

WELCOME

Thank you for becoming a School Governor in Sheffield.

This is some important information for you as a new governor. Please take the time to read it and contact the Governor Support Team with any queries on (0114) 2506887 or email ed-governorsupport@sheffield.gov.uk

In addition to this welcome information, we also produce a termly Sheffield Governor Newsletter, which will be sent to you in advance of your next full governing body meeting. You can also view or download it from our website: [Sheffield City Council - Governor News](#)

The website contains more detailed information including news items, forthcoming events, guidance and training for governors. There is also a webpage specifically [for new governors](#).

Induction Training

We strongly advise that governors book onto our induction training as soon as they can. The training covers the role and responsibilities of a governor in an ever-changing environment. Dates of all training sessions can be found in the latest training update available via the [Governor training](#) webpage.

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Getting started

Contact the Headteacher and ask for the latest written information about the school:

- The school prospectus
- The Headteacher's Report to the last Governors' meeting
- A list of Governing Body policies
- A summary of the current School Improvement Plan
- A calendar of Governors' meetings if there is one
- The Governing Body's Code of Conduct
You can view or download our [model Code of Conduct](#) for an understanding of the expectations on governors and the level of commitment required.

Ask for a password to access the City Wide Learning Body information centre to keep up to date with Governor correspondence. See page 10 for details.

Contact the Performance and Analysis Service for access to the Children and Young People's Profile website to get an understanding of school performance data. See page 10 for details.

Arrange a visit to the school. Even if you cannot make it during school hours, at least you will see the school and get a feel for the kind of work that goes on.

Contact the Chair of the Governing Body and arrange to meet him/her for an informal discussion about the school. Find out how the Governing Body is organised. Usually there are a number of Committees and individual Governors are nominated to take particular interest in curriculum or other areas.

EVERY GOVERNOR MATTERS

Sheffield City Council wants the Governing Bodies of all our schools to be representative of their communities.

We also want all Governors to feel that they are included in the work of the Governing Body and are able to make a contribution.

What we are doing to ensure Equal Opportunities for Governors?

- We monitor gender, ethnicity and disability, and use this information to set annual targets for improving representation.
- We support Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Governor recruitment and organise training, support and other events for current and prospective BME Governors. All known BME Governors receive direct mailing about events so please get in touch if you would like to be involved but haven't heard.
- We support Governing Bodies to fulfil their statutory duties in relation to Gender, Disability and Race Equality.
- We use email and our website, www.sheffield.gov.uk/education/schoolgovernors to make information easily accessible. We back this up with hard copy information and correspondence so Governors without electronic access are not left out.
- We also ensure that venues for training events/ conferences are accessible to all.

Help us improve:

- Please return the monitoring form to us sent out with your welcome information.
- Remember to complete the 'change of email' list, which is circulated with the attendance list at Governing Body meetings.
- Please let us know if you think there are new or better ways in which we can recruit Governors from under-represented groups.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR SCHOOL

When you become a Governor **you are a representative** rather than a delegate. This means that if you are elected as a Parent Governor, or nominated as a Local Authority Governor, you cannot be instructed by parents or your nominating group to take a particular view. On the other hand you (and all the other Governors) do have a responsibility to listen to their view and to take it into account.

All Governors have a duty to keep in touch with how parents feel about the school. The practical reality is often that it is the Parent Governors who are most available because other parents meet them more regularly. You may sometimes need to be quite clear that, when you are talking to parents as a governor, you can only listen to what they are saying and then bring it to the attention of the whole Governing Body.

If you are a parent you may feel that you already know your child's school. However, when you become a governor, you are likely to find that there are some areas of the school's activity you need to find out more about. Most new governors will need some time to get to grips with their role and nobody will expect you to know about all the issues that come up. You should expect to be able to ask questions - and get answers - from other governors and from the Headteacher.

It is sometimes difficult to define where the boundaries are between governing and managing a school. An effective Governing Body will develop a good working relationship with the Headteacher and the staff of the school. It is not necessary for the Governing Body, let alone an individual governor, to know all the details. It **is** important that governors understand that their role is **strategic**. In particular you will get involved with developing school policies and the School Improvement or Development Plan.

Three Key Roles

The three main roles of the Governing Body are:

- ❑ agreeing the **Strategic Direction** for the school
- ❑ acting as a **Critical Friend**
- ❑ ensuring **Accountability**

ROLE OF THE GOVERNING BODY IN RAISING STANDARDS AND IMPROVING SCHOOLS

The strength of the Governing Body lies in the collective knowledge, experience and expertise of its members. The Governing Body answers to parents, the local community, and in some cases the Local Authority or church, for the performance of the school.

