

WORKING TOGETHER - Principles for Governance

An introduction for newly appointed governors in Church schools

Taken from A Guide to the Law for School Governors: 2006 and The National Training Programme for new Governors: 2005 with additional material from various sources.

THE PURPOSES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNING BODIES

'The role of the governing body has changed beyond recognition over the past twenty years. With the introduction of local management of schools and further reforms, governing bodies have become the strategic leaders of schools. They are rightly responsible and accountable in law and in practice for major decisions about the school and its future. Governing bodies are equal partners in leadership with the headteacher and senior management team. We want to see them taking a full part in driving the improvement and culture of the school.'

DfES: Governing the School of the Future. 2004

The key purpose of governing bodies is to help schools provide the best possible education for pupils. They do this by:

- setting the school's values, vision and strategic aims, agreeing plans and policies, and making creative use of resources
- monitoring and evaluating performance, acting as a critical friend to the headteacher to support and challenge them in managing the school
- ensuring that the school is accountable to the children and parents it serves, to its local community, to those who fund and maintain it, as well as to the staff it employs

DfES: Governing the School of the Future. 2004 (edited)

Individual Responsibilities

Being a governor in a Church school is a vital Christian ministry. It involves time, energy and a willingness to become involved in the life of the school on a regular basis. It requires the prayerful and practical support of the local Church.

Governors are all there in different capacities, for different reasons, with different views on the school. As a Parent Governor, for example, you may have been elected or appointed to represent the interests of parents of pupils in the school. This does not mean that you must vote according to the wishes of the parents as a whole or of individuals. You have the right to make your own mind up on issues but you also have a responsibility to express the views and interests of parents insofar as you know them. Individual governors cannot act on their own unless they have been authorised to do so by the whole governing body, even then their actions will be strictly defined.

There are certain ethical standards which all governors are expected to meet. 'The Seven Principles of Public Life' were formulated by the Nolan Committee in 1996, for the public sector in general, but they are very relevant to governors and are often mentioned in publications about governance. These principles are: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Governors should be guided by these principles and the actions of individual governors must always be seen to be in the best interests of the school.

Corporate Responsibilities

As a governing body, you have a corporate existence and a corporate responsibility. This has several consequences. For one thing, authority rests with the whole governing body – not with any one person, such as the chair or the clerk. When they act on their own, they are doing so only on the authority of the whole body, and only in so far as they are authorised to act. (When decisions have to be made urgently, the chair can act, but is required to inform the whole governing body at the earliest opportunity.)

Another consequence is that collective responsibility should be taken for the outcomes of your decisions – even if you personally did not agree with them.

A third consequence is that how individual governors vote is confidential. The decisions of the whole governing body are public but the views of individual governors are private and personal.

The Foundation Governor

1. Introduction

The composition of governing bodies of church schools is set out in The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2003. In voluntary aided (VA) schools, the foundation governors must be in a majority of two. In voluntary controlled (VC) schools, the foundation governors number at least two but no more than a quarter of the total number of governors.

2. Term of office

The usual term of office for a foundation governor will be four years regardless of the type of school (as with all other categories of governor this can be varied by the Instrument of Government). Those bodies which appoint foundation governors (parochial church councils, diocesan board of education etc.) should be consulted on the period of office.

3. Types of Foundation Governor

There are various routes by which a foundation governor may be appointed to a church school governing body:

- by virtue of being an incumbent of a parish;
- by the Parochial Church Council (PCC);
- by the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE);
- by a foundation body relating to the trustees, or the original founders of the school.

Incumbents of parishes with a church school are normally *ex officio* foundation governors, that is, they are members of the governing body because they hold the office of incumbent. It is hoped that all incumbents whose parish includes a Church of England school will feel able to take up his or her *ex officio* position on the governing body. The church school is very much part of the local worshipping community. Incumbents should take their role in relation to the church school very seriously but if the Incumbent does not wish, or is unable to be a governor, the Diocesan Director of Education should be informed.

