

A GUIDE TO GOVERNORS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. INTRODUCTION

The DELTA Academies Trust (DELTA) model of governance delegates almost all procedural and statutory powers in relation to the operation of each academy to its Local Governing Body. The LGB plays a key role in the life of each Academy.

The LGB, following a structure recommended by the DELTA directors agree a scheme of delegation for local operation of their academy which gives powers to the Principal and committees and panels of governors to deal with the necessary operational and statutory responsibilities of the LGB - for example - admissions, social cohesion, pupil discipline, pay and staffing matters etc.

The governing body is, of course, supported by the Principal and local senior leadership team as well as, where appropriate, by DELTA. In addition, the LGB retains the responsibility to oversee the broad academy objectives for their own locality – working with the Academy Senior Leadership Team to improve the whole life of the academy and its impact on its community.

The general aim of this documentation is to help you understand what being a school governor is about. It does not contain all the answers. It should, however, help you understand the roles and responsibilities of the governing body. It is hoped that the information will:

- help you see the skills and experience that you can bring to the role of governor;
- increase your awareness of the different roles of the governing body and how they can be carried out; and
- understand some of the key responsibilities of the governing body.

2. WHAT CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE?

If you were asked to list the skills, experience and personal qualities you have which might help you in your role as a school governor you might not think of many – but if you read through the following list and tick those which apply to you, you could be surprised by how many you do have!

EXPERIENCE	SKILLS	QUALITIES
life experience	effective team worker	an interest in the academy
working with children	questioning / challenging skills	loyalty
experience in industry	debating skills	commitment
running a home	organisational skills	common sense
committee experience	secretarial skills	willingness to contribute ideas
youth work	counselling skills	rational
managing a household budget	marketing skills	detached view
bringing up children	parenting skills	keeping up to date on issues affecting the school
business experience	management skills	enthusiasm
teaching experience		an interest in education
governorship		an interest in the local community
local knowledge		tolerance
financial experience		good listener
		Patience
		Tact

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The key purpose of governing bodies is to help schools provide the best possible education for pupils. The roles of the governing body can be divided into 3 categories:

Strategic development of the Academy following the stated vision and ethos of DELTA Academies Trust (DELTA) by:

- focusing on raising standards of achievement;
- receiving regular reports from the Principal and academy staff;
- helping to identify areas for improvement;
- ensuring that resources are well used and value for money is achieved;
- reviewing overall progress against targets; and
- taking advice on all of the above from the Principal before making decisions.

Within this role, governors always need to bear in mind one of the key influences on the national and local education agenda, that of 'Every Child Matters', the 5 main outcomes are be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being.

Critical Friend – this is about monitoring (collecting information) and evaluating (making judgements); it's about supporting and challenging (in equal measures) the Principal by:

- asking questions;
- getting involved in discussions;
- recognising and celebrating achievements of the academy;
- knowing where the academy is not achieving as well as it could and ensuring that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met; and
- providing support and encouragement when strategies to bring about improvements are being explored.

How can you do this?

- by visiting the academy during the day to see it in action;
- by attending academy events;
- by becoming 'attached' to a class, year group or subject; and
- by inviting staff to give presentations to the governing body.

Accountability – governing bodies have to be accountable by:

- running the academy to promote high standards of educational achievement;
- discussing, questioning and refining proposals;
- respecting the professional roles of the Principal and other staff;
- being prepared to account for the overall performance of the academy and to explain the governing body's actions to anyone who has a legitimate interest ie pupils, parents, staff, community, those who fund and maintain the academy.

How can you do this?

- by working with the school improvement partner (a person appointed by DELTA to support and challenge the Principal) and DELTA;
- by publishing statutory information;
- by responding to complaints; and
- by responding to inspections.

4. HOW IT WORKS IN PRACTICE

The question is, of course, how you as an individual governor can use your experience, skills and personal qualities to help you fulfil the roles. This might seem like an impossible task but there are a number of straightforward things that you can do:

Contributing to Governing Body Meetings – you will receive agenda papers well in advance of the meeting which should give you time to read thoroughly and prepare to ask questions or contribute to debate. At the meetings it is important that you take part and are not afraid of appearing ignorant – you might find that what appears to be a very simple question is one that a number of governors would have liked to ask but did not.

Joining Committees or Working Groups – considering issues at committee meetings, eg finance, can save a lot of time at full governing body meetings. It is also an ideal way for you to use a particular skill or learn more about a subject. The committee structure is reviewed annually.

Taking on a Particular Role – if you have a particular interest or relevant experience, you might want to become a governor with responsibility for a particular area, eg link governor for training, health and safety governor, special educational needs governor.

Linking with a Particular Class or Subject Area – it can be a huge benefit if a system of 'linking' is adopted. It allows greater understanding and, if you spend some time in the academy during the day, you can get to know some of the staff and pupils. Being a governor does not give you an automatic right to go into the academy but a planned, purposeful visit will always be welcomed.

Attending Training – this is really important if you want to gain a greater knowledge and understanding of what goes on in within the academy. It might take up some of your time but it helps to make your job a lot easier in the long run.

5. CONCLUSION

The LGB's main functions are to:

- Act as a key link between the Academy, parents and local community and champion the work of the Academy.
- Provide constructive challenge and strategic direction to the Principal and Leadership Team as they plan the future development of the Academy, ensuring that they focus on Academy improvement.

It is important to remember that the governing body is a group. Individual governors have no power (except where the whole governing body has delegated a specific power to an individual); decisions are taken collectively. If you do not agree with a particular proposal you can exercise your right to vote against it but if the proposal is carried by the governing body, you must remain loyal to the decision.