



February 2020

North Nibley Church of England Primary School

THINKING OF BECOMING A GOVERNOR?

If you have no experience of how School Governance works, it is sometime difficult to understand what a School Governor does and what the role involves. Often people are unsure of the time commitment the role takes. This short document is designed to help. The most important thing to remember is the School needs committed Governors. As with most things in life, it isn't necessarily about knowledge or experience but about attitude, a willingness to commit and to work as part of a team for the continued better performance of the School. There are some specific areas where skills or experience gained elsewhere are helpful and the Governors undertake a simple skills audit each year in order to understand where they might have 'gaps' or have less strength in depth. This then helps to identify who might be best to fulfil any vacancies.

A. THE ROLE OF GOVERNOR

Fundamentally, the role of the Governor is as follows:

To contribute to the work of the governing body in ensuring high standards of achievement for all children and young people in the school by:

- Setting the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

As part of the governing body team, a governor is expected to

- Contribute to the strategic discussions at governing body meetings
- Hold the head teacher to account by monitoring the school's performance
- Ensure the school staff have the resources and support they require to do their jobs well

The role of governor is largely a thinking and questioning role, not a doing role.

A governor does NOT:

- Write school policies;
- Undertake audits of any sort – whether financial or health & safety - even if the governor has the relevant professional experience;
- Spend much time with the pupils of the school
- Fundraise – this is the role of the PTA – the governing body should consider income streams and the potential for income generation, but not carry out fundraising tasks;
- Undertake classroom observations to make judgements on the quality of teaching – the governing body monitors the quality of teaching in the school by requiring data from the senior staff and from external sources;
- Do the job of the school staff – if there is not enough capacity within the paid staff team to carry out the necessary tasks, the governing body need to consider and rectify this.

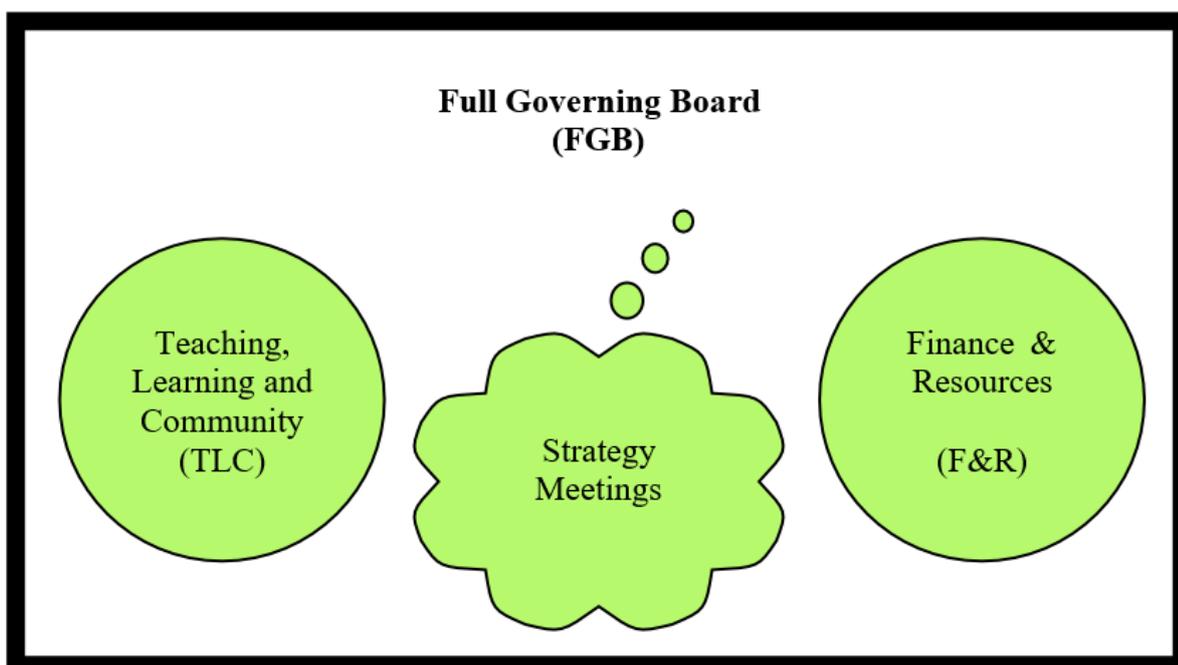
As you become more experienced as a governor, there are other roles you could volunteer for which would increase your degree of involvement and level of responsibility (e.g. as a chair of a committee).

In order to perform this role well, a governor is expected to:

- Get to know the school, including by visiting the school occasionally during school hours, and gain a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- Attend induction training and regular relevant training and development events;
- Attend meetings (full governing body meetings and committee meetings) and read all the papers before the meeting;
- Act in the best interest of all the pupils of the school; and
- Behave in a professional manner, as set down in the governing body's code of conduct, including acting in strict confidence.

B. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AT NORTH NIBLEY

The current structure of Governance is best explained by the following diagram:



All Governors are members of the Full Governing Board and are usually a member of one of the other committees (TLC or F&P). The content of these meetings is tightly planned to enable all the business of the school to be addressed. All Governors are also expected to participate in the Strategy Meetings. These tend to be meetings with a single agenda item, with space for 'free' thinking and exploration of ideas.

