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Training for chairs of governors in Wales

Guidance for local authorities and governing bodies of maintained schools



Guidance

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Audience	Governing bodies of all maintained schools in Wales; local authorities; diocesan authorities; Governors Wales and any other provider of governor training.
Overview	The subject matter of this guidance relates to provisions in the Government of Maintained Schools (Training Requirements for Governors) (Wales) Regulations 2013.
Action required	Local authorities and any other governor training provider must have regard to the content of this guidance document when producing their mandatory programme training for chairs of governors.
Further information	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Schools Management and Effectiveness Division Department for Education and Skills Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ Tel: 029 2082 6051 Fax: 029 2082 6109 e-mail: SMED2@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills
Related documents	The Government of Maintained Schools (Training Requirements for Governors) (Wales) Regulations 2013

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1. Overview

1.1 This document sets out the scope and content of the Chair training.

1.2 Chairs of governing bodies will be expected to undertake training as contained in this document.

1.3 The training will support Chairs to:

- i. have the required knowledge and understanding to fulfil their role effectively to support school improvement, raise standards of performance, ensure pupils' wellbeing and improve the quality of education provided;
- ii. develop and enhance their understanding of the role of an effective Chair in leading the governing body;
- iii. 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;
- iv. be aware of national and local educational issues and their impact on governing bodies; and
- v. recognise the importance of training and the need to develop their skills and those of the governor body and take advantage of other training opportunities available to them.

1.4 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; and acting as a critical friend to the headteacher.

1.5 In addition, the training for Chairs will support governors to develop a range of key skills, i.e., 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, and support for other governors.

1.6 The training will provide an overview of school governance and the responsibilities of the Chair of the governing body. The training will be set out in six inter-related areas as follow: (based on the specification)

- A. Key roles and responsibilities of governing bodies.
- B. The role and skills of the Chair.
- C. Key relationships.
- D. How to be an effective Chair.
- E. Other statutory duties of the Chair.
- F. Where to access further advice and support.

A. Key roles and responsibilities of governing bodies

This Key Area focuses on:

Powers and duties of the governing body

- i. **Providing a strategic view** – setting the framework within which the head and staff run the school; setting the aims and objectives; agreeing policies, targets and priorities for achieving these objectives; monitoring and evaluating.
- ii. **Acting as a critical friend** – providing support and challenge to the headteacher and staff, seeking information and clarification.
- iii. **Ensuring accountability** – explaining the decisions and actions of the governing body to anyone who has a legitimate interest.

Core responsibilities

- i. **Standards** – ensuring the school promotes high standards of educational achievement, attendance and behaviour, including the rigorous review of published performance data.
- ii. **Targets** – setting targets by which progress for pupil achievement and outcomes can be measured.
- iii. **Curriculum** – ensuring that all learners have access to a broad and balance curriculum and that statutory requirements are met.
- iv. **Determining the aims, policies and priorities of the school** – in discussions on the School Development/Improvement plan; School Self Evaluation; renewal and approval of statutory policies and documents.
- v. **Finance** – determining and monitoring the school's budget.
- vi. **Staffing**¹ – 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 Document (STPCD).
- vii. **Providing parents with information regarding the school** – e.g., via annual report to parents and statutorily required meetings with parents.
- viii. **Inspection preparation and follow up** – including producing an action plan and monitoring progress following an inspection by Estyn.
- ix. **The wellbeing and safeguarding of learners** – including the promotion of healthy eating.
- x. **Awareness of governor responsibilities in equality matters and where to seek further advice.**

¹ Covering the differences between governing bodies' responsibilities for staff and those of local authorities as the employer where appropriate.

xi. Evaluation of the performance of the governing body as and when required.

How the business of the governing body is conducted

Governing body, statutory and non-statutory committees.

- Role of committees (the statutory committees – and other committees (see below), membership and terms of reference of committees agreed and reviewed annually effective communication between committees and the governing body i.e. reporting back:

Statutory:

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 regarding admissions to governing bodies).