MAIN ROLES OF THE GOVERNING BODY

To Provide a Strategic View

The Governing Body has important powers and duties but limited time and resources, so it should focus on where it can add most value. That is in helping to decide the school's strategy for improvement so that pupils learn most effectively and achieve the highest standards.

The Governing Body should help to set, and keep under review, the broad framework within which the Headteacher and staff should run the school.

In all its work, the Governing Body should focus on the key issues of raising standards of achievement, establishing high expectations and promoting effective teaching and learning.

To Ensure Accountability

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring good quality education in the school.

The Headteacher and staff report to the Governing Body on the school's performance.

It is not the role of Governors simply to rubber-stamp every decision of the Headteacher.

The Governing Body has a right to discuss, question and refine proposals – whilst always respecting the professional roles of the Headteacher and other staff, and their responsibilities for the management of the school. In its turn the governing body answers for its actions, above all to parents and the wider local community, for the school's overall performance.

To Act as a Critical Friend

The Governing Body also provides the Headteacher and staff with support, advice and information, drawing on its members' knowledge and experience. In these ways the Governing Body acts as a critical friend to the school.

Critical in the sense of its responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the school's effectiveness, asking challenging questions, and pressing for improvement. A friend because it exists to promote the interests of the school and its pupils.

WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL

Extensive research and school inspection evidence has shown that effective schools generally share certain characteristics.

FEATURES OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Professional Leadership

The Headteacher is the professional leader of the school. He or she is purposeful, fully involved in what goes on in the classroom, and helps make sure that staff have opportunities to show leadership and participate in making decisions.

Shared Vision and Goals

Staff work together for a common sense of purpose and clear targets.

A Learning Environment

The school provides a climate in which pupils are able and willing to learn. The atmosphere is orderly and purposeful, and the working environment is attractive.

Concentration on Teaching and Learning

The school's activities have one central purpose – helping pupils to learn and to achieve.

Explicit High Expectations

The school has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. These are communicated clearly to all pupils, and lessons are intellectually challenging.

Positive Reinforcement

Discipline is clear and fair. Staff make sure that pupils know how they are doing, and take particular care to praise them for good work.

Monitoring Progress

Staff systematically monitor and evaluate the achievements of pupils and of the school as a whole.

Pupil Rights and Responsibilities

The school promotes pupils' self-esteem. It encourages them to take responsibility, particularly for their own work.

Purposeful Teaching

The quality of teaching is high, particularly because lessons are efficiently organised, have a clear purpose and are well structured. The teaching takes account of the fact that different pupils learn in different ways.

A Learning Organisation

The school presents learning as something that is for the adults working there, as well as for pupils. The school provides training and development for its entire staff, including school-based staff development.

Home-School Partnership

Relations between home and school are supportive and co-operative. Parents get actively involved in their children's work and in the life of the school.

IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

Knowing the school's current performance provides a basis for improvement. The most important way in which the Governing Body can carry out its strategy-setting role is through the School Improvement Plan. This should set out targets for the next few years and how the school will meet them. It should be based on wide consultation and focus on raising standards of achievement and on the quality of pupils' learning. The role of the Governing Body in this process is to provide overall direction and constructive criticism, and to review the plan regularly.

QUESTIONS TO ASK IN DRAWING UP SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Where are we trying to get to?

The plan should summarise the overall vision of the sort of school that the Governing Body wants to see by the end of the period covered by the plan.

Where are we now?

The plan should summarise the school's current strengths and weaknesses and link clearly to the school's Self Evaluation.

How can we get from where we are now to where we want to be?

The plan should set out objectives and targets for improving the school's performance in line with the overall vision. It should state clearly the action that will need to be taken in order to achieve those improvements.

The best targets are ones for which particular groups and individuals (both teachers and pupils) in the school can take responsibility, for example, measurably higher performance in a subject, age group or class.

By getting agreement to realistic but challenging targets, the Governing Body can help to raise expectations and achievements throughout the school.

What are the key priorities?

There are likely to be many more objectives and targets that the school would ideally like to meet than will be realistically achievable. The plan should state the priorities that matter most, and what actions the school should focus on.

Have we got the resources to do it?

Some objectives and actions will not need more money and others will. Given budget constraints, the Governing Body must consider whether the resources are likely to be available to meet all their objectives; and if not, whether there are other ways of achieving them.

