

School governor's guidance

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Introduction to the Governor Support Team

Governance of schools is becoming an increasingly demanding and time-consuming role. There has never been a more crucial time when schools have needed appropriately appointed and well trained individuals to take on this crucial position, to help secure the success of schools in an ever-changing world. Being a governor can be an enjoyable and stimulating way to spend a small amount of time each month.

The Governor Support Team is your central point of contact for all queries relating to any aspect of school governance.

As part of a Buy Back Service, Governor Support will:

- Issue Welcome Packs to new governors including -
 - Welcome to Governance
 - Access to the DfE Governors Handbook
 - Code of Conduct
 - Welcome letter
 - Instrument of Government
 - Previous minutes
 - Declaration Form
- Create & distribute Agendas/Packs for Full Governing Body Meetings
- Minute take at Full Governing Body Meetings
- Distribute Full Governing Body minutes
- Offer support and advice to governors over the phone and by email
- Cascade Statutory Guidance and essential information to the Chair of Governors & Head Teacher

The information and links in this document will provide you with local, regional and national information to guide and enhance your role as governor. We hope this document website will help you to make the most effective and efficient use of your valuable time.

We aim to provide an outstanding service - your feedback on how we can improve is welcomed. Please feel free to contact us at:

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Telephone: 0161 253 5688

E-mail: Governors.support@bury.gov.uk

Link Governors - Governors with specific roles

Link Governors take responsibility for promoting the development of their fellow governors.

One of the key roles and responsibilities for the governing body is to monitor the progress and performance of the school. Many governors hold positions with specific responsibilities in the governing body, usually referred to as "link governors". Governing bodies use link governors to share the workload more effectively. The link governor can play a significant role in developing the effectiveness of the governing body and in raising school standards. Reports from the link governor will not only help the governing body understand what happens in schools but also helps the governor to fulfil their strategic role.

The number of link governor roles is for the governing body to determine. However, the governing body should (as a minimum) nominate a link governor for the following:

- Special Educational Needs (a governor or committee of governors)
- Child Protection

Governing bodies should, determine their own link governor areas, based on the needs of the school. Some examples of areas that the governing body can designate a link governor to be responsible for are noted below:

- Training and Development
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Pupil attendance
- Health and safety
- Curriculum areas, e.g. mathematics, PE, drama, etc.
- Phases e.g. Foundation Phase, Key Stage 1, and Key Stage 2 etc.

Link governor visits to schools

Visits to school enable link governors to:

- see the school at work;
- observe the range of attitudes, behaviour and achievements of pupils;
- get to know the staff and work in partnership with the staff;
- demonstrate their commitment to the school;
- give active support to the staff and activities in the school;
- be aware of the effect of change and different approaches to teaching and learning;
- evaluate resources and discuss with staff any further requirements;
- gain first-hand information to assist with policy making and decision taking.

Schools should have a policy or protocol for governor visits to schools which is agreed by the governing body and staff at the school. Many members of staff will be delighted to meet a link governor who is showing a genuine interest in their work and that of their pupils. They will welcome governors observing their lessons etc. They will understandably want to prepare for the visit, for example, by arranging for samples of pupils' work to be available. It is therefore important to always ensure that the date, time and purpose of your visit is mutually agreed with both the Head Teacher and the link staff member. If link governors have a concern arising from the visit, they should take care that the matter is handled sensitively and raise the issue with the Head Teacher (as appropriate) rather than comment directly to staff members. If the agreed protocols are followed, then governor visits will be an enjoyable experience for all involved, and will result in effective monitoring by the governing body, which will contribute to school improvement.

Remember, the link governor visit is not about:

- inspection and governors should not behave as an inspector;
- making judgements about the professional expertise of the teacher;
- checking on your own children; or
- pursuing a personal agenda.

On the day of the visit the link governor should:

- arrive on time at the school and first report to the school office or secretary. This is not only courteous to the Head Teacher and the staff but also maintains the security of the school;
- act as an observer and only participate in class at the invitation of the teacher;
- respect the professionalism of the teacher, supporting but not interfering.

