

GOVERNORS' GUIDE ON THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR

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7. THE CHAIR AND THE GOVERNING BODY

Whilst the chair is an equal member of the governing body, he/she plays a significant role in ensuring that the governing body works effectively. (For further information, refer to **Governor Guide on The Effective Governing Body**).

Most teams work more effectively when they have an effective leader. An effective chair will ensure that the governing body and its committees work together to agree a strategic direction for the school, act as the critical friend, ensure accountability for the standards achieved and the quality of education provided. In this way, the governing body can maintain and improve the educational opportunities provided for its pupils.

To do this, the chair will need to develop a good knowledge of the school, understand and share its values and vision and have a clear view of its priorities for improvement. The chair leads the governing body in supporting the school to achieve its agreed targets by focusing meetings on strategies for school improvement. The implementation of day-to-day plans and policies are the responsibility of the headteacher and the staff.

Each governing body decides how it will work, and the roles that its members will play. Although the chair has little power, he/she can have a great deal of influence. How the chair leads the team affects all its

members. Chairs can make an influential contribution to the governing body by simply being well organised and understanding how effectively the governing body is working.

Team effectiveness

The governing body is made up of members who have either been elected or nominated. Membership of the governing body changes from time to time. The challenge for the chair is to get the governing body to fulfil its role as effectively as possible.

Sometimes the team will have a balance of skills and experience and at other times it will be less well balanced. This does not mean that such a team cannot work effectively. It is very useful for a chair to understand what makes an effective team so that he/she can encourage 'team spirit'. He or she should try to ensure that:-

- there is a good range of skills, experience and knowledge amongst team members that they are willing to contribute and share;
- individual and team knowledge and skills are continually updated through training and information sharing;
- specialist knowledge is developed to ensure it is not lost when people leave;
- workload is shared and different people take a leadership role when their particular skill and expertise warrants it;
- members challenge each other in a constructive way – disagreements are handled positively;
- there is open discussion and everyone's views and opinions are respected and valued;
- there is group responsibility for decisions and actions that are taken. No-one acts on behalf of the team without the team's permission – there is *'one face'* to the community;
- the team systematically reviews its own effectiveness and efficiency – *'Did we do the right things?' 'Did we do the right things well?' and 'What do we need to change to do better?'*

MODEL GOVERNING BODY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND EXAMPLES OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

A committee or working group is a good place to exchange ideas and carry out the more detailed work of the governing body. Work undertaken by committees allows key matters to be discussed in more detail by smaller groups. It is also a way of splitting up the work of the governing body so the workload is shared. You may be asked to be a member of one of these groups.

The governing body may delegate any of its functions to a committee, any governor or the headteacher subject to some restrictions, as described in Regulation 51 of The Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005¹. Where the governing body has delegated a function, this does not prevent the governing body from exercising those functions. The governing body must review the exercise of functions it has delegated annually.

A governing body is required to have certain statutory committees but may also wish to establish other committees if it is to operate effectively and efficiently.

The full governing body is responsible for:

- (i) establishing committees and determining their constitution, membership, terms of reference and delegated powers; and
- (ii) reviewing these annually.

This review can take place at any time but it is recommended that it takes place at the first full governing body meeting in the autumn term. Decisions must be formally recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The governing body must be quorate when a committee is established, or changes are made to the membership and terms of reference of committees.

Governors may appoint non-governors onto most committees (excluding the pupil discipline and exclusions committee and the admissions committee where applicable) provided that the governors on the committee are always in a majority. The full governing body may give voting rights to non-governor members of committees except on staff disciplinary and dismissal committees where non-governors may not have a vote, unless those committees are dealing with child protection allegations where a non-governor with full voting rights is required. The headteacher can attend any meeting of any committee except where the regulations state otherwise. Further information on this can be found in Part 9 of The Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005.²

A chair must be appointed annually to each committee by the governing body or elected by the committee, as determined by the governing body. If the chair is absent, the committee can elect a member of the committee to act as chair for that committee. Members of staff and registered pupils at the school however, cannot chair committees.

All statutory committees must be clerked, and the appointment of the clerk reviewed annually. Although non-statutory committees do not need to be clerked, minutes must be taken at these meetings to ensure that the governing body has an accurate record of discussions, recommendations and decisions from those committees to report back to the full governing body.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2005/2914/regulation/51/made>

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2005/2914/part/9/made>

GOVERNORS' STRATEGIC ROLE

Governors Wales has produced several publications for governing bodies to assist governors to fulfil their role effectively. This resource brings all the key aspects of the strategic role of the governing body together in one document.

School governing bodies play a key role in improving standards within schools. They:

- have a duty to promote the highest standards of educational achievement;
- must establish the strategic framework for the school; and
- must regularly review the progress made.

The three main roles of the governing body are:

- 1. The strategic role**
- 2. The critical friend**
- 3. The accountable role**

The strategic role, along with the critical friend and accountable role, contributes to raising the standards achieved by both the school and its learners. Governors carry out their strategic role by providing a framework for what they decide the school should achieve. The governing body works with the headteacher to:

- (i) set the aims and objectives for the school;
- (ii) agree policies, targets and priorities for achieving these objectives; and
- (iii) monitor and evaluate the aims and objectives and whether the policies, targets and priorities are being met.³

Setting the aims and objectives for the school

The starting point for strategic planning is a vision that makes it easy for staff and the community served by the school to understand what the school is striving to achieve.

Governors should be left in no doubt about the significant role that the governing body can play in both developing and achieving their school's vision, objectives and targets. The governing body is responsible for ensuring the school delivers the best opportunities for every child, whatever the age or ability, to reach his or her full potential in a caring and safe environment.

Once the vision has been confirmed, the governing body, headteacher and senior staff will determine the strategies and activities that will enable the school to progress towards it.

³ [School Government Terms of Reference \(Wales\) Regulations 2000](#)