Statutory Procedures in place for the following:

Headteacher and Deputy head selection panel.

Headteacher Performance Management Appraisers and Appeal Appraiser(s).

Pay review and pay review appeals.

Grievance and Grievance appeals.

Capability and Capability appeals.

Complaints Procedures.

B. The role and skills of the Chair

This key area focuses on the following:

Descriptors for the role of Chair

- Providing a lead in organising the governing body's work –having 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.
- Acting as a spokesperson on behalf of the governing body as and when appropriate.
- Developing a good knowledge of the school - school performance data, school values and visions.
- Liaising with other agencies to support school improvement.
- Undertaking functions delegated to the Chair in cases of urgency (covered in key area E).
- Keeping up to date and promoting awareness (as appropriate) of initiatives such as collaborative working/federation; and
- Knowing the parameters of the Chair's and governing body responsibilities.

Descriptors for the role of the vice Chair

- Supporting the Chair in the conduct of meetings.
- Standing in for the Chair when necessary.

Skills of the Chair

- Recognising the boundaries between governance and management.
- The ability to involve governors effectively in the work of the governing body.
- Dealing with issues sensitively and impartially.
- The ability to prioritise and address difficult issues as and when they arise.
- Good listening, time management skills, tact, objectivity and diplomacy.

C. Key relationships

This key area focuses on the Chair's relationship with the headteacher, the clerk and the governing body. The need to foster an effective relationship based on trust and mutual respect for each other's roles is crucial:

Working with the headteacher

- i. The difference between governance and management – defining the respective roles:

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

- ii. The Chair's relationship with the headteacher is fundamental to the school's success. Regular meetings/discussion is essential as below:
- 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, consideration of other means of communication – telephone/email.
 - Determining types of issues for discussion – such as, issues facing the school, whether the school is 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, where the head is using the Chair as a sounding board.
 - Considering the work-life balance of the headteacher.
 - Sharing information with the governing body.

Working with the clerk

The role of the clerk:

- Duties and powers – convening governing body meetings; distributing papers; taking and distributing governing body meeting minutes; maintaining membership 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:

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

Working with the headteacher and the clerk, ensuring that:

- agenda items focus on school improvement – the strategic, accountable and critical friend role e.g. referenced to the school;

development/improvement plan, agreed targets and the school's self-evaluation;

- ensuring committee Chairs follow the same procedures.

Working with the vice chair:

- explain the chair's relationship with the headteacher and clerk and the matters that are dealt with;
- include vice chair in meetings with the headteacher where appropriate to discuss general issues;
- have separate meetings with the vice chair to keep them up to date with governing body issues.

Working with the governing body:

- supporting the governing body and ensuring that all governors have the opportunity to participate in discussions and contribute to decision making.

Working with stakeholders effectively:

- ensuring good communication with stakeholders (parents, LA, the community etc) and having regard to the role and responsibilities of the LA/diocesan authority.

D. How to be an effective Chair

This key area focuses on the Chair's role in:

- i. the effective organisation and management of meetings;
- ii. leading the governing body in supporting the school to achieve its agreed targets by focusing on strategies for school improvement;
- iii. ensuring that the governing body and committees work together to agree the strategic direction for the school; and
- iv. ensuring the governing body provides high quality challenge and support as the critical friend whilst ensuring accountability for the standards achieved and the quality of education provided:

This includes:

- Working with the headteacher and clerk to ensure that governing body meetings and committees are linked to strategic planning, monitoring and evaluating school performance – SDP/SIP, School Self Evaluation, performance data and governing body self-evaluation through:
 - The Headteacher's report.
 - Involvement of governing body discussions on the SDP/SIP and School Self Evaluation on at least a termly basis.