4. Diocesan Representatives on Governing Bodies

The Diocesan Board of Education appoints representatives to each school governing body in the Diocese, although the number does vary and there is often only one Diocesan representative on a controlled school governing body. Where there is a vacancy for a Diocesan representative, nominations are usually sought from the incumbent of the parish in which the school is situated, but nominees may be sought using other Diocesan networks. The Diocesan Board of Education is mindful of the need for its representatives to uphold and strengthen the Christian foundation of its schools.

Diocesan Board representatives may be expected to put forward Diocesan Board of Education policy where pertinent to a particular issue of debate at governors' meetings. The Board sends out termly Newsletters to keep governors aware of policy and other initiatives. However, such representatives are not delegates and should there be a vote on any issue at a governors' meeting, in common with all their fellow governors, whether elected or appointed, they should vote according to their conscience.

5. Roles and Responsibilities of Foundation Governors

Every governor whether appointed, elected or ex officio has the same duties and responsibilities. As a corporate body, the responsibilities of church school governors include - religious education, staffing, finance, and in VA schools, admission of pupils and buildings and maintenance. Foundation governors should have a particular concern for the religious education and collective worship in the school and in making financial decisions should recognise that religious education deserves full resourcing support. They should also seek to maintain and develop the links with the local church. Foundation governors of VC schools have less autonomy in such matters, but are responsible for the collective worship policy, appointing a member of staff to teach religious education, as well as having, (in most cases), some control over use of the school building on Sundays.

Foundation governors also have a special responsibility for securing that the character of the school as a Church of England voluntary school is preserved and developed and that the school is conducted in accordance with the provisions of the school's Trust Deed and its ethos statement. The Trust Deed is a document that relates to the original foundation of the school and sets out the reasons why the school was first set up. It is not always readily available and some, which are over 100 years old, are very difficult to read. The ethos statement is contained in the Instrument of Government and all schools have access to this through their local authority. The ethos statement relates to the school's Christian foundation and for church schools sets the context in which governors carry out their responsibilities.

The Role of the Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- the internal organisation, management and control of the school
- formulating aims and objectives, policies and targets for the governing body to consider adopting
- advising on and implementing the governing body's strategic framework.
- giving governors the information they need to help the school raise its standards
- reporting on progress at least once every school year.

'Roles of Governing Bodies and Headteachers', DfEE, August 2000

EVERY CHILD MATTERS

The 'Every Child Matters' agenda flows from the Children's Act, 2004.

Schools and local authorities will now be judged on how well they achieve the five intended outcomes:

- Be healthy: enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
- Stay safe: being protected from harm and neglect
- Enjoy and achieve: getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood
- Make a positive contribution: being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour
- Achieve economic wellbeing: not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

The implications of this agenda for schools are only now becoming clear and will continue to affect the

way schools develop for years to come.

POWERS AND DUTIES OF GOVERNING BODIES

The strategic working of governing bodies translates into some quite specific powers and duties. Here is a list of some of the most important areas in which governors have to be active, based on 'A Guide to the Law for School Governors'.

- **Standards** – ensuring a strategic and systematic approach to promoting high standards of educational achievement.
- **Targets** – setting appropriate targets for pupil achievement at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.
- **Curriculum** – ensuring that the curriculum is balanced and broadly based, and that the National Curriculum, and religious education are taught. (Plus, in secondary schools, sex and relationships education).
- **Reporting results** – reporting on assessments and examination results.
- **Policies** – deciding how, in broad strategic terms the school should be run.
- **Finance** – determining how to spend the budget allocated to the school.
- **Staffing** – deciding the number of staff, the pay policy and making decisions on staff pay.
- **Appointments** – appointing the head and deputy headteacher, leading on appointments to the leadership group, and determining how other appointments will be made
- **Discipline** – agreeing procedures for staff conduct and discipline.
- **Performance management** – establishing the policy following consultation with staff, and reviewing annually
- **Special educational needs** – managing governor duties
- **Inspection** – validating the Self Evaluation form (SEF)

In addition, in Voluntary Aided schools, governors are responsible for religious education, collective worship, admissions, premises and the employment of staff.

