

School Governor Welcome Pack



**School
Improvement**



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

Director of Education, SEND and Skills

The Northumberland Governor Support Team work closely with colleagues across the County Council and Church Diocese: -



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Main Purpose of Governance

- That the vision, ethos, and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined.
- That the headteacher performs their responsibilities for the educational performance of the school
- The sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources.
NGA recognises the following as a fourth core function of governance:
- Ensuring the voices of school stakeholders are heard.

A governing board and its governors **must**, as required by the [The School Governance \(Roles, Procedures and Allowances\) \(England\) Regulations 2013 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

- Act with integrity, objectivity, and honesty and in the best interests of the school.
- Be open about the decisions they make and the actions they take and shall be prepared to explain their decisions and actions to interested parties.

The governing board also has legislative responsibility and strategic oversight for the school's safeguarding arrangements – Keeping children safe in education ([Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)).

Source: [Maintained schools governance guide - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) [Eight elements of effective governance | National Governance Association \(nga.org.uk\)](#)

Strategic responsibilities:

Governing boards work closely with headteachers and senior leaders. Headteachers are responsible for day-to-day management whereas the role of the governing board is strategic. As such, governors are responsible for:

- determining the mission, values, and long-term ambitious vision for the school
- deciding the principles that guide school policies and approving key policies.
- working with senior leaders to develop a strategy for achieving the vision.
- ensuring that parents, pupils, staff, and the wider community are involved, consulted, and informed as appropriate.
- ensuring that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum such that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and adult life.
- setting the school's budget and ensuring it is managed effectively together with premises and other resources.
- agreeing the school's staffing structure and keeping it under review to ensure it supports delivery of the strategy.
- ensuring robust risk management procedures are in place and that risk control measures are appropriate and effective.

Monitoring and evaluating school performance:

Governors must monitor the priorities that have been set to ensure progress is being made by:

- measuring the school's impact and progress towards its strategic objectives.
- ensuring the required policies and procedures are in place and the school is operating effectively in line with these policies.
- evaluating relevant data and feedback provided by school leaders and external reporting on all aspects of school performance.
- asking challenging questions of school leaders in order to hold them to account.
- holding the headteacher to account for standards, financial probity, and compliance with agreed policies.
- visiting the school to monitor implementation of the strategy and reporting back to the board (this could be in a link governor capacity).
- ensuring that there are policies and procedures in place to deal with complaints effectively.

Panels and committees:

When required, governors are expected to serve on panels or committees in order to:

- appoint the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- appraise the headteacher and make pay recommendations.
- hear staff grievances and disciplinary matters.
- review decisions to exclude pupils.
- deal with formal complaints.

Contribution to the governing board:

Governors should ensure that they are making a positive and meaningful contribution to the governing board by:

- attending meetings (a minimum of three full governing board meetings and a number of committee meetings each year), reading papers and preparing questions for senior leaders in advance.
- getting to know the school, including visiting the school occasionally during school hours.
- Undertaking induction training and developing knowledge and skills on an ongoing basis.

The governing board must have:

- a chair or co-chairs, supported by one or more vice-chairs, to lead and set the culture of the governing board.
- a governance professional (clerk) to:

- provide expert procedural advice and administrative support.
- manage the efficient and compliant operation of the governing board.

Using different sources of data:

DfE Find and Compare Schools in England [Compare the performance of schools and colleges in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/services/find-and-compare-schools-in-england)

Analyse School Performance (formerly RAISE), school's internal pupil data.

[Schools Financial Benchmarking - GOV.UK \(schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk\)](https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk)

Effective Governance

1. Working as a team

Being willing to share the workload, being respectful of different personalities and perspectives (even when you disagree) and sharing success together. Conduct skills audits to identify skills gaps and development needs to be met, whether through recruitment or training. Consider targeted recruitment to create a more diverse board and consider succession planning. Agree and adopt a code of conduct.

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 school governance professional (clerk) who can organise meetings and papers efficiently and ideally provide information and procedural advice.
- A chair to lead and ensure the board fulfils its functions, ensuring that decisions are properly taken and clearly understood. Facilitate the governing board working as a team and supporting all governors to participate actively and equally.
- clear minutes setting out points for action and recording challenge.
- participation by appropriate professionals – to give advice (e.g., a local authority officer, school improvement partner or consultant), to make a presentation (e.g., the teacher responsible for a subject), or to act as an observer (e.g., a senior leader).



5. Knowing the school

Governors should get to know their school through monitoring visits organised in close co-operation with the headteacher. They are expected to follow agreed protocols which help ensure the visit is effectively conducted in the right spirit (it isn't an inspection) and convenient to all parties.

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).

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 626150 or

Email learningandod@northumberland.gov.uk

Username & password problems

On the login screen, select 'Forgotten your username or password?' - Once you have selected this, select the option to what you want to reset your details. This is by username or email address. - If you can't remember either your username or email address associated with your account, please contact learningandod@northumberland.gov.uk with your organisation, job role and managers name and request for a password change.

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 board by virtue of their office. However, they can resign as governor if they choose.

Local Authority Governors

Local Authority Governors are nominated by the local authority but appointed by the governing board. A local authority governor, like any other governor, must govern in the interests of the school and not advocate the interests of the local authority.

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 and where relevant, preserve and develop religious character and uphold compliance with the foundation's governing documents, for example, the trust deed. The number of foundation governors will be set out in the instrument of government.

Partnership Governors

Partnership governors are only needed in foundation and foundation special schools that do not have a foundation. They act in the best interests of the foundation school and the wider community. Where foundation schools with a religious character do not have a foundation, they have a role to preserve and develop such religious character.

Co-opted Governors

Co-opted governors are people who, in the opinion of the governing board, have the skills and experience required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school. They act in the best interest of the school and wider community.



Associate Members

Associate Members are appointed by the governing board to serve on one or more governing board committee. They may also attend full governing board meetings. They are not governors and therefore do not have a vote in governing board 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 board - the law requires governing boards to meet at least three times a year, but many governing boards 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 boards 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/training/learning-link/>

You will receive an invitation to attend induction training which is held termly. Details on [Governors – Northumberland Education](#)

- 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. [The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

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 boards 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 board 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 board to take an interest in a particular area of the school such as special needs, safeguarding, pupil premium, literacy, numeracy or health and safety, and to keep governors up to date on issues e.g., through governor monitoring 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.

Many employers recognise the value of volunteering and offer a designated number of volunteer days that do not impact annual leave or flexi time. If you're currently employed, it's worth checking whether you're entitled to this benefit

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 Maintained school's governance guide. [Maintained schools governance guide - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintained-schools-governance-guide)

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' and completing the short questionnaire.

A Selection of Useful Contacts and Links

Department for Education

www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/governance

School Performance Tables

[Compare the performance of schools and colleges in England - GOV.UK](#)

NGA

(National Governance Association)

www.nga.org.uk

Modern Governor

[Modern Governor - high-quality, mobile-friendly governance CPD](#)

Chartered Governance Institute

[The Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland is the professional board for governance \(cgi.org.uk\)](#)

Safeguarding Children

[Safeguarding children | Northumberland County Council](#)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

[Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Church of England Education Office

[Education and Schools | The Church of England](#)

Catholic Education Service

[Home \(catholiceducation.org.uk\)](http://Home.catholiceducation.org.uk)