Who is responsible for doing what, and by when?

The plan should say which members of staff are expected to take what action to achieve the priority targets set and give a deadline by which the action should be taken.

How will we know if we have achieved our goals?

The plan should say what information the governing body will need in order to evaluate progress, when that information is to be provided, and by whom.

EVERY CHILD MATTERS

Children's services, including schools, are required to work towards achieving these five key outcomes for children:

- * **Being Healthy**
- * **Staying Safe**
- * **Enjoying and Achieving**
- * **Making a Positive Contribution**
- * **Achieving Economic Well-Being**

Governors play an important role as a Critical Friend to ensure the school meets these five outcomes.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS OF GOVERNORS

Meetings

- Attend Governing Body and Committee meetings, and send apologies if unable to attend.
- Be a member of at least one Committee.
- Prepare for meetings by reading the agenda and relevant papers beforehand.
- Participate as appropriate in general discussions, making contributions, and asking questions to clarify or challenge.
- Report back on monitoring visits to school.
- Be familiar with policies and key documents, especially Governing Body and Committee remits, the school ethos, School Improvement Plan and Self Evaluation documents.

Designated Responsibilities

- If your Governing Body has governors with particular designated responsibilities (e.g. curriculum areas), be responsible for linking with and monitoring at least one area.

Training

- Familiarise and prepare yourself for the role by reading around relevant articles, e.g. from the Local Authority (LA), Department for Education (DfE), Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) and School Policies.
- Attend Governing Body training events, in particular an Induction course for new Governors.
- Attend individual training events run by the Local Authority where gaps in knowledge and/or experience exist.

General

- Familiarise yourself with the school by supporting school events for example concerts, sports activities, assisting with school trips or other pupil activities.

LOCAL AUTHORITY SUPPORT FOR GOVERNORS

Training

The Local Authority provides [training and support for School Governors](#). Find out the name of the Governor at your school responsible for training so that you can book onto an induction course. This course is also available as an e-learning module for self-study.

If your school has bought into the Local Authority Governor training package for the current financial year you also receive free access to all online training courses provided by [Modern Governor](#).

If you have any queries call the Governor Support Team helpline on (0114) 250 6868 or visit the website www.sheffield.gov.uk/education/schoolgovernors.

City Wide Learning Body (CWLB) Information Centre (formerly known as SchoolPoint): Make sure you have access

CWLB information centre (Schoolpoint) is the electronic system used by the Local Authority to communicate with schools with the aim of effective, efficient and green communication.

All Governors can access it to view general correspondence to Chairs and Governors along with guidance and model policies for schools and governing bodies.

Schools should provide a generic password to all Governors and this should be part of the school-based induction process for all new Governors. It is particularly important that the Chair of the Governing Body has access.

If you would like to receive email alerts to keep specific users up to date with content please ensure to let your school know that you would like an individual account.

If you need any further information, please contact the MIS team on 0114 2734517

Children and Young People's Profile Website

All Governors can access the [Children and Young People's Profile](#) to look at data reports for the school at which they serve as a Governor. Reports also compare individual schools' performance with data for Sheffield as a whole and nationally. Reports cover all aspects of attainment, progress and attendance as well as contextual data.

Governors are given access to this site and will need to contact the Performance and Analysis Service on 0114 203 9672 for a username and password.

Insurance Cover for Governors

The following information outlines the situation with respect to insurance for school Governors. Governing Bodies are required to take out insurance to cover potential liability for negligence in carrying out its responsibilities. Cover is regarded as essential.

Governing Bodies are incorporated, thus removing financial liability from individual Governors, providing they have acted honestly without ulterior motive and reasonably within the scope of their functions and procedures and with care and common sense.

Actions could be brought against individuals for criminal conduct, deliberate non-compliance with Health and Safety Guidelines or willful misconduct with regard to spending of the school budget.

DfE guidance in [‘The Governors’ Handbook’](#), describes the legal responsibilities of Governors.

Sheffield City Council has insurance cover in the following areas, which includes cover for School Governors

- Employer’s Liability
- Public Liability
- Officials’ Indemnity
- Libel and Slander

The Council insurance covers only civil liability as no organisation can cover for deliberate criminal misconduct. The Council’s insurance applies for any incident that occurred whilst a person was acting as a Governor both as an individual and for the incorporated governing body.

Incorporation removes financial liability from individual Governors, providing they have acted honestly, without ulterior motive and reasonably within the scope of their functions and procedures, and with care and common sense.