That's quite a formidable list. It may be comforting to know that there are very few decisions that a governing body would have to make without the advice of the headteacher.

What should governors do?

A governing body should play a strategic role – in contrast to the headteacher and staff, who are responsible for implementing plans and policies established by the governing body. Understanding what this means is probably the most important thing to learn about being a governor.

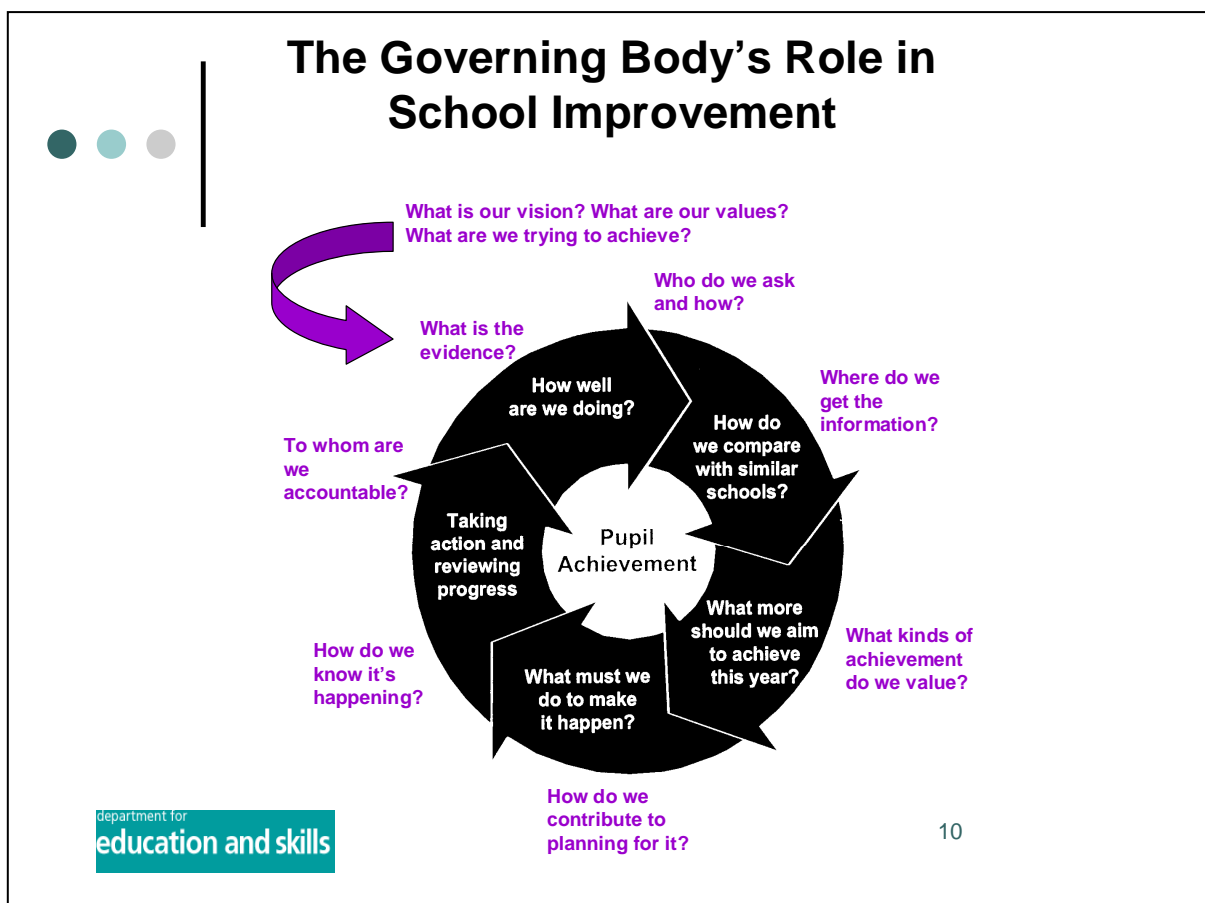
All schools are required to have a curriculum policy, and governors, as part of their strategic role, should contribute when the policy is being produced, and formally establish it. This policy should reflect the agreed values for the school: for example, that there should be high expectations, that learning should be an enjoyable process, that children should be encouraged to become independent learners. The policy should indicate how teaching and learning is to be organised to ensure that children have a rich and stimulating experience and do as well as they possibly can whilst in the school. Governors should also play a part in the development of the School Improvement Plan. In addition governors will contribute to the creation and evolution of other school policies a full list of which may be found in the Guide to the Law.

