



# The Role of a School Governor.



**GOVERNORS  
FOR SCHOOLS**

## About Governors for Schools

Governors for Schools exists to improve educational standards so that children and young people have the chance to realise their full potential. We believe the key to improving school performance is effective governance. By finding, nurturing and supporting a committed network of governors we help to drive systematic change in how schools operate.

Since 1999, we have been connecting schools across England with skilled and committed volunteers, supported by our business and university partnerships.

**“Trustees and governors  
are, in my view, the unsung  
heroes of the system.”**

**Sir David Carter**

National Schools Commissioner

Become a governor:

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# What does a school governor do?

Governors are responsible for overseeing the management side of a school: strategy, policy, budgeting and staffing. They enable their school to run as effectively as possible, working alongside senior leaders and supporting teachers to provide excellent education to children.

Being a school governor is a commitment to attending governing body meetings which consider issues such as setting the school vision, mitigating financial risk and scrutinising educational outcomes. They are also involved in the school community, acting as critical friends to the headteacher and senior leaders.

Governors bring a wide range of skills and expertise from their professional lives to the governing board and schools benefit greatly from working with skilled volunteers, for example anyone with experience of finance, law, premises management or human resources. A governor with business know-how can transform the running of a school.

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# Core governor responsibilities



## Setting the strategic direction

Governing bodies are the key strategic decision makers in every school. Along with the Head Teacher, it is the job of a governing body to set the school's aims and objectives around how the school will develop and improve. They set policies, formulate plans and agree targets to help the school achieve these objectives, as well as regularly reviewing their strategic framework in light of that progress.



## Creating robust accountability

The governing body is there to support and challenge the school's senior leadership team. They play a crucial role in holding the Head Teacher to account for securing the best possible outcomes for pupils. By challenging key decisions and asking pertinent questions about the school's performance data, governors aim to guarantee high standards in education.



## Ensuring financial probity

Governing bodies have a strategic role in the financial management of schools. Their key responsibilities include, setting financial priorities through the school development plan, 3 year financial plan and the annual budget. They also decide on how the school's delegated budget should be spent in accordance with the school improvement plan and statutory curriculum requirement.

# How do Governing Bodies work?

Governors work together to provide independent oversight of the management and operation of a school, with the aim of improving the quality of education provided and raising standards. A school's governing body does not run the school on a day-to-day basis; this is the job of the Head Teacher and other senior staff.

## **Governing body meetings**

Full governing body meetings are normally held once a term and whilst there are many important aspects of the role, the most important is the business that takes place at these meetings.

## **School visits**

Governing bodies are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of a school and its curriculum. School visits will help governors to understand more about their school and the reality of school life. Governor visits to classrooms are not a form of inspection but serve as a clear monitoring function on the implementation of the school's strategic planning.

## **Committee meetings**

A governing body is required to have certain statutory committees but may also wish to establish other committees. Most governors are members of one or two committees, whose work is reported back to the full governing body. This is so all governors are kept informed of matters and working progress. Typical committees include Personnel, Curriculum, Premises, and Finance.

## **Reading & Agenda**

Prior to meetings, you will receive an agenda, a copy of the minutes from the previous meeting and any other relevant papers that are to be discussed. It is recommended that you take time to read and familiarise yourself with these documents prior to the meeting. Make notes of anything you are unsure of so you can ask questions at the meeting if necessary.

# Why become a school governor?

Being a school governor is a chance to experience leadership at board level at any point in one's career. Governors balance the school's budget, hire the headteacher and make strategic decisions. The role provides individuals with the opportunity to develop and hone skills such as negotiation, influencing and teamwork.

Volunteers need to be dedicated people who care about improving education, but they do not need prior board experience. It makes the role perfect for professionals looking to improve their business and leadership skills, give back to society and enhance children's futures.

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*"I went for a director role within [RICS] and they said that I had all the internal knowledge, but I needed to get more external knowledge and develop my strategic skills. I took that feedback on board and I wanted to give something back [...] so I signed up [with Governors for Schools] online and registered my interest.*

## Sonia Kearns

Governor at Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Coventry

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## Schools



**Skilled and committed volunteers**

**Effective school governance**

**Improved school performance**

**Children reach their full potential**

**Skilled workforce**

**Happy productive adult life**

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# Commitment involved



**Term of Office** - most governor appointments are for a term of four years.



**Travel** - you decide the time period you are prepared to travel to and from the school. This could be up to 30 or 60 minutes, or more on occasion.



**Liability** - governors are not individually liable. Liability is collective and held by the governing body as a whole.



**Time per month** - governors are expected to attend 3 full governing body and 3 committee meetings per year at a minimum. The preparation, participation and travel for these meetings, and training, will comprise 4-5 hours a month for 9 months of the year, mainly in the evenings. Other involvement such as ad hoc panels and learning walks are not compulsory to attend, but we would strongly recommend you attend as many as possible to maximise your impact as a school governor.

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## Training and support

We are committed to ensuring newly appointed governors are up to speed and effective in their roles as quickly as possible. We provide a number of services to support you from the start:



High quality e-learning provision, with a suite of four free modules that are essential training for any governor in their first year.



Regularly scheduled Business Governor Network sessions providing governors with an opportunity to hear from experts and network with peers.



Six months' free membership of The Key for School Governors for you and your fellow governors, an online service that provides practical guidance and resources.

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## Next steps



### Complete our application form online

We will work with you to match you to a suitable governor vacancy in your local area.

[governorsforschools.org.uk/volunteer/apply](https://governorsforschools.org.uk/volunteer/apply)



### Speak to a member of our team

If you have further questions or would like to find out more contact a member of our team on

**020 7354 9805**



### Visit our website

To read case studies and testimonials, watch videos and find out more about governance, visit our website [www.governorsforschools.org.uk](http://www.governorsforschools.org.uk)

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**“It’s very satisfying because the school seems genuinely appreciative of my work. The school was inspected again by Ofsted in January 2017 and achieved a rating of ‘good’. It was a great sense of achievement, we felt we had been along the journey together as a school and as a governing body.”**

**Alastair Cowen**

Governor at James Brindley School, Birmingham

**Effective Governors, Excellent Schools**

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