



Llywodraeth Cymru
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Training for chairs of governors in Wales

Requirements for local authorities on what to include in training for chairs of governors.

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Overview

This document sets out the scope and content of the chair of governors training.

Chairs of governing bodies must complete the chair training within 6 months of their election and will be expected to undertake training as contained in this document.

The training will support chairs to:

- have the required knowledge and understanding to fulfil their role effectively to support school improvement, raise standards of performance, ensure learners' wellbeing and improve the quality of education provided
- develop and enhance their understanding of the role of an effective chair in leading the governing body
- enhance their confidence and leadership skills and their ability to develop effective relationships with their headteacher, enabling them to offer both challenge and support to the school
- be aware of national and local educational issues and their impact on governing bodies
- recognise the importance of training and the need to develop their skills and those of the governing body, and take advantage of other training opportunities available to them

The training will reflect the current legislative framework for school governance in Wales and will clearly define what should be expected from the role of chair:

- providing a clear lead in organising the work of the governing body
- focusing on the strategic role
- the range of powers and duties of governing bodies
- their role in school improvement
- how the governing body supports and challenges the work of the school

- their role in monitoring and evaluating progress within the school
- acting as a critical friend to the headteacher

In addition, the training for chairs will support governors to develop a range of key skills. These will be the necessary skills and attributes required for an effective chair which add value to a governing body, such as:

- team leadership
- self-confidence
- effective team working
- problem solving
- time management
- motivation
- good delegation skills
- support for other governors

The training will provide an overview of school governance and the responsibilities of the chair of the governing body.

Key roles and responsibilities of governing bodies

Powers and duties of the governing body

- Providing a strategic view: setting the framework within which the headteacher and staff run the school, setting the aims and objectives, agreeing policies, targets and priorities for achieving these objectives, monitoring and evaluating.
- Acting as a critical friend: providing support and challenge to the headteacher and staff, seeking information and clarification.
- Ensuring accountability: explaining the decisions and actions of the

governing body to anyone who has a legitimate interest.

Core responsibilities

- Standards: ensuring the school promotes high standards of educational achievement, and attendance and behaviour, including the rigorous review of published performance data, the school development plan and robust self-evaluation.
- Targets: setting targets by which progress for learner achievement and outcomes can be measured.
- Curriculum for Wales: ensuring that all learners access a broad and balanced curriculum that meets statutory requirements, as well as supports and challenges them to progress in their learning.
- Determining the aims, policies and priorities of the school, renewal and approval of statutory policies, curriculum summaries and documents.
- Finance: determining and monitoring the effective use of the school's budget.
- Staffing: covers the difference between governing bodies' responsibilities for staff and those of local authorities as the employer (where appropriate) in deciding the number of staff, the pay policy and making decisions on staff pay, staff appointments, suspension, disciplinary issues and dismissal, grievances, performance management and matters affecting the work-life balance of the headteacher and staff, all with due regard to the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (Wales) Document (STPC(W)D).
- Support community engagement for the benefit of learners, their families and the wider community.
- Ensure that learners with additional learning needs (ALN) are benefitting from the education provision and are achieving, attaining, and showing appropriate progress.
- Ensure that learners with ALN are fully included in all aspects of school life.
- Providing parents and carers with information regarding the school, for

example via the annual report to parents, curriculum summaries and statutorily required meetings with parents and carers.

- Inspection preparation and follow up, including producing an action plan and monitoring progress following an inspection by Estyn.
- Ensuring the wellbeing of learners and staff through a whole-school approach.
- Ensuring effective policies and procedures are in place to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children in accordance with **Keeping learners safe** guidance, and for monitoring compliance with them.
- Take action to promote healthy eating and drinking, including information on action taken in the annual report.
- Ensure that every learner who is entitled to receive free school lunches and free school milk receives them, taking reasonable steps to ensure that learners who receive free school lunches cannot be identified.
- Promoting a fully inclusive school environment, with a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and discrimination in all its forms, with a particular focus on anti-racism.
- Awareness of governors' responsibilities in equality matters and where to seek advice.
- Evaluation of the performance of the governing body as and when required.