The School Improvement Plan

The most visible way in which governors exercise their strategic role is through their contribution to the School Improvement Plan. (SIP)

The whole point of an SIP is that it should record the agreed strategic direction for the school for the next few years, in a form that can be used to guide more detailed operational decisions.

Technically, a governing body only has to approve the School Improvement Plan; it would be quite legal for a headteacher to draw up a plan on their own, without consultation. However, it's unlikely that such a plan would be effective if no one else has any involvement in its production. So governors are encouraged to take an active role in the development and drafting of their SIP.



THE 'CRITICAL FRIEND'

A good friend will not just tell us what we want to hear. They will sometimes want to criticise us for our own good. Because they are our friends they can be trusted and their criticism can help us to change for the better. In the same way governors offer friendly but challenging advice to schools. Their motivation must always be the good of the school.

In their critical friend role, governors will need to know that the headteacher has systems in place to ensure that what has been agreed is actually happening. They might even be able to spend time in the school during the school day, gathering information on behalf of the whole governing body. For this to be a productive experience, it's important that staff and governors agree how such visits should be organised.

To ensure accountability, governors will receive regular reports on how children and teachers are responding – what's working well and which aspects could be improved. They will, in turn, report to parents, carers and others with an interest. The following aspects could be considered by the governing body when discussing with the headteacher the overall quality of teaching and learning in the school:

GOVERNING BODIES AND STAFFING

The LA is the principal employer of staff in Community schools and Voluntary Controlled schools. In Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools, the governing body is the legal employer of staff.

Governors of church schools have varying safeguards to appoint teachers and senior staff who will support the religious ethos, depending on the category of school. Voluntary Aided church schools have most autonomy, and governors of these schools may advertise for teachers (including head and deputy) who are practising members of the relevant faith.

Decisions about staffing are both important and complex, and governing bodies will want to make sure that they make full use of the advice available to them. Such guidance is available from LAs, dioceses and the 'Guide to the Law for School Governors'.

TARGETS

Governors are responsible, with the Headteacher, for setting agreed targets for achievement. Targets and results must be published unless ten or fewer children were in the relevant group when the targets were set. Targets must be set by December 31 each year for performance five terms later e.g. in December 2005 for the end of the 2006-2007 academic year.

In primary schools the targets are for the percentage of pupils who, by the end of Key Stage 2, will achieve Level 4 or above in the National curriculum tests in English and maths.

In secondary schools the targets are for the percentage of children who, at the end of Key Stage 3, will achieve:

- Level 5 or above in English, mathematics, science and ICT

At the end of Key Stage 4 will achieve: Grades A*-C in five or more subjects in GCSE examinations and approved qualifications

The average points score for the school to be achieved by those children. This is calculated from the actual grades achieved in all subjects taken by the pupils.

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The National Curriculum must be taught in most schools funded by the State, including Church Schools. It is made up of a list of agreed subjects and organised into four key stages. The chart below shows the normal age at which the Key Stages are taught and the year groups to which they apply.

