



Being a Governor at Owlsmoor Primary School

Owlsmoor Primary School

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Headteacher – Liz Cole

Chair of Governors – Christine Jones

Vice Chair of Governors – Brian Francis

Being a Governor at Owlsmoor Primary School is about being part of the community of the school. It is an important position requiring enthusiasm, time and commitment.

The Governing Body consists of 16 governors including the Headteacher. There are 6 parent governors, 3 Staff Governors, 3 Local Authority Governors, and 4 Community Governors.

As a new governor, you will receive a pack of information from the Local Authority which will describe the formal responsibilities and duties of being a governor.

This guide provides information about our Governing Body, which we hope you find helpful.

You will discover that there is more to being a governor than attending meetings although it is true to say that meetings do provide the structure around which the Governing Body operates.

We hope that you find the experience of being a governor at Owlsmoor fulfilling and enjoyable.

Attendance at Meetings

The full Governing Body meetings are where the big decisions are made that affect Owlsmoor Primary School, its pupils, staff and families.

It is very important that governors take part in this decision-making.

Please make every effort to attend. If missing a meeting is unavoidable, then you should send your apologies to the Chair or Clerk as soon as possible.

Meetings of the full Governing Body usually take place once per term either on a Tuesday/Wednesday or Thursday evening. We try to keep the duration of these meetings to less than 2 hours; dates of these meetings are issued to all governors at the beginning of the spring term.

Meetings are necessarily, formal in the way they are conducted but the atmosphere is friendly. Being a governor is more than just being at a meeting. A good governor is proactive and will follow decisions through with action.

Governing Body Committees

Much of the work of the governing body takes place through its committees. We currently have 4 main committees which meet regularly one a term.

The Committees are

- 1.) Staffing
- 2.) Finance
- 3.) Curriculum
- 4.) Premises/Community

Further committees dealing with Complaints and Disciplinary and Grievances for Staff and Pupils etc, Pay Review Panel and Headteacher performance appraisal. Governors must have completed the specialised training to be able to sit on these committees.

Committees provide good opportunities for new governors to get involved right away, and because the group is small, it is easier to take part in all discussions.

Be Prepared

You will be sent meeting papers at least 10 days before the meetings date.

Meetings can only be effective if everyone has prepared well; this means reading the papers and making notes on any points you wish to make.

If you have any questions for any of the meetings, you can contact either the Chair or

Vice Chair of the meeting in question. If you would like to raise a point under AOB you must give at least 48 hours notice, this also applies to the full governing body meeting.

The agenda for the full Governors Meeting is put together by the Clerk in consultation with the Headteacher and the Chairman of the Governing Body. If you would like to add something to the agenda, you should contact one of these individuals preferably three weeks before the meeting.

Email/Paperwork

All minutes and agendas and Headteachers reports etc are sent out by Email, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ALL GOVERNORS ENSURE THAT THEIR CURRENT EMAIL ADDRESS IS GIVEN TO THE CLERK. There is a file for each governor in the main Reception area, would you please ensure you look at your files on a regular basis.

Confidentiality

It is important that governors share information. However some things must be kept confidential. For example, discussions relating to specific pupils or staff are treated as confidential.

Sometimes the Governing Body agrees that a matter is confidential and everyone must abide by that decision. Minutes of meetings where confidential items are discussed are referred to as Part 2 minutes and are kept separate and do not form part of the public record.

Whether a matter is confidential or not, outside the meeting, you should only discuss the decisions made, not details of the discussion, who said what, or which governors supported or opposed a decision.

As a governor you will be privy to information, which may not be specifically confidential, but would be inappropriate to talk about to others. Minutes of meetings are public domain after they have been agreed at the following meeting.

The Governing Body has agreed a Code of Conduct, which is included at the end of this document.

Collective Responsibility

Governors have no power as individuals. That lies with the full Governing Body as a whole.

In some circumstances the Chair / Vice Chair of the Governing Body can act without consulting other members of the Governing Body, but this is rare.

The Governing Body may delegate its responsibilities to committees or to an individual governor (e.g. the Headteacher).

When parents or others bring a matter of concern to you, do not try to deal with the matter yourself. In the case of a complaint, there is a complaints procedure and policy, which must be adhered to.

The Governing Body usually takes a vote when making decisions. We aim to discuss everything thoroughly and ensure that all points of view are listened to and considered.

Once a decision is made all governors must support the decision.

Visiting the School

Governors have no right of entry into a school, but at Owlsmoor governors are always welcome to visit. It is however courteous to make an appointment in advance if you wish to see the Headteacher, or another member of the staff.

Governors are also asked to respect the workings of the school day, and be sensitive to demands upon the time of school staff.

When visiting the school, governors must call at reception and sign in, not forgetting to sign out when they leave. There is a separate folder held in the reception area for governors when they visit the school.

Governors are always encouraged to attend school events, such as sports days, school plays, school fairs, fates and parents evenings etc.

As well as informal visits, governors sometimes visit school more formally in their monitoring role, especially if they have special responsibilities for areas of the curriculum, premises.

Such visits must:

Always be discussed with and arranged through the Headteacher.

Always have a specific agreed purpose.

Never take the form of an Inspection.

Governors must always respect the professionalism of the Teaching staff. If any issues arise during the visit, they should be brought up afterwards with the Headteacher during a debriefing meeting. It is not appropriate for governors to comment on the teachers conduct of the lesson or on individual pupils.

Governors will need to report on their visit to the full Governing Body as evidence of their monitoring role, but the report should always be discussed with the Headteacher beforehand.