After the visit, the link governor should:

- thank the teachers and children;
- complete a Link Governor Report Form (if it is part of the school procedure), reporting on the focus of the visit, without giving opinions and individuals should not be identified;
- amend the report (if appropriate) after consultation with the teacher and Head Teacher; and
- report on the visit at the next governing body meeting.

There are also ways, other than visits to the classroom, in which link governors and the governing body can have a better understanding and knowledge of the school, these include:

- twilight session meetings with relevant staff / departments; and
- staff presentations given at committee / governing body meetings.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Reforms (SEND) Link Governor

Every school must have a 'responsible person' who makes sure that all those who are likely to teach a pupil with a statement of special educational needs are told about the statement. This person is generally the Head Teacher, but may be the Chair of Governors or a governor appointed by the governing body to take that responsibility. Being a governor with responsibility for SEND is about doing your best to ensure pupils with SEND get the help and support they need to access the curriculum and to participate fully in the life of the school. The SEND Governor will support and assist the governing body to have a better understanding and knowledge of SEND provision within the school. The role includes:

- confirming that the school has a SEND policy and that it is reviewed annually;
- being familiar with the school's SEND policy
- keeping informed of SEND initiatives, nationally and locally, from the Government and Local Authority;
- meeting termly, by appointment, with the SEND coordinator to discuss the progress and effectiveness of the SEND policy (in accordance with the Governor Visits to Schools policy);
- working with the child protection link governor (if appropriate);
- understanding how the school identifies pupils with SEND and what happens once a pupil has been identified;
- being aware of the progress individual pupils with SEND are making;
- being aware of the budget available for SEND within the school and monitoring its effective use;
- reporting, on at least an annual basis, to the governing body on the implementation and effectiveness of the school's SEND policy, without discussing the details of individual pupils;
- writing, or helping to write, the SEND information for the Governors Annual Report to Parents
- ensuring that the school prospectus contains a section on SEND provision; and
- keeping SEND knowledge up to date by attending relevant governor training courses run by the Local Authority.

Child Protection Link Governor

Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm. Effective child protection is essential as part of wider work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The governing body is responsible for ensuring the school has effective policies and procedures in place for safeguarding children, and monitoring the school's compliance with them. It is recommended that each governing body has a nominated governor for child protection to promote the importance of safeguarding and child protection. The child protection governor will support and assist the governing body to have a better understanding and knowledge of child protection and safeguarding provision within the school. The role includes:

- confirming that the school has a Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually and is readily accessible to all members of staff
- being familiar with the schools Child Protection Policy
- ensuring that the school has an up-to-date and agreed staff disciplinary procedure for dealing with allegations of misconduct against staff, including child protection allegations, that complies with the relevant legislation including the appointment of an independent investigator;
- meeting as and when required, by appointment, with the designated member of staff for child protection to monitor the effectiveness of the Child Protection Policy in the school (in accordance with the Governor Visits to Schools policy);
- working with the SEND link governor (if appropriate);
- helping to ensure that the school works well with relevant agencies and individuals;
- helping to ensure that accurate records are being kept by the school and that the child protection file is up to date;
- being aware of the number of pupils currently on the child protection register;
- checking that staff and governors are appropriately trained and that all members of staff and governors know what to do if they have any child protection concerns;
- ensuring safe recruitment procedures are in place and appropriate checks are being carried out on new members of staff and volunteers;
- understanding how safeguarding and child protection issues are addressed through the curriculum;
- reporting, on at least an annual basis, to the governing body, without discussing the details of individual pupils, on the implementation of the child protection policy; and
- keeping child protection knowledge up to date by attending governor relevant training courses run by the Local Authority.