	Key Stage 1	KeyStage2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
Age	6-7	8-11	12-14	15-16
Year groups	1-2	3-6	7-9	10-11

Finding out about the curriculum

Governors will get to know the curriculum in many ways but especially by reading documents such as:

- Curriculum policy
- School Development Plan or School Improvement Plan
- Prospectus
- School profile
- Ofsted report (if available)
- internal and external (advisers) monitoring documents

Governors will also visit the school over time both to observe the work going on and to talk to pupils and staff.

VISITING YOUR SCHOOL

• INTRODUCTION

All governors bring with them a particular and valid perspective. It is important to ground an individual's perspective in a sound knowledge of the school as a whole. Reading the school

prospectus and other papers and statistics is a useful starting point, but cannot be a substitute for first-hand knowledge, that is, a visit to the school during "working" hours.

- **TIME OFF WORK**

Some governors find it difficult to take time off work in order to visit their school. Under employment law, employees are entitled to "reasonable time off" to carry out their duties as a governor. There needs to be agreement between the employee and employer as to what "reasonable time off" means in practice. It will be necessary to consider the amount of time needed to carry out the duties; the effects of an employee's absence on the employer's business; and whether time off is given to the employee for other activities. An employer is not obliged to give time off with pay. Some governors find it difficult to get time off work during the school day: governing bodies need to be sensitive to this and ensure, as far as possible, that all governors benefit from the experiences of those who are able to get into school during the working day.

- **SCHOOL VISITS POLICY**

Governors sometimes ask whether they have a right to visit their schools. There is nothing set down in law, but it is generally agreed that governors need to visit during the school day in order to understand and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Governors make important decisions about their schools and it is vital that those decisions are grounded in a sound, first-hand knowledge of the school. Part of the governing body's role is to monitor the progress of the school development plan and also the teaching and learning that takes place in the school; it is very difficult to fulfil this role without visiting the school. Schools are, however, complex places and it is vital that visits are organised properly in consultation with the headteacher. Many governing bodies choose to link governors to a class, year group or curriculum subject; in this way individual governing bodies can get to know part of the school in greater depth and develop relationships with staff and pupils.

- **GROUND RULES FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL VISITS**

There are four main rules for an effective school visit:

1. **Clear agreed aims** Governing bodies should be clear about why governors need to visit and draw up a planned programme of visits; individual governors must know why they are visiting the school;
2. **Clear channels of communication** Visits must be arranged in consultation with the headteacher and other staff. Feedback is an important part of any visit. Any concerns must always be discussed with the headteacher in the first instance;
3. **Careful planning** Governors should be as fully prepared as possible; read relevant policy documents and talk to more experienced governors and the headteacher;
4. **Empathy** If you are visiting a classroom, try to put yourself in the place of the teacher, remember that you are not there as an inspector, sharing your anxieties beforehand may help to improve the partnership.

- **BEFORE YOU VISIT**

First answer a few questions:

- Why are you visiting the school?
- Is this your first visit? (If yes, see next section)
- Will you go alone or accompanied?
- Will you have a "focus" for your visit? (You cannot expect to find out everything in one go.)
- Are you up-to-date with what is happening in your school?
- Is your visit part of a planned rota of visits?

- **PLANNING YOUR FIRST VISIT**

A first visit to school will be a familiarisation process. If you are a parent, you may be familiar with a particular class or year group, but have little knowledge of what happens in the rest of the school; others may not have visited a school for a long time. Governors planning their first visit should consider the following:

