



# New Governor Induction Guide

**For newly appointed governors and  
trustees**

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If you have a query, question or comment. please get in touch and we will be happy to help!

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Dear Colleague

Thank you for your willingness to become a member of a profoundly important group of people, without whose dedication and support the education of children and young people in the Wigan Borough would be much poorer. We hope that the enclosed information will provide you with preliminary guidance on your role in school governance.

Governors and trustees have a vital role to play, and the better equipped they are, the greater the chance the school has for growth and success. For this reason we would encourage you to make full use of the training opportunities provided by the Governor Services Team. The 'new to governance' course will provide you with the initial information and support to enable you to more confidently participate in your first meetings, while the varied programme of other training events will provide specialist advice to develop particular functions within the governing board. Details of current training courses are available on the Wigan Governor Services training pages on [GovernorHub](#).

Thank you again to committing yourself to improving the standard of education for children and young people in the Borough. We are confident that you will find your involvement a challenging yet rewarding experience.

Yours sincerely

All the team at Wigan Governor Services.

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## **WELCOME**

There are many benefits to becoming involved in school governance.

You will have the opportunity to:

- Develop new skills and to strengthen existing ones. Free training is offered to all governors and trustees in Wigan as part of the buy-back arrangements with Governor Services.
- Work with a wide range of people from a variety of social, cultural and religious backgrounds.
- Gain an understanding of how schools are run and how the education system works.
- Enjoy the personal satisfaction and sense of achievement of working to improve your school or trust.
- Enjoy using your skills to the good of the local community.

## **Why do we have governing boards?**

To help schools provide the best possible education for their pupils by:

- Thinking and working strategically to help raise standards.
- Monitoring and evaluating progress toward priorities and targets.
- Supporting the headteacher and staff as well as challenging their expectations.
- Accounting to all stakeholders for the school's performance and for the decisions they make.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNING BOARD?

A school governing board has a strategic role in the development of the school or trust, but does not become involved in day-to-day management issues – that is the role of the headteacher or senior executive leader. In academy trusts, there are different layers of governance, which can include the trust board and local governing boards at school level.

Governors are there to:

1. Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- 
2. Hold the executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and the efficient and effective performance management of staff;
- 
3. Oversee the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

Don't forget to arrange with the headteacher a visit to the school. A visit is the best way to get to know everybody and become effective and efficient in your role!

## WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE GOVERNOR?

### BEING PREPARED FOR A MEETING

- You are enthusiastic.
- You can commit time and energy.
- You attend relevant training.
- You care about improving all children's educational attainment.
- You want to work as a part of a team and can value and respect the contribution made by different people.
- You are willing to listen, learn and to ask questions.
- You are open to ideas and have a feel for what is important to people.
- Find out the names of the others on the board.
- You can log into GovernorHub.
- Make sure you have read all the necessary papers before the meeting.
- Prepare your thoughts and questions before the meeting.
- Bring with you a pen, your diary and your annotated papers.

## HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU GIVE?

- A governor's or trustee's term of office is usually for four years, but as a volunteer you can resign at any time.
- Previous governors and trustees can normally apply to be reappointed or re-elected if they wish to return and are still eligible.
- Your main task is to attend meetings. Meetings of the full governing board normally take place once or twice each term and committees normally meet once a term, but may meet more frequently
- You should clarify with your governing board the time commitment required.
- Governors also visit school as part of their role in monitoring and evaluation to observe practice, meet with staff and to familiarise themselves with the school. Governors are usually also invited to attend school performances, events and some staff training.

## DBS CHECKS

All newly appointed and elected Governors must apply for an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Check within 21 days of their appointment. School will send you a link to complete an application on-line. Volunteers are entitled to a check free of charge. In academies, trustees and members of the local governing board should have an enhanced DBS check prior to appointment. Everyone should also have a Section 128 Direction check.



## TOP TIPS FOR THE FIRST 12 MONTHS

- Don't bring up issues about your own children at governing board level.
- Consider the best interests of the school.
- Remember you are equal to all governors or trustees on your board.
- Remember decision-making is corporate, bring your own view, but respect and abide by the corporate decision.
- You have no power, responsibility or liability as an individual.
- Get to know your school, speak to the headteacher, the chair and the clerk.
- Ask for a mentor as a first point of contact.
- Your volunteer status means getting summaries – don't allow governance to become a full-time job.
- Remember the governing board steers the boat; the headteacher manages the rowing and the vessel.
- If you are a member of a committee, be familiar with its terms of reference.
- Find out about confidentiality.
- Don't be part of decision making where a personal interest or occupation allows you to become biased – declare the interest and withdraw.
- If you don't feel you have enough information to make a decision, then say so – remember you can abstain.
- Prepare well for all meetings.
- Attend training where possible, ask about other options such as online training.