There are a number of statutory governing body committees, including:

- staff disciplinary and dismissal committee
- staff disciplinary and dismissal appeals committee
- pupil discipline and exclusions committee
- admissions committee (voluntary aided and foundation schools and any school where the local authority has delegated authority for admissions to governing bodies)

Statutory procedures must be put in place by governing bodies for the following:

- headteacher and deputy headteacher selection panel

- headteacher performance management appraisers and appeal appraisers
- pay review and pay review appeals
- grievance and grievance appeals
- capability and capability appeals
- complaints

Governing bodies should also consider putting in place policies and procedures for the following:

- whistleblowing
- school toilets
- sustainable development

Governors must have:

- training in understanding the role of school data in supporting self-evaluation and improvement in schools
- understanding of the characteristics of an effective school, through involvement in discussions on the school development plan and school self-evaluation on at least a termly basis
- visits to the school, to become familiar with and learn about the school, while respecting the protocol for visits and outlining the purpose
- continuous training and development; this training should be reviewed regularly, with skills and experience analysis undertaken by the whole governing body

The role and skills of the chair

Descriptors for the role of chair should include:

- providing a lead in organising the governing body's work. They should have

a clear view of the priorities for improvement and developing a shared sense of purpose and direction

- ensuring all governors are fully informed to make decisions and are fully involved in meetings
- ensuring that the governing body works as a team
- making good use of skills and expertise of members and encouraging members to make the most of training and development opportunities
- arranging for new governors to be mentored and inducted
- managing meetings effectively
- maintaining an effective relationship with the headteacher
- maintaining a good working relationship with the clerk and the local authority and diocesan authority, where appropriate
- acting as a spokesperson on behalf of the governing body as and when appropriate
- developing a good knowledge of the school, including school performance and learner progress data, school values and vision
- liaising with other agencies to support school improvement
- undertaking functions delegated to the chair in cases of urgency
- keeping up to date and promoting awareness (as appropriate) of initiatives such as collaborative working and federation
- knowing the parameters of the chair's and governing body's responsibilities

The vice chair supports the chair in the conduct of meetings and stands in for the chair when necessary.

Key relationships

This section focuses on the chair's relationship with the headteacher, the clerk, the local authority (and diocesan authority, where appropriate) and the governing body. Fostering an effective relationship based on trust and mutual respect for each other's roles is crucial.

Working with the headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school, and advising on and implementing the governing body's strategic framework and policies.

The chair's relationship with the headteacher is fundamental to the school's success. Regular meetings and discussion is essential, including:

- occasions and frequency when the chair should meet with the headteacher, dependent on a variety of factors such as:
 - prior to governing body full meetings
 - committee meetings
 - meetings to discuss the work of the school
 - agenda setting
 - annual report to parents
 - emergency issues
- determining types of issues for discussion, such as issues facing the school or preparing for an inspection
- planning and preparation for meetings
- providing strategic challenge and support to the headteacher
- determining confidential items, such as ideas shared at an early stage of development
- considering the work-life balance of the headteacher
- sharing information with the governing body

Working with the clerk

The clerk is responsible for:

- convening governing body meetings

- distributing papers
- taking and distributing governing body meeting minutes
- maintaining membership (including instruments of government) and attendance registers
- offering procedural advice and guidance during and between meetings
- ensuring any follow up action has been taken

Building a good working relationship with the clerk is essential to ensure that:

- the governing body is well informed
- sufficient notice is given to the governing body of forthcoming meetings
- papers are sent in advance of meetings
- a yearly cycle of governing body meetings is agreed
- the clerk is supported and encouraged to attend relevant training
- the role of the clerk is monitored and evaluated

The chair should work with the headteacher and the clerk, to ensure that:

- governing body agendas focus on school improvement
- the strategic, accountable and critical friend role of the governing body is respected by all parties
- there is sufficient discussion on school development plans, with agreed targets and the school's self-evaluation
- committee chairs follow the same procedures and uphold the same standards as the whole governing body

The chair should work with the vice chair to:

- explain the chair's relationship with the headteacher and clerk and their individual roles and responsibilities
- include the vice chair in meetings with the headteacher where appropriate to discuss general issues
- have separate meetings with the vice chair where appropriate to keep them

up to date with governing body issues

Working with the governing body

The chair should support the governing body and ensure that all governors have the opportunity to participate in discussions and contribute to decision making.

