

**GOVERNOR SUPPORT TEAM CONTACTS**

**Ann Turner - Governor Services Manager**

Tel: 01429 523766

email: [ann.turner@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:ann.turner@hartlepool.gov.uk)

**Derek Gouldburn - Governor Support Officer**

Tel: 01429 523767

email: [derek.gouldburn@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:derek.gouldburn@hartlepool.gov.uk)

or email: [governor.support@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:governor.support@hartlepool.gov.uk)

**Contact Address:**

Children's and Joint Commissioning Service  
Hartlepool Borough Council  
Civic Centre, Victoria Road  
Hartlepool  
TS26 8AY

**Website:** [www.hartlepool.gov.uk](http://www.hartlepool.gov.uk)

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**BEING A SCHOOL  
GOVERNOR IN  
HARTLEPOOL**

## INTRODUCTION

*School governors are part of the largest volunteer group in the country*

*They are ordinary people from many walks of life, living and working in the community*

*They play an important role in helping to make sure that every child and young person achieves their true potential*

Governing bodies play an important role in the running and management of schools providing strategic leadership, guidance and support.

Although made up largely of volunteers, school governors are required to have certain skills that allow them to make decisions that are in the best interests of the school. These skills do not necessarily require formal qualifications but can involve knowledge and understanding of the school community or personal attributes such as an ability to work effectively with others. Governors must be willing to undertake training to help them develop in their role.

Being a school governor also involves agreeing to give up time to support the school and regularly attend governing body and committee meetings.

Before governors are appointed they are required to undertake an interview, normally with the Head Teacher and/or Chair of Governors. They must also provide character references. This is to ensure that they understand the role and to help identify the skills that they can bring to the governing body.

Where governors are seeking to be elected, for example as Parent Governors, before they pick up a nomination form from the school they should first meet with the Head Teacher and/or Chair of Governors to discuss the role, and possibly arrange to attend a meeting of the Governing Body as an observer.

## WHAT WE HOPE YOU WILL GET OUT OF BEING A GOVERNOR

- The knowledge that you are helping to make a real difference to the educational standards of a school and its pupils
- The chance to gain an understanding of the decision making process of schools, governing bodies and the education system as a whole
- The personal satisfaction of being able to give something back to the community
- A sense of purpose and achievement and the chance to contribute your own skills for the benefit of the school
- The opportunity to develop new skills and strengthen existing ones
- The opportunity to access free training provided by the Local Authority on various aspects of governance which will help you to understand and fulfil your role as a governor
- The chance to meet people, work together as a team and make new friends.

## GOVERNOR INDUCTION

To help you understand your role and responsibilities as a school governor you will receive an information pack from the Local Authority's Governor Support Service upon appointment. This will be issued with your formal approval letter once your DBS Clearance is confirmed.

You will be invited to and expected to attend an induction training session led by the Governor Support Service and you will also have access to a range of free training delivered by the Local Authority including termly briefings.

You can access support from a range of other sources including the Governor Support Team and fellow Governors

You will be encouraged to visit your school to begin the process of developing an effective relationship with the Head Teacher

You will gain an initial understanding of the school's ethos and aims

You will have access to a range of information about the school, much of which is available on the school's website

Some schools select an experienced governor to act as a mentor and who will offer support and guidance

The Governor Support Team is at hand to answer any queries and provide support and guidance on any governance issues.

## WHAT DO GOVERNORS DO?

School governors work collectively as part of the governing body of a school. They have three core functions which are to:

- **Ensure that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined**
- **Ensure that the Head Teacher performs his/her responsibilities effectively to improve and enhance the educational performance of the school**
- **Ensure that the school's financial resources are sound and are properly and effectively used.**

### A governing body:

- Works closely with the Head Teacher and Senior Management Team to set the direction for the school
- Determines the aims and overall conduct of the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational attainment
- Conducts most of its business through meetings often delegating decision making to committees, taking account of relevant papers and guidance, training, and advice from the Head Teacher
- Monitors and evaluates performance, acting as a critical friend to the Head Teacher to support and challenge him/her in managing the school.

## A GOVERNING BODY HAS A RANGE OF DUTIES INCLUDING:

- Monitoring pupils achievement and progress
- Ensuring that a broad and balanced curriculum is delivered
- Developing school policies, plans and procedures within which the school operates
- Appointing staff and specifically the Head Teacher, and undertaking performance management and reviewing pay in accordance with statutory guidance
- Managing the schools finances and setting the school budget
- Ensuring good behaviour and attendance
- Maintaining safety within the school including ensuring that proper safeguarding arrangements are in place

The strength of a governing body lies in its willingness to accept collective responsibility and for individual members to share tasks and duties.

