

# Governor Welcome Pack



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# Northumberland County Council

Dear Governor

Congratulations on becoming a school governor in Northumberland. I am writing to welcome you and to thank you for agreeing to take on this responsibility. Northumberland greatly values the contribution professional volunteers make to the governance of our schools. Your role is critical in raising standards of achievement of Northumberland pupils and improving their well-being and life chances. The Northumberland Governor Services Team provides information, training and support, which I hope you will find useful. Please call on them if you need support. I hope you find being a school governor both worthwhile and enjoyable.

Thank you again for volunteering.

Yours faithfully

**David Street**  
Deputy Director of Education

# **Northumberland Governor Services Team**

**Damian Burke** Tel: 01670 623236 Mobile: 07973600170  
**Primary School** Email: [Damian.Burke@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Damian.Burke@northumberland.gov.uk)  
**Improvement Lead**

## School Support Officers:

**Vicki Evans** Tel: 01670 623600  
**Governor Services Manager** Email: [vicki.evans@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:vicki.evans@northumberland.gov.uk)

**Margaret Arksey** Tel: 01670 623607  
Email: [margaret.arksey@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:margaret.arksey@northumberland.gov.uk)

**Ian Hampson** Tel: 01670 623601  
Email: [ian.hampson@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:ian.hampson@northumberland.gov.uk)

**Susan Mitchell** Tel: 01670 623610  
Email: [susan.mitchell01@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:susan.mitchell01@northumberland.gov.uk)

**Linda Papaioannou** Tel: 01670 623608  
Email: [linda.papaioannou@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:linda.papaioannou@northumberland.gov.uk)

**Helen Pye** Tel: 01670 623604  
Email: [helen.pye@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:helen.pye@northumberland.gov.uk)

**Louise Gilmour** Tel: 01670 623609  
Email: [louise.gilmour@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:louise.gilmour@northumberland.gov.uk)

**Donna Donaldson** Tel: 01670 622725  
**Administrative Assistant** Email: [donna.donaldson@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:donna.donaldson@northumberland.gov.uk)

**The Northumberland Governor Services team work closely with colleagues across the County Council and Church Diocese: -**



## **CE Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle**

**Paul Rickeard**

**Director of Education**

**The Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle**

**Tel: 0191 270 4140**

**Email: [paul.rickeard@drmnewcanglican.org](mailto:paul.rickeard@drmnewcanglican.org)**

**Paul has overall responsibility for support to schools within the Church of England Diocese.**

**Liane Atkin**

**Assistant Director of Education**

**The Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle**

**Tel: 0191 270 4164**

**Email: [liane.atkin@drmnewcanglican.org](mailto:liane.atkin@drmnewcanglican.org)**

**Liane has particular responsibility for Legal and Governance within the Church of England Diocese.**



## **RC Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle**

**Deborah Fox**

**Head of Education**

**The Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle**

**Tel: 0191 243 3313**

**Email: [education@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:education@diocesehn.org.uk)**

**Deborah has responsibility for support to schools and colleges within the Catholic Diocese.**



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## Main Purpose of Governance

The purpose of governance is to provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. All boards, no matter what type of schools or how many schools they govern, have three core functions:

- **Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;**
- **Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and**
- **Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.**

Source: [Governance Handbook. For academies, multi-academy trusts and maintained schools.](#)

### **Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction**

Governing boards are the key strategic decision-making body in every school. It is their job to set the school's strategic framework. This includes ensuring the school has a long-term strategic vision – including for the type of school that will offer them the most opportunities. The governing board should agree the strategic priorities, aims and objectives for the school and sign off the policies, plans and targets for how to achieve them. They should check on progress and review regularly their strategic framework for the school in the light of that progress'.

### **Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff**

Governing boards should support and strengthen the school's leadership in the day-to-day running of the school, including the performance management of teachers. Governing boards should play a strategic role, focusing strongly on holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of its pupils, whilst avoiding being drawn into direct involvement in operational matters. It is essential to have skilled governors, but equally important to emphasise that the skills required are those to create robust accountability, not to do the school's job for it. They do this by:

- Asking the right questions
- Understanding the importance of objective data
- Using different sources of data – DfE Find and Compare Schools in England <https://www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables>, Analyse School Performance (formerly RAISE), school's internal pupil data
- Visiting the school



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## **Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.**

Governing boards are responsible for making sure their school's money is well spent. They should do this by making sure they have at least one governor with specific skills and experience of financial matters, and by asking questions such as:

- Are we allocating our resources in line with our strategic priorities?
- Are we making full use of all our assets and efficient use of all our financial resources?
- Are other schools buying things cheaper or getting better results with less spending per pupil? <https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/>
- Is the organisation complying with the basic procurement rules and it gets the best deal available?
- How can we get better value for money from our budget?



## Features of Effective Governance

Source: [Competency Framework for Governance](#), January 2017

# **Effective Governance**

## **1. Working as a team**

Building an effective team requires regular attendance and energetic commitment from all governors. It means making use of what each governor has to offer, sharing the workload, give-and-take on individual issues, respect for colleagues and their differing opinions, and loyalty to final decisions.