- going with an experienced governor who is used to visiting, or at least talking to other governors who have visited the school;
 - accepting any offer from the headteacher, staff or pupils of a guided tour of the school;
 - finding out what material is available and reading it before your visit, e.g., school prospectus, previous governors' annual reports, school policies on more general aspects of school life, e.g., behaviour policy.
 - If you are new to "education" your headteacher may be able to supply you with information on the particular stage of education which concerns you, whether nursery, infant, junior, or secondary.
- **ARRANGING A VISIT**
First and foremost, always make an appointment with the headteacher and plan with him/her what you will do during your visit. You cannot expect to learn everything about the school in one visit, concentrating on one aspect, which interests you, is a good starting point. If you are visiting a class make sure you liaise closely with the teacher, you will need to be flexible and respond to situations in the classroom as they arise. Make sure that the teacher is happy for you to sit with the children and to talk to them before you do so.
- **WHAT TO LOOK FOR**
It is vital for governors to remember that a visit to school is not an inspection; misunderstandings may arise if notebooks are in evidence, particularly in a classroom. Depending on the type of visit, you may wish to answer some questions for yourself, below are some examples:
 - How many pupils are there in a class and are they overcrowded?
 - Are the pupils working alone or in groups?
 - Is there enough equipment/books to go round?
 - Are all pupils occupied on the same task?
 - What is the atmosphere like in class and corridors - is it quiet/calm or noisy?
 - Is there an adequate, comfortable staff room?
 - Are there attractive displays on the walls?
 - Is the library well stocked and well used?
- **AFTER YOUR VISIT**
Always thank the headteacher, staff and pupils for their time, it is not always easy to cope with visitors on a busy day! If you visited a particular class, you may wish to write to the pupils and class teacher. If possible, before you leave the school talk over your impressions with the headteacher. If you intend to write a brief report for the governors ensure that the headteacher knows this and let him/her see a copy before it is circulated to the governors. If you have any serious misgivings or questions you must discuss these first with the headteacher and chair of governors. If you are presenting a report based on a class or departmental visit, the class teacher or head of department should be invited to the meeting when the report is discussed. Always inform an individual if they have been named in a report before the report is circulated.
- **CONCLUSION**
Visiting your school should be a pleasant experience; time spent in preparing for your visit will reap benefits since you will have a clearer idea of what you are trying to achieve. Visits are an opportunity for getting alongside the headteacher, staff and pupils; being with pupils may be daunting to some governors at first, but it will serve as a reminder that you are a governor essentially in order to benefit the children in the school's

FINANCE

One of the key roles of governing bodies is the setting and supervision of the school budget. Until the end of March 2006 the income that schools will receive is a combination of central government grant and local government taxation. From April 2006 the vast majority of their income will come via central

government grants paid to local authorities: this means that there will be no requirement on local authorities to contribute to school funding from local taxation, although they will be free to do so if they choose to. The main grant that local authorities will receive for schools is called the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

School budgets are largely based on the number and age of their pupils (AWPU – Age weighted pupil units). Governing bodies need to anticipate and plan for the effects of fluctuations in pupil numbers. By March 2006, schools will receive budgets for 2006-07 and 2007-08. 2006-07 and 2007-08 will be a transitional phase during which various elements of the new system will be reviewed, to ensure smooth implementation from 2008 of multi-year budgets. In early 2008, schools will receive budgets for the three years 2008-09 to 2010-11.

Schools also receive funding from Standards Fund Grants and Schools Standard Grant. Some of the Standards Fund Grants are targeted at specific, national priorities. Further money may be generated through the school's own efforts.

Strategic financial and resource management by governing bodies

Approval/monitoring of the budget can be delegated to a committee but not to an individual. The budget must be spent and managed to ensure that the National Curriculum and Religious Education are taught and to meet other legal requirements, e.g. personnel, Health and Safety.

Governors need to ensure that they achieve value for money in the use of resources. Value for money is about achieving the best possible outcomes for pupils in the most efficient way and at reasonable cost. Governing bodies need to demonstrate that they are applying the four principles of *best value* in their management and allocation of resources. This means considering the 4 Cs:

Compare – how a school's performance compares with that of other schools

Challenge – whether the school's performance is high enough, and why and how a service is being provided

Compete – how the school secures economic, efficient and effective services

Consult – seeking the views of stakeholders about the services provided

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance management of the headteacher and teaching staff is a key process designed to raise standards in schools. It involves the setting of objectives for individual teachers by team leaders, the monitoring of progress, provision of relevant training and development, and a formal review of progress at the end of each cycle. The governing body has two key tasks:

- to ensure that the performance management policy is being implemented and is having a positive effect. Many schools have decided to apply the policy to all staff.
- to appoint 2 or 3 governors to agree performance management objectives with the headteacher; to monitor progress and to formally review the overall performance of the headteacher; to make recommendations to the governors dealing with decisions on the head's salary.