In addition to the committees outlined above, other panels or committees are formed as needed or required by law e.g. admissions, disciplinary etc. They tend to meet as required and are usually made up of a smaller number of (say, three) Governors.

The Make-Up of the Governing Board

The Instrument of Government specifies the composition of the Governors. Being a small Church of England Voluntary Aided School, this Governing body has the following members:

- **Foundation Governors:** Eight members appointed by the Diocese on the recommendation of the North Nibley Parochial Church Council (PCC)
- **Parent Governors:** Two members elected by the parents
- **Local Authority Governor:** One member nominated by the sitting County Councillor of the ward.
- **Co-Opted Governor:** One member who can come from any background and is simply elected by the Full Governing Board (FGB). This role gives the FGB flexibility to recruit someone with specific skills that they perceive are needed.
- **Staff Governor:** One member elected by the School staff
- **Headteacher**

That is a total board of 14 Governors. All Governors are equal irrespective of what 'type' of Governor they are. Once on the board, it is never very obvious what role the different Governors have as no distinction tends to be made with the exception of, for example, the Staff Governors not being able to be involved with staffing matters. Governors usually serve for a four-year term.

Officers

The Clerk to the Governors is the secretary for the Governors. This is a paid appointment. At the first full meeting of each academic year elections are held for the other officers who must be governors. These are:

- Chair
- Vice-Chair

Any governor may hold these offices except those who are also members of the school staff.

C. TIME COMMITMENT

Often, the first question asked by prospective Governors is about the time commitment.

The basic commitment is for the following: Full Governing Body (FGB) Meetings, Committee Meetings, Strategy Meetings and Governor visits to School.

FGB Meetings: There is one FGB meeting held each half term

Committee Meetings: Each committee also meets each half term.

Strategy Meetings: These tend to be arranged on a more ad-hoc basis but there might be four per year.

The meetings are usually held in the evenings and shouldn't last more than 2 hours. Governors are expected to read papers relating to the meetings in advance but this shouldn't take more than an hour on most occasions.

Governor Visits to School: These visits are encouraged to enable you to get a real understanding for how the school is run. These are always organised in advance with the School and are usually undertaken by a Governor on their own or perhaps two Governors together. They are usually to look at a specific area of the school and a short report should be written afterwards. These reports have a simple structure so it doesn't require something to be written from scratch. Governors are expected to visit at least once per academic year but more frequent visits are welcomed. Our current system of managing visits is to have a 'Governor of the Month' to guarantee at least one visit per month but sometimes Governors choose to focus on a particular subject and might visit at any time of year, particularly if there is something relevant happening in school relating to that subject.

As one would expect, Governors wishing to become more involved in the work of the Governing Board and take on additional roles can spend more time in the role.

D. GOVERNOR TRAINING

Induction

It can seem very daunting being appointed a Governor, but remember you have been elected or appointed because you have skills, expertise, contacts and personal qualities which will enhance the Governing body - you may not think so, but other people have recognised your worth. Some Governors have expertise in educational matters but most do not. This is to ensure that the Governors have a range of strengths to call upon; however, the greatest contributions you can make are those of enthusiasm and common sense.

If you are not familiar with the School, the Head Teacher will arrange for you to visit during a school day to meet the staff and the children.

Mentoring

On becoming a Governor, you will be given a 'Mentor' who is another North Nibley Governor. This is just so that you have someone you can speak to about confusing acronyms, meetings structure etc. Your mentor might well sit next to you in the first few meetings in order to help you find your way through the papers. Generally, however, we hope that you will find the whole board of Governors to be open, supportive and understanding. We are a team and put a lot of importance on working together and supporting each other well.

Further training

To ensure that the Governing body acts in the best interests of the children and is mindful of its legal responsibilities, further training is available from time to time on different subjects e.g. Safeguarding, Finance for Governors, Safer Recruiting and details of these courses are circulated for Governors to consider.

The School will fund the training and has a budget allocated for this. In addition, being a School Governor is widely recognised as a public responsibility and many employers will allow time off for School Governor work in addition to your normal holiday entitlement.

E. CONCLUSION

This short guide is designed to give a brief overview of the role of Governor at North Nibley C of E Primary School. Many more resources are available to explain the role more fully. A good place to start is the National Governors Association website (www.nga.org.uk). We hope that the current board of Governors are a friendly bunch and we are more than happy to be asked about the role and what it entails. If you would like to make contact, speak to the Head Teacher who will answer your questions or put you in touch with another Governor. Otherwise you can email the generic chair@northnibley.gloucs.sch.uk email address which is automatically forwarded on to the current Chair of Governors.

North Nibley C of E Primary School is an important part of the local community and provides a crucial role for its pupils, staff and other stakeholders. Being a School Governor is therefore an important role which comes with responsibility. As a result, helping to steer the direction of the School can be a very rewarding role and we hope that the vast majority of Governors will say that they are glad that they decide to take part.