Training Link Governor

Training for governors and their development is central to effective governance. The training link governor needs to be aware of the knowledge and skill needs of the governing body, which will help it operate and develop more effectively. The training link governor will help the governing body to plan and implement effective training and development programmes, and identify its training needs. The role includes:

- acting as a link between the governing body and governor support regarding training issues;
- helping to ensure that all governors are supported and that they have access to relevant advice and guidance in order to become more effective;
- ensuring that governor training and development is a regular agenda item at governing body meetings (at least once a term), in order to keep governors updated with the courses available;
- encouraging all governors to attend regular training sessions so that they may become more effective governors, and to feedback to the governing body to share knowledge and the relevance of the training etc;

- carrying out a skills and experience audit so that the governing body can identify the knowledge, skills and experience governors already have. The skills audit will also identify any gaps in skills and knowledge which can inform future development and training;
- ensuring all new governors have attended mandatory induction training so that they may become more effective governors;
- ensuring that the chair of governors has attended mandatory training for chairs so that he/she may become more effective in their role;
- ensuring that the governors have attended mandatory training on the use of performance data so that they may become more effective in their role;
- ensuring that the governing body welcomes and inducts new governors;
- encouraging governors to become members of their Local Governor Association;
- ensuring that the School Development/Improvement Plan contains a section on governor training and development;
- using the School Development/Improvement Plan to draw up a list of skills and knowledge the governing body will need to develop over the next few years in order to fulfil the requirements of the plan;
- helping the governing body to work on succession planning by encouraging potential chairs (of the governing body and committees) to attend chairs training sessions;
- maintaining a record of training sessions attended by governors, individually, whole governing body and cluster training etc;
- facilitate feedback from governors who have attended training courses as appropriate; and
- liaising with other link governors locally to consider cluster training etc.

Literacy Link Governor

The purpose of the school's literacy policy/action plan is to raise standards of literacy, reading and writing in the school. The literacy link governor helps to ensure that literacy issues remain high on the school's agenda and will support and assist the governing body to have a better understanding and knowledge of the literacy policy/action plan within the school. The role includes:

- being familiar with the National Literacy Programme and keeping informed of any local initiatives;
- being aware of how to implement literacy across the curriculum;
- understanding how literacy is assessed, recorded and reported in the school (including the national reading tests);
- being aware of the budget available for literacy within the school and monitoring its effective use/use of resources etc;
- knowing what "catch up" programmes for literacy are available for schools to use;
- meeting as and when required, by appointment, with the designated member of staff for literacy (in accordance with the Governor Visits to Schools policy);
- supporting the school's literacy co-ordinator so they can achieve the school's literacy targets;

- review, monitor and evaluate the impact of the activities within the school's literacy action plan (if appropriate);
- reporting to the governing body on the effectiveness of the school's literacy action plan;
- attending in-service training course (INSET day) if relevant to literacy; and
- keeping knowledge up to date by attending relevant governor training courses run by the Local Authority.

Numeracy Link Governor

The purpose of the school's numeracy policy/action plan is to raise standards of numeracy in the school. The numeracy link governor helps to ensure that numeracy issues remain high on the school's agenda and will support and assist the governing body to have a better understanding and knowledge of the numeracy policy/action plan within the school. The role includes:

- being familiar with the National Numeracy Programme and keeping informed of any local initiatives;
- being aware of how to implement numeracy across the curriculum;
- understanding how numeracy is assessed, recorded and reported in the school (including the national numeracy tests)
- being aware of the budget available for numeracy within the school and monitoring its effective use / use of resources etc;
- knowing what "catch up" programmes for numeracy are available for schools to use;
- meeting as and when required, by appointment, with the designated member of staff for numeracy (in accordance with the Governor Visits to Schools policy);
- supporting the school's numeracy co-ordinator so they can achieve the school's numeracy targets;
- review, monitor and evaluate the impact of the activities within the school's numeracy action plan (if appropriate);
- reporting to the governing body on the effectiveness of the school's numeracy action plan;
- attending in-service training course (INSET day) if relevant to numeracy; and
- keeping knowledge up to date by attending relevant governor training courses run by the Local Authority.

Health and Safety Link Governor

Health and safety in schools is governed by the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and the associated Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The employer is responsible for health and safety at the school. Under health and safety law, the employer (either the Local Authority or governing body) is required to monitor activities to ensure compliance with locally set policies and procedures.