Which Hat are you wearing?

Governors often have two roles in the school, as governor and as a parent, employee or helper. If this is the case it is really important to try to keep these roles separate.

For example if you are a parent governor and wish to discuss a matter concerning your child it is helpful to let the teacher/Headteacher know that you “have your parent hat on”. If something has come to your attention however that you feel has a wider implication you may wish to discuss it “with your governor hat on”.

Similarly, staff governors sometimes feel uncomfortable as governors, challenging decisions made by the Headteacher who is their line manager.

If you are assisting out in any other capacity in the school e.g. helping to run a school club, it is also important to keep your roles separate. Being a governor does not entitle

you to any additional privileges or use of the school resources. For example, if you need to use the photocopier you should ask and try to choose a time when it not likely to be needed by the school staff, such as after school.

These adjustments can take a bit of practice but most people manage it well.

Elected Governors

Parent and Staff governors (excluding the Headteacher), are elected by other parents and staff. It is important that as such you do not represent the people who elected you in a parliamentary sense, but that you are representative of them.

As a governor you act as an individual.

The Law

The law regarding school governance is covered by School Governance regulations 2003 and 2007. Every governor will be given a copy of the Guide to the law (GTTL) on a CD.

It can also be viewed online at www.governmornet.co.uk.

Governors are expected to be familiar with the law. This does not necessarily mean reading the entire GTTL but you should at least know where to go for information. The clerk is also able to provide advice on the law relating to school governance.

Training

New governors are expected to attend the induction training provided by the Local Authority who will inform you of the dates available. In addition the Local Authority provides a wide range of training sessions, which you are strongly encouraged to attend. There is also no additional cost to the school. Advice can be obtained from the Clerk or the Link Governor about which sessions may be appropriate.

Security Clearance

At Owlsmoor, you will be asked to complete an application for clearance by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). You need to be aware that refusal to complete the form if requested to do so, is automatic grounds for disqualification as a governor. It is a simple paper-based procedure, which should not be a cause of concern. If you require more details please speak to the Headteacher or the Clerk.

All governors also sign a declaration of qualification as a governor, which covers aspects of criminal activity, bankruptcy and child protection.

A new system of vetting will be introduced by the Government in October 2009.

Further information and support can be obtained from:

Bracknell Forest Council Governors Helpdesk

Tel No 01344 354066 / 354071

Website www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk

(follow links to Learning / Schools / school governors)

Special Roles

Some governors take on special roles on the governing body. i.e.

Numeracy

Literacy

SEN

Link Governor

Child Protection

Gifted and Talented

ICT Governor

Full details of these roles are available from the clerk or from the Bracknell Forest website www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk follow links to Learning – Schools – Governance – DIY Guides.

Key Documents

There are several key documents relating to the school that you should be familiar with. These are summarised below.

The School Prospectus

This is a statutory document containing a broad range of information about the school, for parents and prospective parents. At Owlsmoor this consists of a full colour booklet with inserts which are updated as necessary.

The School Evaluation Form (SEF)

This part of the Ofsted inspection system, schools are required to perform continuous self-assessment of their performance. This is recorded on the self-evaluation form or SEF, which is a very important document. When the inspectors come to make judgements on the school they will be based on the extent to which the inspection team agrees with the self-evaluation. The governors are involved in this self- evaluation process and should be familiar with the contents of the current SEF.

School Improvement Plan (SIP)

This is a very important document which is revised annually and agreed by the governing body. It is mainly developed by the senior leadership team (SLT) and discussed in detail at the various Committee Meetings. It is a strategic plan encompassing the long term vision, medium and short term objectives and specific targets relating to the school improvement.

School performance data is issued in the autumn through a system known as RAISE which stands for Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through School self-evaluation. RAISE is available online to the Headteacher. Governors are entitled to request access to some of the RAISEonline data.

In addition the governing body is responsible for many of the school's policies. Governors regularly review policies in committee.

The official record of the Governing Body's business is the Minutes of their meetings. Once agreed, the minutes are in the public domain.

General

- We have responsibility for determining, monitoring and keeping under review the broad policies, plans and procedures within which the school operates.
- We recognise that the Headteacher is responsible for the implementation of policy, day-to-day management of the school and the implementation of the curriculum.
- We accept that all governors have equal status, and although appointed by different groups (i.e. parents, staff, local authority, community) our overriding concern will be the welfare of the school as a whole.
- We have no legal authority to act individually, except when the governing body has given us delegated authority to do so.
- We have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer.
- We will encourage open discussions and will act appropriately.
- We will consider carefully how our decisions may affect other schools.

Commitment

- We acknowledge that accepting the office as a governor involves the commitment of significant amount of time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in work of the governing body, attend regularly, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.

- We will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for training and development.

Relationships

- We will strive to work as a team.
- We will seek to develop effective working relationships with the Head, Staff, and Parents, the Local Authority and other relevant agencies and the Community in general.

Confidentiality

- We will observe complete confidentiality when required or asked to do so by the governing body, especially regarding matters concerning individual staff or students.
- We will exercise the greatest prudence if a discussion of a potentially contentious issue affecting the school arises outside the governing body.

Conduct

- We will encourage the open expression of views at meetings, but accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the governing body or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak out against majority decisions in public (or private).
- We will only speak or act on behalf of the governing body when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school we will follow the procedures established by the governing body.
- Our visits to the school will be undertaken within the framework established by the governing body and agreed with the Headteacher.
- In discharging our duties we will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of Owlsmoor School.