

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS

The Role of the Staff Governor

Staff governors are in a unique position on a governing body, you are involved in the day to day running of the school and yet as governors you are required to put this to one side and be 'strategic managers'. This can raise a number of challenges which are unique to the role. However, being a staff governor offers an opportunity to make a real contribution to the strategic management of the school, providing an interesting and rewarding dimension to work.

As a staff governor you bring to the governing body an understanding of the school's ethos and culture as well as a close, professional knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. The role of a staff governor serves as a useful link between the staff and the governing body.

Understand the role

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

- setting the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

All governors are equal and staff governors, along with all other types of governor, should take part in all aspects of the work of the governing body providing you do not have a personal interest in the item under discussion. As staff governor you also bring specialist knowledge and skills to the governing body, which can help in several ways. This includes contributing to discussions by explaining the likely effect of any proposal on pupils' learning or wellbeing and drawing attention to the likely effect of a proposal on the staff.

Effective governance

To effectively fulfil the role, staff governors:

- Have equal rights with all other governors.
- Should declare an interest and withdraw from any meeting where you, a partner or close relative or associate stands to gain, or where you are so close to a matter discussed it is difficult to be impartial; this may include discussion of potential staff redundancy or consideration of parental complaints.
- Should not participate in discussions about colleagues' pay (this does not apply to the headteacher who should be involved in discussions about staff pay, but not about his/her own pay).
- Should follow the agreed procedure for putting items on the agenda.
- Are advised to discuss, in advance of the meeting, any issue which might result in a conflict with the headteacher so that they know that you may be putting an alternative view at the meeting.
- Should feel free to express your own personal views, it being recognised that this is not necessarily the view of the majority of staff. You should report in good faith any widely held staff views, even if in a vote you decide to vote differently.
- Take responsibility for your own learning and development as a governor including attending training. Even if you have received training as a member of staff in particular areas e.g. safeguarding, it is still recommended that you attend governor training courses as governors are required to approach things from a different (i.e. more strategic) perspective.

- Should respect the confidentiality of governing body affairs and be aware of the sensitivity of governing body meeting discussions. You should clarify after such discussions which items can be reported and which items the governing body wish to remain unreported until the minutes of the meeting have been confirmed or are deemed confidential.

Practical ways to achieve a balance between being an impartial representative member of staff and regular involvement in day to day issues

- Never press your own personal agenda at the expense of others.
- Always be clear about what information can be reported back to colleagues.
- Never promise to 'solve a problem' on your own.
- Be wary of bringing an individual issue to meetings without following the agreed procedures.
- Abide by the agreed protocol regarding agenda items and any other business.
- Keep yourself aware of staff views and concerns.
- Play an active part in governor meetings.

Legal and recommended restrictions

There are two legal restrictions relating to staff governors that result from your status as employees of the school:

- A staff governor may not be chair or vice chair of the governing body.
- A staff governor may not be present at a meeting where consideration is being given to the pay or performance of any person employed at the school. The exception to this is the headteacher as outlined above.

It is not recommended that staff governors:

- Fulfil any of the named governor roles (eg. safeguarding governor) because these roles must provide an external challenge to the school.
- Participate in an exclusion panel or complaints panel. In both instances, parents may feel that staff cannot be objective and staff could be put in an uncomfortable position.
- Be involved in the selection panel for a new headteacher or deputy headteacher. Whilst the law does not exclude staff governors from being part of the selection panel, good practice suggests that there are too many instances where a conflict of interest might arise to make participation advisable. However, staff governors can give valuable input into the activities for an interview day or can be available to show prospective candidates around the school.

Remember, the governing body cannot fully function without its staff governors, so despite the necessary limitations placed upon the role, there is much more that you can offer. The majority of your governor colleagues are not educational experts and look to you for advice and guidance to help them fulfil your roles.

Governor Development Service

Support Available

Although this is a very delicate role, there is ample support and training available.

Resources	How To Access
Welcome Pack for all new governors	Sent to all new governors once GDS is notified of a new appointment.
Governor E-Learning (GEL) module - Getting it Right as a Staff Governor	Access to GEL is included in the Service Order. The link to the module is: http://www.elc-gel.org/learning-modules/the-role-of-the-staff-governor/
Leicestershire Governor Training and Development Programme	Copies sent to all new governors and available on EIS.
Leicestershire Governors' Newsletters	Produced termly and made available on EIS.
Governor Announcements	Announcements are posted on EIS throughout the year. They update and inform governing bodies about changes in legislation and new developments.

Team details

If you have any queries relating to courses, bookings or need general advice, please contact:

		Email	Telephone
Helen Wardle	Advice & Information	helen.wardle@leics.gov.uk	0116 305 6430
Michelle Wright	Advice & Information	michelle.wright@leics.gov.uk	0116 305 6517
Shehal Persaud	Course Bookings Advice & Information	shehal.persaud@leics.gov.uk	0116 305 6519

Address:
Governor Development Service
County Hall
Glenfield
Leicester
LE3 8TF