There is therefore, a requirement for schools to formally monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the health and safety systems within the school. The Head Teacher will

be responsible for the day to day management of the school's health and safety policy, and schools will also have a health and safety representative. However, it may be helpful for the governing body to appoint a Health and Safety governor who will support the health and safety representative, and assist the governing body to have a better understanding and knowledge of health and safety within the school. The role may include:

- meeting on a termly basis, by appointment, with the health and safety representative at the school (in accordance with the Governor Visits to Schools policy);
- working with the school health and safety representative to ensure that the school has a health and safety policy, that it meets statutory health and safety requirements and that it is implemented and monitored;
- working with the school's health and safety representative to make regular termly health and safety inspections of the school premises;
- ensuring that risk assessments are in place and reviewed regularly;
- ensuring that all staff with health and safety responsibilities attend relevant training;
- consideration of any budget implications for implementing the responsibilities identified above;
- ensures that the Local Authority's Annual Health & Safety Audit is completed accurately;
- ensuring that regular reports are given by Senior management to the governing body (and / or health and safety committee) on safety matters including accident statistics;
- reporting to the health and safety committee and / or the governing body on the effectiveness of the health and safety policy and keeping the governing body informed of any health and safety issues;
- keeping up to date with health and safety legislation and relevant guidance;
- attending appropriate Local Authority governor training.

Pupil Attendance Link Governor

All parents or carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child regularly attends school. When a child attends school on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential, and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills. Attendance in schools needs to remain a priority to ensure that children and young people are given the chance to achieve their potential. The statistical links between attendance and achievement are very strong.

The governing body may wish to appoint a governor with specific responsibility for pupil attendance. The pupil attendance governor is the link between the governing body and the school in relation to attendance and should meet the designated staff lead regularly, probably on a termly basis. The nominated governor should help the governing body ensure that its statutory duties in relation to pupil attendance are met and that that staff and governors are appropriately trained. The role includes:

- confirming that the school has an attendance policy which is regularly reviewed in consultation with staff, parents and pupils, and formally approved by the governing body;

- being familiar with the school’s attendance policy, any initiatives, nationally and locally;
- meeting termly, by appointment, a relevant member of staff at the school to discuss the progress and effectiveness of the attendance policy (in accordance with the Governor Visits to Schools policy);
- discuss with the relevant member of staff:
 - the school’s agreed attendance target;
 - the overall level of attendance – authorised and unauthorised;
 - the level of persistent absence;
 - an analysis of attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absences to be carried out and used to devise solutions, and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions;
 - the performance of those pupils with poor attendance;
- being aware of the strategies and interventions that the school uses to improve attendance and monitoring of these;
- reporting, on at least an annual basis, to the governing body on the implementation and effectiveness of the school’s attendance policy, without discussing the details of individual pupils;
- writing, or helping to write, the attendance information for the Governors Annual Report to Parents, highlighting the importance of regular school attendance and information about any targets set by the governing body for improvement for reducing the level of unauthorised absences;
- keeping knowledge up to date by attending relevant governor training courses run by the Local Authority.

Subject or Area Link Governor

The purpose of linking every governor with a particular subject / area is to support the school in its work of raising pupil attainment in the school and to assist the governing body to have a better understanding and knowledge of the subject / area within the school. The role includes:

- confirming the school has a scheme of work in place for the subject / area and that it is reviewed;
- developing knowledge of the subject / area and being familiar with strategies and keeping informed of any local initiatives;
- meeting as and when required, by appointment, with the designated member of staff for the subject / area (in accordance with the Governor Visits to Schools policy);
- supporting the subject / area co-ordinator / head so they can achieve targets;
- being informed about staffing arrangements and training;
- being aware of the budget available for the subject / area within the school and monitoring its effective use / use of resources etc;
- being aware of curriculum and timetable arrangements;
- being aware of special needs / additional needs provision for the subject / area;
- understanding the assessment and recording procedures for the subject / area;

- knowing and understanding the current levels of attainment in the subject / area;
- understand how the subject / area fits into the school development / improvement plan;
- reporting to the governing body and / or curriculum committee on current practice in the subject / area;
- attending in-service training course (INSET day) if relevant to the subject / area (as an observer);
- keeping knowledge up to date by attending relevant governor training courses run by the Local Authority.

