



A guide to the role of the Governors

- **Statutory duties:** Governors are sometimes responsible for ensuring that the school complies with the law, including the many changes that occur.
- **Premises:** The governors are accountable to the church for the upkeep, maintenance, and health-and-safety aspects of the premises
- **The School Self Evaluation Report (SEF):** This is an important part of the school's 'evidence pack' in preparation for the next Ofsted inspection. Since inspections can occur with only a few hours' notice, the SEF should be reviewed and updated at least every few months. Governors are required to be thoroughly familiar with our SEF, usually through regular reviews at meetings.
- **Inspection:** Ofsted and Diocesan (Church school) inspectors will want to meet with several governors to collect evidence on how well the school is lead and managed.

The Future – strategic vision and direction

Finally, governors are responsible for 'Strategic Vision and Direction'. This means keeping up with change and planning for change to ensure our school remains a good school into the future. In the short term this is generally achieved by maintaining a 'School Development Plan'– in the longer term by perhaps contributing to 'future strategy' meetings. Both increasingly involve looking beyond school bounds, to the local community and to collaboration with other schools as education moves progressively towards integrated services for children and young people.

In Summary

- Governors know the quality of education provided by the school
- Governors monitor and update school policies to ensure the 'running' framework is sound
- Governors leave the day-to-day running of the school to the Head
- Governors stay up to date with and contribute to the School Development Plan
- Governors stay abreast of developments in education and the longer term implications for our school
- Governors monitor and contribute to the on-going Self Evaluation Form in preparation for Ofsted
- Governors can take positive action if things are not right by calling in appropriate professionals
- Governors recognise and celebrate - and enjoy - every success at our school.

Picture by Charlotte McAskey

Governors take up their governor role in one of several ways – some are elected by the parents, some are appointed by the Church or the Local Authority, some are staff of the school and some are brought on to the board on the basis of specific skills they have which are helpful for the running of the School. Whichever way they ‘arrive’, the governors on the Full Governing Board are all equal. They elect a Chair and Vice Chair, and are appointed to different committees, but they act as one.

From 2015, Governors have been able to appoint ‘associate’ members to support them in their work. These members aren’t part of the Full Governing Board but can sit on some of the individual committees because of their specific skills.

The Governing Body has three main roles:

- To provide strategic direction for the school
- To act as a critical friend to the head teacher
- To ensure accountability

‘Critical friend’ is not the easiest of concepts to explain. It is not uncritical, unquestioning support. Rather it is supporting the head teacher in the performance of his or her functions, and giving constructive criticism, advice and information which helps the school to move forward. The phrase ‘critical friend’ recognises that there is a significant focus on monitoring and evaluating performance, and governors strike an appropriate balance between support and challenge.

Two Key Questions

Governors ask two Key Questions. The first is “Is this a ‘good’ school”?

Simply put, are the children (and all groups of children) getting a good education?

In order to help them answer this, the Head Teacher provides regular information on the attainment and progress of the children, the quality of teaching, the behaviour and safety of the children and the effectiveness of the curriculum. Annual plans are drawn up to support the development of the school and the governors monitor, and sometimes assist the school in delivering these plans, which are evaluated for success in helping the school meet certain targets.

Where targets are being met, the governors celebrate the successes, and consider if good practice here might be useful to other schools.

If targets are consistently missed, the Governing Body considers bringing in professional advice and support (though there are also other times when outside assistance might be sought, unrelated to missed targets).

The second question to ask is “Is our school well run?”

There is a wealth of evidence to consider, including the results of Parent questionnaires. Governors monitor the overall picture, and ask penetrating questions. Are legal requirements complied with and completed on time? How well are policies and plans being implemented? Are financial accounts clear and transparent? How is staff morale? What is the current workload like? Are there any current complaints from parents? Governors review reports on behaviour, bullying and exclusion as well as the more routine school administration.

Governors have several other responsibilities that keep them up to date with and involved in how our school is performing:

- **Meetings:** Most decisions take place in Committee or ‘Full’ Governor meetings. Governors are required to attend these. Our school holds around 30 of these each year, though most governors are not on every committee, and therefore attend around 20 of these meetings per year.
- **Visits:** Our school encourages governors to get to know the school through regular visits during the school day and meetings with the staff, so that they have a better understanding of the successes and challenges school is facing.
- **Staffing:** Governors in a ‘Voluntary Aided’ school such as North Nibley select and appoint staff through shortlisting and interviews.

Governor’s responsibilities include preventing (or at least minimising) complaints and negative issues by providing good, clear policies within which the school operates. There are some 30 mandatory policies which every Board of Governors must publish, ranging from Child Protection and Pupil Behaviour through to Admissions Policy and Staff Pay. Most are based on model policies provided by Department for Education or the Local Authority. They must be up to date, reviewed regularly and they must be readily available for governors, staff, pupils and parents to refer to on a daily basis.

It is not the role of governors to get involved in individual complaints or issues. Governors do not ‘run’ schools - that is solely the job of the Head Teacher. Governors should never find themselves in the middle of ‘how to’ issues regarding the way the school goes about its role as an educational establishment, particularly in any issue involving individual staff or pupils. Governors are not permitted to even enter the school without the Head’s permission!