## **THE NOLAN PRINCIPLES**

As elected individuals, school governors are expected to be aware of, and accept the 7 principles of public life, also known as the Nolan Principles.

### **Selflessness**

School and college leaders should act solely in the interest of children and young people.

### **Integrity**

School and college leaders must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. Before acting and taking decisions, they must declare and resolve openly any perceived conflict of interest and relationships.

### **Objectivity**

School and college leaders must act and take decisions impartially and fairly, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. Leaders should be dispassionate, exercising judgement and analysis for the good of children and young people.

### **Accountability**

School and college leaders are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

### **Openness**

School and college leaders should expect to act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from scrutiny unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

### **Honesty**

School and college leaders should be truthful.

### **Leadership**

School and college leaders should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs. Leaders include both those who are paid to lead schools and colleges and those who volunteer to govern them.

Schools and colleges serve children and young people and help them grow into fulfilled and valued citizens. As role models for the young, how we behave as leaders is as important as what we do.

## **FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION**

Leaders should show leadership through the following personal characteristics or virtues:

### **TRUST**

Leaders are trustworthy and reliable.

We hold trust on behalf of children and should be beyond reproach. We are honest about our motivations.

### **WISDOM**

Leaders use experience, knowledge and insight.

We demonstrate moderation and self-awareness. We act calmly and rationally. We serve our schools and colleges with propriety and good sense.

### **KINDNESS**

Leaders demonstrate respect, generosity of spirit, understanding and good temper.

We give difficult messages humanely where conflict is unavoidable.

### **JUSTICE**

Leaders are fair and work for the good of the children.

We seek to enable all young people to lead useful, happy and fulfilling lives.

### **SERVICE**

Leaders are conscientious and dutiful.

We demonstrate humility and self-control, supporting the structures, conventions and rules which safeguard quality. Our actions protect high-quality education.

### **COURAGE**

Leaders work courageously in the best interest of children and young people.

We protect their safety and their right to a broad, effective and creative education. We hold one another to account courageously.

### **OPTIMISM**

Leaders are positive and encouraging.

Despite difficulties and pressures, we are developing excellent education to change the world for the better.

## **AM I ENTITLED TO TIME OFF WORK?**

Under employment law, employers must give employees who are involved in school governance “reasonable time off” to carry out their duties.

The employee and employer have to agree on what is “reasonable time” off. Issues to be considered when arranging time off with your employer include:

- How much time is needed to carry out your governance duties.
- Whether the employee also has time off work for other activities.
- The circumstances of the employer’s business and the impact the employee’s absence may have on it.

Employers do not have to give time off with pay, although some do as part of their corporate social responsibility.

Many governing boards have an allowance or expenses policy. Allowances/expenses may include childcare expenses, support for governors whose first language is not English, telephone bills, photocopying, postage, travel and stationery. Contact your governing board to see if they have such a policy.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Any governor who, without permission, is absent from meetings of the full governing board for a continuous period of six months will cease to be a governor. Within academies there are different mechanisms to manage attendance in line with their articles of association and scheme of delegation.

If you need to offer apologies for a meeting, contact the clerk in advance of the meeting with the reason for your absence. The full governing board will then decide whether to accept your apologies during the meeting.

## **QUORUM**

If a meeting of the governing board cannot be held for a lack of a quorum (50% of current membership for full governing board meetings, with committee quorum determined by their terms of reference) the clerk must convene a further meeting as soon as reasonably practicable.

If the governing board decides to terminate the meeting before all agenda items have been completed, it must fix the date and time for a further meeting at which the outstanding items will be considered and must direct the clerk to convene that meeting accordingly.

The process for trust board meetings and local governing boards in academy trusts will follow similar principles in line with their articles of association and scheme of delegation.

## **FREQUENCY AND NOTICE OF MEETINGS**

Clarify with your school how much time you will be expected to give, for example how frequent the meetings are.

You will usually be given meeting dates for the full academic year when you join the governing board.

You should receive the agenda and supporting papers seven days before the meeting. The papers set out details of the date, time and place.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Governing board meetings are not open to the public. Visitors may attend by invitation but may be asked to leave if a confidential item is discussed.

You should observe confidentiality regarding proceedings of the meetings and from your visits to school. How an individual votes should always be regarded as confidential.

The minutes of any part of the meeting that are confidential should be kept separate. In the main, confidential items will be those where the privacy of an individual needs to be respected.