Safeguarding Children

Safeguarding children is everyone's business.

Please refer to the web site www.safeguardingburrychildren.org:

- if you are concerned about the safety of any child;
- for the contact details of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), to report any concerns regarding someone who works with a child including foster carers and volunteers.

Ofsted inspectors will not rely on the production of certificates as part of the inspection. Inspectors will discuss safeguarding arrangements and will need to be satisfied that school leaders and governing bodies are competent in the safeguarding requirements associated with the recruitment and appointment of staff.

Governors' responsibilities for Cared for Children

As part of the arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the Designated Teacher Governing Bodies should, as a minimum, receive an annual report from the designated teacher. This should cover:

As part of the arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the Designated Teacher Governing Bodies should, as a minimum, receive an annual report from the designated teacher. This should cover:

- levels of progress made by Looked after children (LAC) who are currently or have been on roll within the past twelve months in relation to all children in the school (ie educational, social and emotional progress);
- how Pupil Premium for LAC has been used to raise the attainment of individual looked after children and its impact on the progress of this group of children;

- whether the pattern of attendance and exclusions for LAC is different to that of all children;
- any process or planning issues arising from personal education plans (PEPs);
- whether any are identified as gifted and talented and how those needs are being met;
- whether any have special educational needs (SEND) and whether those needs are being met through statements or School Action or School Action Plus or Education and Healthcare plans;
- how the teaching and learning needs of LAC are reflected in school development plans and are being met in relation to interventions and resources;
- training provided for the designated teacher in order to impart knowledge and understanding about the education and well-being of LAC to colleagues;
- any workload issues arising as a result of the number of LAC on roll at the school and the number of Local Authorities which are involved;
- work with virtual school heads or their equivalents in Local Authorities;
- the impact of any of the school's policies, for example on charging for educational visits and extended school activities, on LAC.

To protect a child's need for confidentiality, it is important to ensure that the report does not mention individual children by name.

In addition to considering and acting on an annual report, school Governing Bodies should make sure that there are arrangements in place to keep themselves informed about provision for, and attainment of, cared for children on the school's roll on a more regular basis.

It is recommended that your Governing Body has a governor with particular responsibilities for LAC.

Full statutory guidance can be found at:

(www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269764/role_and_responsibilities_of_the_designated_teacher_for_looked_after_children.pdf)

Good practice – Policies and Procedures

The Governing Body is responsible for monitoring, supporting and implementing numerous policies and procedures with regards to the leadership and management of the school. These responsibilities can range from dealing with complaints against the school to appointing the new Head Teacher.

Policy Development

Policies are the statement of principle which guide conduct and action. The following bullet points might help when developing policies in line with the school ethos:

- establish the principles upon which conduct and action should be based;
- identify those responsible for drafting the policy (curriculum leader, staffing committee, working group);
- consult all interested and affected parties;
- review policy in light of analysis of consultation;
- identify the success criteria - (if the policy underpins the practice, x, y, z would be happening);
- establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;
- amend, agree and adopt policy - if appropriate;
- review impact and outcomes of policy on a regular basis.

It is through the setting and the monitoring and evaluation of its implementation that the governing body fulfils its main purpose of raising standards and securing the welfare of its pupils.

School complaints

All schools are required to establish a complaints procedure and to publicise that procedure. This means that the procedure should be easily accessible at the school.

Governor Training

The Bury Governor Development Group (BGD) exists to help governors of both primary and secondary schools to fulfill these roles ever more effectively. It provides excellent courses tailored to the needs of governors and led by high quality trainers. Our vision is not only to maintain but also to enhance the high attainment of children in Bury schools.

For further information, visit the website at www.burygtg.org.uk