



# Becoming a school governor

Guidance for potential governors



## School governors are volunteers who want to make a positive contribution to children's education. They do not need to be education experts or have formal qualifications.

### **The most effective governors are those who:**

- listen, think and ask questions;
- believe that education is important;
- take an interest in the role of schools in the community;
- can work with others and assimilate a wide range of information and data;
- have a willingness to learn;
- have sound communication skills; and
- are prepared to give time to doing the job well.

### **A governor performs a vital strategic role as part of a governing body. Governors need to make time to:**

- attend full governing body meetings, usually twice a term;
- attend committee and working party meetings about once or twice a term;
- attend school events;
- read reports and background

- papers before meetings;
- visit the school during the working day;
- take part, if necessary, in staff appointment panels, pupil exclusion panels, complaints panels and staff discipline and grievance hearings; and
- attend training.

### **The governing board**

- Individual governors have no power or responsibility. It is only the full governing body that has legal duties and powers. However, all governors share in that corporate responsibility;
- The school's direction is agreed by the governing board, headteacher and senior leadership team, who also make sure the school is meeting its targets;
- The headteacher and staff manage the school on a day-to-day basis.

## Excerpt taken from Governance Handbook, October 2020

'Governance has never been more critical to the education of our nation's young people. As Minister for the School System I see at first hand the impact of governors and governance professionals. The governance duty is, above all, to drive relentless ambition for the young people served by our schools system, whatever the circumstances'

**Baroness Elizabeth Berridge**, *Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools*

### **All governance boards, no matter what type of school or how many schools they govern, have three core functions:**

- 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 effective and efficient performance management of staff; and
- overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

### **Schools are looking for governors. People with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity who:**

- understand the purpose of governance and the role of non-executive leadership and have all the necessary skills, as outlined in the department's

Competency frameworks for governance and professional clerking, to deliver it well;

- include an effective chair and vice-chair with the ability to provide visionary strategic non-executive leadership;
- provide sufficient diversity of perspectives to enable robust decision making;
- are recruited through robust and transparent processes against a clear articulation of required skills which are set out in a role specification;
- use active succession planning to ensure the board, and the whole organisation, continues to have the people and leadership it needs to remain effective; and
- employ a professional clerk, and as necessary a company secretary, to provide expert advice and guidance and to ensure the efficient and compliant operation of the board.

Quotes received  
from current  
West Sussex  
governors

"Great satisfaction  
in knowing I am  
contributing to the  
education of our  
future generation  
in a positive way."

"In investing in the  
education, ethos and  
vision of a school you  
can be looking at the  
future of our society  
in terms of values  
and social cohesion."

"Making a  
difference for  
all the children in  
our community  
– not just in  
our school."

"You are not alone!  
There is a really  
good support team  
at County to help  
you with queries."

## Links and contact details

### **Governance Handbook**

[www.gov.uk/government/  
publications/governance-  
handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook)

### **West Sussex Services for Schools**

[http://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/  
Services/3164](http://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Services/3164)

If you are interested in becoming a school governor you could either contact a school directly or please email: [governor.services@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:governor.services@westsussex.gov.uk) or phone the West Sussex governance team on 0330 222 8887.

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School Support Officers contact details for further information

### **Jackie Gatenby**

[jackie.gatenby@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:jackie.gatenby@westsussex.gov.uk)  
Phone: 033022 24080

### **Ruth Marsella**

[ruth.marsella@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.marsella@westsussex.gov.uk)  
Phone: 033022 24205