## **REGISTER OF PECUNIARY INTEREST**

Governors, trustees, and school staff have a responsibility to avoid any conflict between their business and personal interests and affairs and the interests of the school. Each governor and trustee is required to complete a register each year. Further guidance on pecuniary interests can be obtained from the clerk.

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## HOW THE BOARD IS STRUCTURED

Where the governing board has a committee structure, the whole governing board will meet once each term for a formal business meeting which looks at current issues within the school, takes a report from the headteacher and also feedback from the committees and individual governors who have visited the school.

Whilst each committee has a specific area of responsibility (terms of reference), the support of other committees may need to be sought before decisions can be actioned. Each committee has a core membership and arranges its meetings; however all governors or trustees are invited to attend committee meetings where they feel they wish to be involved in a specific issue.

Governing boards may also choose to operate without committees, in which case they usually meet once per half-term.

Governors can also be asked to join one of the following panels should the need arise:

- Pupil discipline panel
- Staff discipline panel / appeal panel
- Pay committee / pay review appeals panel
- Employee grievance panel / appeals panel
- General complaints panel.

In academy trusts, who sits on these panels will depend on the scheme of delegation / terms of reference.

## **THE AGENDA**

The agenda, which will be contained with your notification for the meeting, will list all the items that are to be discussed at the meeting.

Consider the agenda carefully before the meeting and make notes where there are items of particular interest or importance to you or where you want to ask a question.

You have the right to request that an item be placed on the agenda by contacting the chair or clerk a few weeks before the meeting.

If “any other business” features on your agenda and you wish to raise an issue under this item you must discuss this with the chair prior to the start of the meeting so the chair can evaluate whether the meeting is an appropriate forum for the issue and can allow sufficient time for discussion.

## **MINUTES**

The clerk takes minutes of the meeting which are a record of what happens at that meeting. All governors or trustees receive a draft version of the minutes from the clerk and are given the opportunity to suggest amendments and raise matters arising at the next meeting. Once approved by the full governing board, the minutes form the public record of the meeting and should be made available to any member of the public on request.



## **CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

All governing boards must have a chair and a vice chair. The chair of the governing board will lead the meeting and the vice chair will lead the meeting should the chair be unavailable.

Usually, at the last full governing board meeting of the school year, the clerk will invite nominations for both the chair and vice chair positions and give a deadline date of when nominations should be received. Governors or trustees can nominate themselves or someone else for the position. At this meeting an election will take place. At the meeting the governors or trustees who have been nominated may be asked to leave the room and the rest of the board present will vote. A secret ballot will be conducted by the clerk.

A chair is also appointed for each committee if your board has a committee structure. The committee chair is then responsible for leading the committee meeting and conducting the business of the committee in accordance with the terms of reference.

In academy trusts, the appointment of the chair and vice chair of the trust board is normally detailed in the articles of association. The scheme of delegation indicates the process for the appointment of the chairs of the sub-committees including the local governing boards (LGB). The latter tend to be a trust board appointment based on the recommendation of the LGB.

## USEFUL WEBSITE LINKS

Part of being a governor or trustee is keeping up to date with the latest trends in education. There are many different ways in which this can be done, particularly in reference to governance, the internet provides a range of information - these are some of the current, best websites to look at:

<http://www.nga.org.uk> (membership needed for access to all areas of the website)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>

## THE EFFECTIVE GOVERNING BOARD:

- Works together as a group and makes decisions collectively as a team.
- Delegates.
- Takes reasoned decisions and follows them through.
- Holds meetings that are focused, a manageable length and achieves their aims.
- Supports the pupils, parents, staff and headteacher.
- Works closely with the headteacher.

## WHAT TRAINING IS AVAILABLE

Training is available to all governors if your governing board subscribes to the Governor Services Service Level Agreement (SLA) provided by Wigan Governor Services. Training can also be booked on a 'pay-as-you-go-basis', in which case you will need to liaise with the school to arrange authorisation before booking.

All those new to governance are strongly recommended to attend the induction course, 'New to Governance (for maintained schools and academies)', at the earliest opportunity.

In addition to induction courses there are a number of other training courses available to you, as detailed in the Wigan Governor Services training programme. Courses equip you with essential knowledge and give you the opportunity to talk with others about important issues and share best practice. As these courses are provided through an SLA, no personal cost is incurred.

Some Governing Boards also subscribe to the National Governance Association Learning Link, or GovernorHub Knowledge, online training packages which give you flexibility about when to complete the training. Ask your clerk for more details.

To enquire about training and support contact 01942 486100 or email [governortraining@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:governortraining@wigan.gov.uk)

**NOTES**

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