## **2. Good relationship with headteacher**

It is essential to establish a good working relationship between the governing board and the headteacher. Each party must have a clear understanding of their respective roles. In broad terms, the governing board is responsible for deciding the framework for the conduct and development of the school. But within that framework, **the governing board should respect the position of the headteacher as the professional leader of the school and as the person responsible for the day to day management and administration of the school.**

## **3. Effective time management and delegation**

Governing boards have a lot to do, and limited time. They should identify the priority issues in which they need to be directly involved - including decisions which in law must be taken by the full governing board - and delegate the rest to committees, working groups or individuals. It is important to set clear terms of reference for such delegation, so that everyone knows what they are expected to do, and how and when they should report back to the full governing board.

## **4. Effective meetings**

To make best use of time at meetings, the governing board will need:

- carefully planned agendas which focus on the most important items;
- A professional, independent clerk who can organise meetings and papers efficiently, and ideally provide information and procedural advice;
- purposeful chairing, bringing out the best in all governors, keeping a brisk pace, and ensuring that decisions are properly taken and clearly understood;
- clear minutes setting out points for action;
- participation by appropriate outsiders – to give advice (e.g. a local authority officer or consultant), to make a presentation (e.g. the teacher responsible for an issue), or to act as an observer (e.g. a senior pupil).

## **5. Knowing the school**

Governors should get to know their school through visits organised in close co-operation with the headteacher, to talk to pupils and staff and possibly sit in on lessons.

## **6. Training and development**

To help their schools most effectively, governing boards need to take their own development seriously. They should consider their training and support needs carefully, and be prepared to allocate funds for external courses, visits to other schools, or training for the whole governing board.

### **The National Governance Association (NGA) Learning Link**

Northumberland has subscribed to the NGA to enable Governors to access FREE training. The link is: <https://nga.vc-enable.co.uk/Register>

**To register** click onto learning link self-registration and select your school from the list. Once you have registered, a request for verification will ultimately be sent through to Vicki Evans, Governor Support Manager and you will receive an Email to confirm that your registration has been successful, current registration is being administered solely through the NGA until revised systems are in place.

### **NCC Learning Together**

Learning Together is a FREE online resource with access to over 100 hours of relevant learning content and resources to support the school's workforce.

Northumberland School's Governors are now able to self-register on the Learning Together site and create an account which will provide them with access to eLearning modules:

#### **What you need to know to get started:**

On any computer with internet access:

Visit <http://ncc.learningpool.com>

#### **Create an account:**

1. You will need to click on the orange button named 'CREATE ACCOUNT (EXTERNAL USER ONLY)'. You will need to complete all fields on the page that follows; otherwise your request will be rejected.
2. Once you have been advised that your request to create an account has been approved, you can then navigate to the Learning Together login page and enter your username, which we advise is your email address.
3. Enter the password that you have chosen when creating your account. The password must have at least 8 characters, containing at least 1 digit(s), at least 1 lower case letter(s), at least 1 upper case letter(s) and at least 1 non-alphanumeric character(s).
4. Check that your Email address is correct in your profile (all emails are automatically set as a default no reply address).



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**Finding a course:**

To find a course, click on Find Courses at the top of your screen or alternatively navigate using the category tiles located on the home page.

**Contact**

Learning & Organisational Development on 01670 624803 or

Email [learningandod@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:learningandod@northumberland.gov.uk)

**Username & password problems or technical assistance on your own PC?**

Call Learning Pool's helpdesk on 0845 0744 114 or email [support@learningpool.com](mailto:support@learningpool.com)

Their friendly support team is available to help you Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays 9am to 5:30pm.

For the Local Authority introductory training email:

[governortraining@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:governortraining@northumberland.gov.uk)



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# **Categories of Governor**

## **Parent Governors**

Parent Governors are elected by other parents at the school. Parent governors may continue to hold office until the end of their term of office even if their child leaves the school.

## **Staff Governors**

Staff Governors are elected by other staff at the school. Teaching and support staff who work at the school under a contract of employment are eligible to be staff governors. They cease to hold office when they cease to be employed at the school.

## **The Headteacher**

The headteacher is a member of the governing body by virtue of their office.

## **Local Authority Governors**

Local Authority Governors are nominated by the local authority but appointed by the governing body. An individual eligible to be a staff governor at the school may not be appointed as a local authority governor.

## **Foundation Governors**

Foundation Governors are either appointed or take the role by virtue of an office that they hold. They are appointed to secure that the school's character (including religious character where it has one) is preserved and developed.

## **Partnership Governors**

Partnership Governors are appointed by the governing body. They must have the skills needed to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school.

## **Co-opted Governors**

Co-opted Governors are appointed by the governing body. They are people who have the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school.

## **Associate Members**

Associate Members are appointed by the governing body to serve on one or more governing body committee. They may also attend full governing body meetings. They are not governors and therefore do not have a vote in governing body decisions but may be given a vote on decisions made by committees to which they are appointed.