From September 2005, headteachers and school governing bodies have been able to use a "light touch validation" checklist to ensure that the school's performance management arrangements comply with the current regulations; make the link between performance management and pay decisions; and are robust, transparent and fair.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Schools that are working effectively will display many or all of the qualities listed below. Governing bodies that are working strategically will be monitoring the schools progress and seeking to establish the development of such qualities.

Extended provision, healthy, inclusive and enterprising.

Professional leadership and management.

- shared values, vision and goals
- explicit high expectations
- pupil rights and responsibilities
- positive reinforcement
- partnership with parents and the community

Concentration on teaching and learning

- personalised learning and teaching
- a learning environment

Self- evaluating

A learning organisation

Based on 'Governing Bodies and Effective Schools', DfEE

EFFECTIVE GOVERNING BODIES

To achieve an effective school it is necessary to have an effective governing body.

'*Governing Bodies and Effective Schools*' (edited), lists the qualities of such a body as follows:

- clarity of purpose
- working as a team
- good relationship with the headteacher
- effective time management and delegation
- concern for their own training and development
- knowing the school
- effective meetings.

Working as a team is about working together and making decisions as a body, with corporate responsibility. It isn't necessary for everyone to know everything about all aspects of governance. But it is necessary for everyone to be clear about what the team is trying to achieve, and what part each individual is playing in bringing that about. It is important for every governor to be given opportunities to work to their strengths and interests.

The relationship between governing body and headteacher springs directly from their complementary roles of strategic and day-to-day management. If those roles are not being fulfilled properly, there will not be a productive partnership.

Time management is a practical necessity, and it is vital that governors focus on strategic issues, not day-to-day management. To make best use of people's time the power to delegate functions should be used wisely.

Training and development is about extending people's existing skills and developing new ones by accessing appropriate training and support. Governing bodies need members that have the knowledge, skills and confidence to play their part.

MEETINGS AND DELEGATION

Much of the work of a governing body is conducted in meetings and it is important that they are productive for all concerned. There are specific rules to guide:

- frequency
- notice
- despatch of paperwork
- the number of people who must be present for decisions to be made
- election of officers
- minutes and confidentiality.

These and other issues are explained in detail in Chapter 3 of the Guide to the Law for School Governors, 2006. Other arrangements such as the way meetings are run and the work is scheduled are left to each governing body to decide.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The governing body is accountable to the public that they serve. There are two main aspects to this role: first, the governing body holds the headteacher to account for implementing agreed policies and plans, and second it stands accountable to the stakeholders in the school for the performance of the school and the contribution it has made. In the case of Church schools this includes relating to the Parish(es) in which the school is set and to the Diocese through the Board of Education. The Section 48 inspections of Church Schools reports on the Christian ethos of the school and, in the case of VA schools on the worship and the delivery of Religious Education.

Accountability of headteachers to governors

The headteacher's written report is one way in which the head fulfils his or her accountability to the governing body. It should be sent to members of the governing body together with other relevant documentation at the same time as notices of meetings, and its aim is to provide a clear and permanent record of key aspects of the school's work. The onus is then on governors to prepare.

Headteachers' reports to governors are the key vehicles by which s/he accounts to governors for the quality of education provided in the school. They are likely to include information about:

- the development of pupils
- standards attained
- the efficiency of the management of the school's resources and crucially,
- progress in implementing the school improvement / development plan against previously agreed outcomes and targets

Accountability of the governing body to others

Schools have responsibility for the education and well-being of many thousands of children, and so have an impact on society as a whole. They also control large amounts of public money, and they have to be seen to be using it wisely. Schools therefore have to be accountable, but what does that mean in terms of a governing body's obligations?

