

Roles and responsibilities of governors at WHSG

WHSG is part of a Multi-Academy Trust which is a registered charitable company – governors are members of the Local Governing Body which is a sub-committee of the Trust Board.

The Governing Body plays a vital role in ensuring that the school maintains its current high standards and excellent reputation. It also serves as a crucial link between the school and the local community. Becoming a governor is your chance to bring the views and experience of a parent to bear directly on the education being offered at WHSG. It is especially useful to have a variety of outlooks reflective of our multi-cultural society.

The Governing Body works closely with the Headteacher to achieve high standards for all students, building on the school's reputation for academic excellence and care for the individual child.

The Governing Body works with, not for the school. Its responsibilities and powers are exercised in conjunction with the Headteacher and staff. Governors do not intervene in the day to day management of the school unless there is something seriously wrong. If there is a weakness in the school they will take action, otherwise their role is to monitor and give advice. It is not easy to maintain an appropriate and beneficial balance between monitoring and advising but it is often likened to that of a 'critical friend'.

The day to day management of the school is the responsibility of the Headteacher and staff. However developing the philosophy and future plans for the school are shared responsibilities – usually proposed by the Headteacher and Senior Leadership of the school and agreed by the Governors. Governors govern rather than manage, they give direction and focus and this could be seen as a vital strategic role but they should not be expected to be 'hands on'.

Individual governors have no power or responsibility. It is only the full Governing Body and the Academy Trust which have legal duties and powers and all governors share in that corporate responsibility. No Governor should promote a 'personal agenda'. This is especially so for Parent Governors. The role of the Governing Body is to achieve the best for all students, not just the children of Governors.

The Governing Body will offer support and constructive advice; be a sounding board for ideas and a second opinion on proposals; and will offer help where needed. They may also challenge; ask questions and seek information; improve proposals and so seek to arrive at the best solution.

The Role

The Governing Body's main role is to help raise standards of achievement, so it should:

- guide the strategic direction of the school, setting annual targets and ensuring that high quality education is provided for all students;
- monitor all aspects of provision and performance;
- achieve and maintain improvement of WHSG;
- ensure that all the statutory and legal requirements pertaining to the school are met and that it meets the requirements of regulators such as Ofsted;
- monitor all aspects of the financial management of the school;
- be aware of current risks associated with running the school and monitor the mitigating actions;
- appraise the current Headteacher's performance each year and appoint any new Headteacher;
- focus at all times on the students and the educational and life experiences they are offered.

The Commitment

Being a governor is a responsible and sometimes time-consuming job. The role includes:

- attending meetings of the full Governing Body four or five times a year. These meetings currently start at 5.30pm and usually finish before 9pm;
- reading reports and background papers prior to meetings;
- visiting the school, if possible, during the day to gain familiarisation and understanding of its work;
- attending other events such as concerts, open evenings, art exhibitions or guest lectures;
- offering support and expertise;
- keeping up to date with local and national developments in education;
- attending governor training sessions or undertaking online training modules;
- taking part in staff appointment panels, student exclusion panels and more rarely staff discipline and grievance hearings

The skills requirement

Governors are expected to contribute to the success and smooth running of the school. They should have knowledge, skills or experience which can be used to inform debate, give a new perspective or provide solutions to problems. The school manages a publicly funded budget of over £5m, so commercial experience or specialist skills (such as in project management, finance or legal departments, contract negotiation, systems analysis, PR, HR, planning law) is very useful.

The overall skillset of the Governing Body is closely monitored and 'Sponsor Governors' are chosen so that there is an appropriate range of skills and expertise required. No specific skills are required from 'Parent Governors', but it is expected that all governors will be able to:

- Work co-operatively and creatively with others;
- Be critical and evaluative;
- Use their personal qualities and expertise in the interest of the school, its students and staff;
- Follow the principles of Public Life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership).

Governors should be at the heart of how WHSG operates, so it is important they get things right. How they do their job may affect the interests and life chances of students, staff morale and how the school is seen by parents and others in the community.

Governors are responsible for how the school is performing, so they have to be prepared to support and challenge the Headteacher by gathering views from interested parties, evaluating situations, asking challenging questions and guiding the staff in their decisions about what is best for the students. Governors are not there to merely rubber stamp decisions – their opinions will be considered and their expertise and experience fully utilised.

Being a governor may have no financial reward, but the benefits come from knowing that what they do is having a positive and beneficial impact on the school and its staff; and from the knowledge that they are helping provide the next generation with the opportunities and lifelong learning skills needed to prepare them for Higher Education, the world of work and adulthood.

Under the terms of the School Governance Regulations a person is disqualified from holding or from continuing to hold office as a governor or associate member if he or she:

- fails to attend the governing body meetings – without the consent of the governing body – for a continuous period of six months, beginning with the date of the first meeting missed (not applicable to ex-officio governors);
- is subject to a bankruptcy restriction order or an interim bankruptcy restrictions order; a debt relief restrictions order or an interim debt relief restrictions order;
- has had their estate sequestrated and the sequestration has not been discharged, annulled or reduced;
- is subject to:
 - a disqualification order or disqualification undertaking under the Company Directors Act 1986
 - a disqualification order under the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 2002
 - a disqualification undertaking accepted under the Company Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002
 - an order made under section 492(2)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986 (failure to pay under county court administration order);
- has been removed from the office of charity trustee or trustee for a charity by an order made by the Charity Commissioners or Commissioners or High Court on the grounds of any misconduct or mismanagement, in the administration of the charity, or under Section 34 of the Charities and Trustees Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 from being concerned in the management or control of anybody;
- is included in the list of people considered by the Secretary of State as unsuitable to work with children;
- is disqualified from working with children or subject to a direction under section 142 of the Education Act 2002;
- Is disqualified from working with children under sections 28, 29 or 29A of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000;
- is disqualified from registration under Part 2 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 for child-minding or providing day care;
- is disqualified from registration under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006;
- has received a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months (without the option of a fine) in the five years before becoming a governor or since becoming a governor;
- has received a prison sentence of 2.5 years or more in the 20 years before becoming a governor;
- has at any time received a prison sentence of five years or more;
- has been convicted under section 547 of EA 1986 (nuisance or disturbance on school premises) or under section 85A of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (nuisance or disturbance on educational premise) during the five years prior to or since appointment or election as a governor;
- has refused a request by the clerk to the governing body to make an application under section 113B of the Police Act 1997 for a criminal records certificate.