## **Academy Governors**

Academy Governors sit on Local Governing Boards/Committees and sit below the Academy Board. The roles and responsibilities of an Academy Governor will change depending on the Academy Trust they are part of.

## What Being a School Governor Involves

1. **Formal meetings** of the governing body - the law requires governing bodies to meet at least three times a year, but many governing bodies meet at least twice a term.
2. **Reading** - between meetings, governors need to read the minutes of the last meeting, the agenda of the next meeting, supporting papers and documents.
3. **Committee meetings or working parties** - most governing bodies have established committees to undertake various aspects of their work. It is often useful for new governors to attend each committee meeting before deciding to join one.
4. **School visits** - governors need to visit their schools regularly - say once a term - to see the school in action. Most schools have a policy on visits.
5. **Training courses** - governors should aim to keep themselves well informed and up to date by registering with the NGA  
<https://www.nga.org.uk/ConsultancyandTraining/NGA-Learning-Link-e-learning.aspx>

You will receive an invitation to attend induction training which is held termly. Details on <http://northumberlandeducation.co.uk/governors>

6. **Staff appointments** - governors may serve on staff appointment panels.
7. **Pupil exclusions** - governors may sit on panels to consider pupil exclusions.
8. **Staff grievance and disciplinary panels** - on rare occasions governors may serve on panels to hear staff grievance and disciplinary issues.
9. **General support to your school** - concerts, prize giving, plays, fundraising events etc.
10. **Your contributions** - the most important quality that you bring is an interest in the school and in the education of young people, together with the skills and knowledge that you have acquired through your life, such as parenting and/or some expertise in a particular area.

Everyone involved in governance should be aware of and accept The 7 principles of public life. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

All school governors are required to have an enhanced criminal records certificate from the DBS. Further details on DBS checks in school are within the statutory guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Most governing bodies have established committees and appointed link governors to carry out the details of their work. The areas generally covered by committees are premises, health and safety, curriculum, staffing and finance. Many schools have adopted a two committee structure - Strategic Policy and Direction (covering curriculum, school improvement, policy review and appeals) and Resources (covering finance, staffing, premises, pupil discipline & complaints and headteacher performance management group). They offer an ideal way to put any particular skills that you have acquired to good use.

For example, when appointing governors to look at Finance, the governing body must have particular regard to the suitability and experience of the members so if you have experience, for example, of budgeting or scrutinising value for money decisions you would be a most useful addition.

Link governors are appointed by the governing body to take an interest in a particular area of the school such as special needs, literacy, numeracy or health and safety, and to keep governors up to date on issues e.g. through governor visits.

But even if you feel you do not have any particular expertise, don't worry as we offer a range of training opportunities to help you develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to carry out your duties.

## **Checklist of Information for Members of Governing Boards**

All members of governing boards should have the following information:

- The school's instrument of government as required by law.
- The most recent version of the [Governance Handbook](#).

In addition, it is useful to have:

- A list of members of the governing board, giving name, category of governor (parent, staff, etc.), date of appointment and (if agreed) telephone number
- The governing board's agreed procedures or standing orders
- A list of the committees and working parties of the governing board, with membership and terms of reference
- A calendar of governing board and committee meetings; school terms and holidays: and major school events for the current school year
- A copy of the staffing structure of the school, showing names of teachers and other staff, subjects taught and other responsibilities
- The school's current prospectus (if they have one as this is not now a required document)
- Information on how to access the school's website
- The school's current development plan, or summary if one exists
- The most recent inspection reports on the school - Ofsted, SIAMS or Church inspections (Catholic schools)
- A list of statutory and non-statutory policies adopted by the governing board and information on how copies of these may be obtained

### **For New Governors**

- The minutes of the two most recent meetings of the governing board
- A plan of the school, if available
- The name of a suggested 'mentor', if the governing board has adopted such a system of support for new governors.

Information on the training courses available to governors and governance in Northumberland - <http://northumberlandeducation.co.uk/governors> This site also provides links to useful websites and publications to help you in your role.



Please join us by joining our new Facebook group by searching 'Northumberland School Governors Network' and completing the short questionnaire.

## A Selection of Useful Contacts and Links

Department for Education

Governance pages

[www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/governance](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/governance)

Department for Education

Publications

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=department-for-education>

School Performance Tables

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/>

Governorline

(National Governors' Helpline)

0800 151 2410

<http://entrust.education/Page/661>

ISCG

(Information for School and College Govs)

01483 300280

[www.governors.uk.com](http://www.governors.uk.com)

NGA

(National Governance Association)

[www.nga.org.uk](http://www.nga.org.uk)

Ofsted

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

GLM partnership (Governor Mark)

[www.glmpartnership.org](http://www.glmpartnership.org)

Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Safeguarding.aspx>

GOV.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/education/school-life>

Times Educational Supplement

[www.tes.co.uk](http://www.tes.co.uk)

Modern Governor

[www.moderngovernor.com/](http://www.moderngovernor.com/)



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Catholic Education Service  
<http://www.cbcew.org.uk>

QCA (Qualifications & Curriculum Authority)  
[www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)

BBC education news  
[www.bbc.co.uk/news/education](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education)