It includes:

- conducting the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement
- having the right to discuss, question and refine proposals
- respecting the professional roles and management responsibilities of the headteacher and other staff
- being prepared to account for the school's overall performance and to explain the governing body's decisions and actions to anyone who has a legitimate interest.

That last obligation raises some interesting questions. Who has a legitimate interest? Obvious groups are pupils, parents, staff, feeder primaries and secondary schools, the LA and Ofsted. In the case of Church schools, as we have already noted, the local Parish(es) and the Diocese have an interest in the performance and life of the school.

The most important ways in which a governing body describes or accounts for its actions are:

- working with its School Improvement Partner (SIP) the local authority and, in the case of VA schools, the Diocesan Board of Education
- publishing the school profile and school prospectus
- responding to complaints
- responding to inspection.

The phasing in of School Improvement Partners (SIPs) from autumn 2005 means that the relationship between schools and LAs will change. The aim is that all schools will have a 'single, on-going conversation' with the school improvement partner about the performance of the school. The SIP will also advise the governors in the headteacher's appraisal, replacing the external adviser.

Representation

Another issue concerning accountability is representation. What are the obligations on governors appointed to represent staff or parents? The official answer is that such governors are to be considered *representative* teachers, members of staff or parents, rather than *representatives of* those groups; that is to say, they do not have to try to represent the view of *all* teachers, members of staff or parents. Clearly, they should communicate with them about issues that arise, but only so far as is reasonable. When decisions have to be made by the governing body, each staff member and parent governor is free to vote in accordance with their own views. In the same way Foundation Governors represent the Church and have a particular responsibility to uphold the Christian ethos of the school. In the case of VC schools this includes taking a particular interest in the daily act of worship, the appointment of a teacher of religious education and the use of the school building on Sundays. It also includes an involvement in the selection and appointment of a Headteacher who is in sympathy with the Christian ethos of the school and is able to uphold its Christian objectives.

Finally, you need to be clear that it's the governing body *as a whole* that has the authority to fulfil its obligations; you, as an individual governor, should not make *ad hoc* demands for information.

THE SCHOOL PROFILE AND THE PROSPECTUS

The Profile forms part of the New Relationship with schools, which places an emphasis on reducing unnecessary bureaucracy, and is predicated on trusting the judgment of schools and governing bodies to make the best decisions for their school. The package of measures around the Profile – abolishing the Governors' Annual Report, reducing the prescription around the content of the Prospectus, abolishing the Annual Parents' Meeting – are intended to free up the way schools and governing bodies communicate with their parents, so that they have more time and flexibility to focus on what works in their particular circumstances, and can respond to parental demand in their school.

The Profile will be launched for the academic year 2005-06, and the DfES will build in to the electronic system both a feedback mechanism and the scope for flexibility, so that where particular problems or issues arise, they can modify the Profile accordingly. They intend to keep the content, format and functionality of the Profile under review at least annually, so they can make sure that it is as relevant and useful as possible.

Governing Bodies will be obliged to complete a School Profile from the academic year 2005/06 onwards. Examination results from 2004/05 will be included in the 2005/06 School Profile and the unvalidated data will be available electronically to schools from October/November 2005. Guidance on the Profile will be available from October.

Schools are not required to include their targets in the profile.

Governing bodies of nursery schools are still required to produce an annual report.

The DfES is also changing the regulations for the school prospectus, so that there is much more flexibility over what is included, and schools will have more freedom to respond to requests from parents for particular pieces of information.

The only obligatory content of the school prospectus will be the information about SEN and disability. Since schools are required to produce this information by the Education (Special Educational Needs) (Information) (England) Regulations, it makes sense to include it in the prospectus where it will be easily available to parents.

THE THREE KEY ROLES OF GOVERNING BODIES