- Access to and rigorous consideration of school performance data. Awareness of how their school compares with similar schools both nationally and locally; involvement of the governing body in identifying the most important school performance measures to be monitored and reviewed.
- Setting agenda items (including standard agenda items) and prioritising them.
- Awareness of school, local and national initiatives that need to be considered by the governing body.
- Ensuring meetings are quorate for voting.
- Managing discussion effectively during meetings.
- Delegating roles.
- Ensuring impartiality.
- Ensuring that challenging questions are asked.
- Dealing with conflicts of interest during meetings.
- Ensuring corporate responsibility for decisions and actions that are taken.
- Ensuring confidentiality – e.g., regarding the proceedings of meetings, confidential items, how individual members vote; expression of conflicts of interest (register of pecuniary interests); how are decisions made in the governing body.
- Recognising the boundaries between governance and management.
- Encouraging all governors to share their views and to consider the views of others.
- Summing up main points of discussion and decisions/actions.
- Ensuring an accurate record of all discussions and decisions.
- Signing of approved minutes of meetings.
- Supporting and encouraging governor development and training.
- Ensuring succession planning and mentoring for prospective Chairs.

E. Other duties of the Chair

This key area focuses on the other statutory duties and action that the Chair has to undertake if required:

- in the case of an urgent matter where to delay would be seriously detrimental to: the interests of the school; any pupil at the school; their parents/carers or a person who works at the school;
- first point of contact for complaints about the headteacher (in accordance with procedures);

- first point of contact for allegations of misconduct against the headteacher (in accordance with procedures);
- performance of headteacher;
- performance management of headteacher;
- work regarding school inspections;
- other HR issues; and
- representing the governing body with a range of stakeholders and other local and national agencies.

F. Where to access further information, support and training

This Key Area focuses on where additional information, support and advice can be accessed from:

Local Authority Governor Support office/Diocesan Authority:

- newsletters;
- briefing documents;
- LA governor training programmes and events;

Governors Wales – Independent national organisation for school governors www.governorswales.org.uk

Helpline: 0845 6020100

Welsh Government:

- Guide to the Law for School Governors.
- Circular Guidance accessed from <http://www.governorswales.org.uk/publications/welsh-government-publications/>
- School performance data – All Wales core data sets <http://schoolportalwales.org.uk/>

Support provided by the school for Chairs from the headteacher, experienced governors and the clerk:

- information provided by the school e.g. prospectus, previous minutes, school improvement plan, newsletters;
- meetings with the head;
- information about the governing body – list of committees, calendar of governing body and committee meetings, a yearly cycle of work;
- training and development of governors – regular item on governing body agenda, audit of training undertaken by the governing body.

2. Background information and related links

- A training Programme for Chairs of governing bodies
 - A School Governor's Guide to the Law:
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/schoolfundingandplanning/schoolgov/schoolgovguide/?lang=en>
 - A Handbook for Governors of Schools in Wales:
<http://www.governorswales.org.uk/handbook/>
 - Governors' Guide on The role of the Chair:
<http://www.governorswales.org.uk/publications/2011/01/04/governor-guide-role-Chair/>
 - Fact File on The Critical Friend:
<http://www.governorswales.org.uk/publications/2009/03/16/01-09-critical-friend/>
 - Governors' Guide on the Effective Governing Body:
<http://www.governorswales.org.uk/publications/2009/04/27/governor-guide-effective-governing-bodies/>
 - Governors' Guide on Self Evaluation:
<http://www.governorswales.org.uk/publications/2011/03/31/governor-guide-self-evaluation/>
 - Governors' guide on using school performance data
 - Jargon Buster Fact File:
<http://www.governorswales.org.uk/publications/2006/10/01/jargon/>
- Cadwyn Newsletters and publications - All Wales Centre for Governor Research and training:
<http://www.governorswales.org.uk/publications/2009/04/08/all-wales-centre-newsletters/>

Further information can be obtained from the Governor Support Office within Local Authorities. Contact details can be found in part 5 of the handbook on:
<http://www.governorswales.org.uk/handbook/>

Useful web addresses:

Welsh Government: www.wales.gov.uk

Governors Wales: www.governorswales.org.uk

Estyn: www.estyn.gov.uk

School Effectiveness Framework: www.sefcymru.org/eng/sef-p2-home.htm

Local Authority sites