EDUCATION (SCHOOL GOVERNMENT) REGULATIONS

Disqualification of people from the membership of School Governing Bodies

In summary the following people may not serve as Governors:-

1. People who are detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 during their period of office.
2. People who have failed to attend Governing Body meetings for a continuous period of 6 months, beginning with the date of the first meeting they failed to attend, without the consent of the Governing Body (not applicable to ex-officio Governors).
3. People who have had their estate sequestrated (temporarily repossessed) and the sequestration has not been discharged, annulled or reduced.
4. People who are subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or an interim order.
5. People who are subject to a disqualification order or disqualification undertaking under the Company Directors Act 1986, a disqualification order under Part 2 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, a disqualification undertaking accepted under the Company Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, or an order made under Section 492(2) (b) of the Insolvency Act 1986 (failure to pay under county court administration order).
6. People who have been removed from the office of charity trustee or trustee for a charity by the Charity Commissioners or High Court on grounds of any misconduct or mismanagement, or under section 7 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990 from being concerned in the management or control of any body.
7. People who are disqualified from working with children or have a disqualification order under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.
8. People who are included in the list of teachers or workers prohibited or restricted from working with children or young people (Section 142 of Education Act 2002, previously 'List 99').
9. People who are disqualified from being an independent school proprietor, teacher or employee by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families.
10. People who have in the previous five years been sentenced to 3 months or more in prison (whether this was suspended or not) without the option of a fine.
11. People who in the previous twenty years have been sentenced to two and a half years or more in prison.
12. People who have at any time been sentenced to five years or more in prison.

13. People who have in the previous 5 years been convicted of an offence under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996 (Nuisance or Disturbance on Education Premises).
14. People who refuse an application being made to the Criminal Records Bureau for a criminal records certificate.
15. In addition, anyone who, whilst serving as a Governor, becomes disqualified from holding office as a Governor of any school shall, upon being disqualified, give written notice of the fact to the Clerk of the Governing Body of the school.

In order to help safeguard the interests of pupils from people who might harm children, you should declare any criminal convictions that you have incurred, including any that have become spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

Any such information, which will be treated with total confidentiality, should be returned, marked CONFIDENTIAL directly to:

Mike Patterson
School Liaison Manager
Governor Support Team
Bannerdale Centre
125 Carterknowle Road
Sheffield
S7 2EX

If you require further clarification please contact the Governor Support Team on (0114) 250 6868 or email ed-governorsupport@sheffield.gov.uk

Other Advice, Support and Information

Governorline, national advice line, 08000 722 181 or www.governorline.info

The National Governors' Association (NGA), (0121) 643 5787 or www.nga.org.uk

The Department for Education (DfE) website www.education.gov.uk includes some useful content for Governors.

Governors Handbook

The Governors' Handbook provides information about the role and legal duties of governing bodies in maintained schools and academies.

View or download the latest edition of [The Governors' Handbook](#).

This document can be supplied in alternative formats, please contact:
Governor Support Team (0114) 250 6887

Sheffield's Governor Support Team

Supporting You

The majority of Sheffield schools continue to buy into the Local Authority Enhanced Governors Service which includes a clerking service and we look forward to continuing to work with you to support and evidence effective governance.

Our Clerks are supported through termly training/briefings, an annual CPD event and regular updates to enable them to advise the governing body on procedural matters.

When taking minutes the Clerk will ensure they evidence the work of the governing body in both supporting and challenging the school. Minutes (including committee minutes) are scrutinised by OFSTED inspectors as a primary source of evidence of the work of the governing body. Our clerks are trained and supported to use the language and terminology of School Improvement.

Our service follows up action points from the minutes which require responses from Local Authority officers or clarification of procedural matters.

As well as the Clerk's attendance at the meeting our service provides support for agenda setting, ensuring that statutory deadlines are met and that the governing body is aware of its statutory duties and changes in legislation.

Within the Local Authority we are advocates for governors and work closely with other colleagues to improve communication with you so that you have sufficient information provided in time for you to fulfil your roles effectively.

We provide a helpline service for all members of your governing body and support governing bodies in conducting parent and staff governor elections as well as identifying prospective Community Governors and the appointment of Local Authority governors.

The majority of schools have also bought into our governor training package for the current financial year and we will continue to develop the service in response to your needs. A governor reference panel asked us to include online training in our standard training package and we encourage all governors to make good use of this.

Our full service specifications are online at

www.sheffield.gov.uk/forschools.