking and questioning, not a doing role. Governors do NOT:

- write school policies
- undertake audits of any sort – whether financial or health and safety - even if the governor has the relevant professional experience
- spend much time with the pupils of the school – if you want to work directly with children, there are many other voluntary valuable roles within the school
- fundraise – this is the role of the PTA – the governing board should consider income streams and the potential for income generation, but not carry out fundraising tasks
- undertake classroom observations to make judgements on the quality of teaching – the governing board monitors the quality of teaching in the school by requiring data from the senior staff and from external sources
- do the job of the school staff; if there is not enough capacity within the paid staff team to carry out the necessary tasks, the governing board need to consider and rectify this

As you become more experienced as a governor, there are other roles you could volunteer for which would increase your degree of involvement and level of responsibility (e.g. as a chair of a committee). This role description does not cover the additional roles taken on by the chair, vice-chair and chairs of committees.

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

- get to know the school, including visiting the school occasionally during school hours and in agreement with the headteacher, 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

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

Created by the National Governance Association and can be found in their Guidance Centre under Tools and Checklists. www.nga.org.uk

The qualities and skills that school governors need

For governing boards to function effectively **all** governors need:

- a strong commitment to the role and this includes dedicating time regularly during the school term and throughout the year to carry out the required duties
- a strong commitment to making sure there are high aspirations for the all the children in the school and a commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for all the pupils
- to be naturally inquisitive and able to question and analyse, and a willingness to learn
- good inter-personal skills
- appropriate levels of literacy in English (unless a governing board is prepared to make special arrangements), and sufficient numeracy skills to understand basic data
- the skills to understand the ethos of the school and its implications for the way it is governed, this includes the religious aspect of the school if governing in a school with a religious character such as a Church of England or Catholic School
- to carry out the role to the highest standards and, as the holder of a public office, to adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life, which are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership

In addition, **some** governors on each governing board will need to have the expertise and experience in the following:

- analysing performance data
- budgeting and driving financial efficiency
- performance management and employment issues, including grievances
- working constructively in committees, chair meetings and to lead the governing body
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Adapted, with thanks, from Salford City Council's list of skills and qualities for school governors.