Working with the local authority (and diocesan authority, where appropriate)

The governing body is responsible for the school. The local authority maintains schools, which means that it has an interest in them being governed and managed well and that, as a whole, schools in the authority area deliver effective and efficient provision.

The chair should work with the headteacher to foster effective relationships with the local authority to ensure it supports the governing body's efforts to improve the school by providing advice, resources and challenge.

Working with stakeholders

The chair should ensure that the governing body maintains good communication with stakeholders (for example, parents, carers, learners, staff, the local authority or the community) and has regard to the role and responsibilities of the local authority (and diocesan authority, where appropriate).

How to be an effective chair of governors

An effective chair:

- uses their excellent communication skills, assertiveness, enthusiasm, listening skills and emotional intelligence to chair governing body meetings
- leads the governing body in supporting the school to achieve its agreed targets by focusing on strategies for school improvement
- ensures that the governing body and committees work together to agree the strategic direction for the school
- ensures the governing body provides high quality challenge and support as the critical friend, while ensuring accountability for the standards achieved and the quality of education provided
- works with the headteacher and clerk to ensure that governing body meetings and committees are linked to strategic planning, monitoring and evaluating school performance through use of the school development plan, self-evaluation, performance data and the headteacher's report
- involves the governing body in discussions on the school development plan and school self-evaluation on at least a termly basis
- sets agenda items (including standard agenda items) and prioritises them
- keeps up to date with school, local and national initiatives that need to be considered by the governing body
- ensures meetings are quorate for voting and voting protocols are respected
- manages discussion respectfully and fairly during meetings
- delegates roles, where appropriate
- ensures impartiality
- ensures that challenging questions are asked professionally and respectfully
- deals with conflicts of interest during meetings
- ensures corporate responsibility for decisions and actions that are taken
- ensures confidentiality, where required
- recognises the boundaries between governance and management

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- encourages all governors to share their views and to consider the views of others, by maintaining a professional and respectful atmosphere
- sums up the main points of discussion and decisions and actions
- ensures an accurate record of all discussions and decisions
- signs off approved minutes of meetings
- supports and encourages governor development and training
- ensures succession planning and mentoring for prospective chairs

Other duties of the chair

In the case of an urgent matter where to delay would be seriously detrimental to the interests of the school, any learner at the school, their parents or carers, or a person who works at the school, a chair may exercise any function that would normally be the responsibility of the governing body.

The chair also has responsibility for:

- being the first point of contact for complaints about the headteacher (in accordance with procedures)
- being the first point of contact for allegations of misconduct against the headteacher (in accordance with procedures)
- the performance of the headteacher
- the performance management of the headteacher
- preparation for, and actions subsequent to, school inspections
- other HR issues
- representing the governing body with a range of stakeholders and other local and national agencies

Background information and related links

- [The school governors' guide to the law](#)
- [Training for school governors: understanding school data](#)
- [Training for chairs of governors](#)
- [Training for school governing body clerks: guidance](#)
- [School improvement guidance: framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability](#)
- [Pupil inclusion, wellbeing, behaviour and attendance](#)
- [Parent meetings: guidance for governing bodies](#)
- [School complaints procedures: guidance](#)
- [Whistleblowing in schools: guidance](#)
- [Handling allegations of abuse against teachers and staff](#)
- [Disciplinary and dismissal procedures for school staff](#)
- [Federation process of maintained schools: guidance for governing bodies and local authorities](#)
- [School toilets: good practice guidance](#)
- [Healthy eating in maintained schools: statutory guidance](#)

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