## APPLYING TO BECOME A GOVERNOR AND WHAT TO DO NEXT

**Parent Governor** vacancies are dealt with when they arise by the school and the Local Authority. Parents/carers are normally notified of vacancies through the pupil post and invited to complete a nomination form. Where there are more nominations than vacancies, an election will be held with all parents/carers of children at the school entitled to vote. If no nominations are received the governing body may appoint a Parent Governor

**Staff Governor** vacancies are dealt with in a similar way to Parents with nominations and elections involving all teaching and support staff in the school

**Co-opted Governor** appointments are made by the governing body based on their knowledge and skills. Anyone interested in becoming a Co-opted Governor should contact the Head Teacher of the school or Chair of Governors to discuss the individual school's requirements

**Local Authority Governors** are nominated by the Local Authority but appointed by the governing body. Application forms for Local Authority Governors are available from the Governor Support Service

**Foundation Governors** are appointed by the relevant Diocese which oversees the arrangements for appointing Foundation Governors to RC and CE schools

Prior to appointment you will be required to complete a form stating that you are not disqualified to serve as a school governor. Your school will also require you to undertake an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check which is organised through the Borough Council.

## WHO CAN BE MEMBERS OF A GOVERNING BODY?

Governing bodies are made up of several categories of governor depending on the type of school. Each governing body has a set number of governors under each category and these details are set out in each school's Instrument of Government.

The main categories of governor are:

- **Parent Governors** – parents or carers are normally elected by other parents or carers who have children at the school but on occasions are appointed by the governing body
- **The Head Teacher** – normally sits on the governing body
- **Staff Governors** – these may be teaching or support staff and are elected by other teaching and support staff at the school
- **Co-opted Governors** – are individuals appointed by the governing body for their particular skills and ability to contribute to the effective governance of the school
- **Local Authority Governors** – are nominated by the Local Authority who take regard of the skills and experience the applicant can offer together with the needs of the school
- **Foundation Governors** – (not community schools) are appointed by the schools founding body, church or other organisation to help preserve and develop the schools religious character.

Governors are appointed for a fixed period of time, normally 4 years.

## WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL GOVERNOR?

- You care about improving children's educational attainment
- You are prepared and able to work as part of a team and can value the contributions made by others
- You are willing to listen, learn and to ask questions
- You are enthusiastic and can commit time and energy to the school
- You are prepared to commit a reasonable amount of time to attend training and develop your skills
- You are open to ideas and are able to understand what is important to the school community
- You are able to involve yourself actively within the work of the governing body and accept a share of responsibilities including serving on committees and working parties.

### Governors must:

- Take collective responsibility for all decisions made by the governing body and respect rules regarding confidentiality
- Not act independently – authority rests with the governing body
- Work with integrity within the Code of Conduct for governors and governing bodies.

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GOVERNORS

On appointment, governors will receive a copy of the Code of Conduct for Governors which provides guidance on standards of conduct and levels of commitment expected of governors. The Code includes:

- A recognition that the governing body is accountable for its decisions
- Whilst governors have responsibility for broad policies, plans and procedures, the Head Teacher is responsible for the day to day management of the school
- All governors are appointed with equal status and must operate in the best interest of pupils and the school as a whole
- Governors should express their views openly within meetings but accept collective responsibility for all decisions
- Governors have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice at all times. The overall good of the school must always override governors' personal feelings and individual concerns
- Any concern or possible criticism about the school should be discussed with the Head Teacher in the first instance

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GOVERNORS

- Governors are required to have the skills necessary to contribute to effective governance. Governors should therefore be prepared to undertake training and development activities to increase their knowledge and understanding of governance
- Governors are expected to commit a reasonable amount of time and energy and to regularly attend meetings of the full governing body, committees and working groups
- Governors should be aware that if they do not attend meetings of the governing body for a period of 6 months (normally 2 meetings) and do not have apologies for absence accepted, they will be automatically removed from the governing body
- Although decisions reached at governors' meetings are normally made public, the discussions on which decisions are based should be regarded as confidential
- Governors should observe complete confidentiality in relation to matters concerning staff or pupils and any other matters agreed by the governing body.