

PATHFINDER SCHOOLS GOVERNOR ROLE

Introduction

Pathfinder Schools (the “**Trust**”) is governed by a Board of Trustees (the “**Trustees**”). The Trustees have overall responsibility and accountability. The Board is the ultimate decision making authority for the Trust. The Board fulfils a strategic function and its main purpose is to:

- determine the vision and values of the Trust;
- support leadership in determining and fulfilling the strategic direction of the Trust;
- hold leadership to account and ensure staff well-being; and
- oversee the financial performance of the Trust ensuring there are systems in place to manage risk and ensure money is well spent.

The Trustees have established Local Governing Bodies to assist them in fulfilling these governance responsibilities and to provide additional support to leadership. The **Governors** serving on these Local Governing Bodies are answerable to the Trustees and the appropriate Diocese in relation to any Church Pathfinder School. The main functions of the **Local Governing Body** are to:

- ensure the School meets the needs of its community;
- protect the School's character and distinctiveness;
- support teaching and learning to ensure high quality provision;
- safeguard pupil and staff well-being; and
- ensure the School works within its budget.

Further detail can be found in the Pathfinder Schools Scheme of Delegation.

Duties of the Governors

Whilst Governors are not trustees or directors of the Trust and therefore are not subject to the normal legal responsibilities of charity trustees, Governors are expected to act in good faith in the best interests of the Trust and all Pathfinder Schools. This means Governors have a responsibility to do the following when dealing with matters for the School of which they are a Governor:

- To ensure compliance with any legal obligations;
- To act in a way which is compliant with the charitable object of the Trust, its Articles of Association and the Scheme of Delegation;
- To act with integrity and to avoid any personal conflicts of interest and not to misuse any Trust or School funds or assets;
- To act prudently in the financial management of the School, avoiding putting any assets, funds or reputation of the School or the Trust more widely at undue risk;
- To exercise reasonable care and skill, using personal knowledge and experience to ensure the School is well run and efficient;
- To act responsibly, getting advice from others, including professional advisors, where appropriate.

Governors are expected to undertake all the usual functions of governance, including serving on panels established to consider matters such as exclusions, disciplinary action and appeals. There is specific emphasis on the duties on Governors to avoid conflicts of interest and to act prudently in the ESFA's [Academy Trust Handbook](#) and Governors must be especially careful where they may have a personal interest in any matter involving Pathfinder Schools. Governors must comply with the Trust's Conflict of Interest policy, which is referenced in the Scheme of Delegation.

Governors must act independently and in the best interest of the Trust even if those interests conflict with those of the body or organisation that might have appointed or nominated them to serve on the Local Governing Body. All Governors are subject to the same duties, irrespective of how or why they were appointed i.e. whether elected as a Parent Governor or appointed by the Local Governing Body.

The role of a Governor is unpaid (except for the reimbursement of reasonable expenses). No specific qualifications are required and Governors must be aged 18 or over.

Governors are ordinarily appointed for a term of 4 years and can be reappointed on the expiry of such term provided that no Governor is to be appointed for more than 3 terms of office. Exceptions are with Trust Board approval or where authority is contained elsewhere in the governing instruments of the trust.

Specific Duties of the Governors

The specific tasks and responsibilities of the Governors (and the Local Governing Body) are as follows.

- decide the School's strategic vision and uphold the School's distinctiveness and unique character, in harmony with the Trust's strategic vision and ethos;
- support senior leadership team generally and with specific emphasis on pupil monitoring and analysing progress data to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils;
- support the fulfilment of any School action plan, focussing particularly on funding and resources necessary to meet the required performance targets;
- oversee expenditure ensuring the School works within its budget and implements the Trust's risk and financial management policies ensuring probity, prudence and efficiency;
- support the senior leadership team in the development and review of an appropriate staffing structure;
- where appropriate, support the headteacher in the recruitment and performance management of senior personnel;
- responsible for staff welfare and well-being, supporting the senior leadership team in monitoring absence and sickness;
- promote collaboration with other schools in the Trust;
- contribute to the development and review of school policies (e.g. admissions, pupil behaviour, safeguarding);
- provide advice and feedback to the Trustees, ensuring the School is meeting the needs of its community;
- undertake all and any appropriate community consultation;
- provide a point of contact for parents, carers and other members of the local community, maintaining an effective link to the wider community;
- evaluate its performance ensuring appropriate training and development so that knowledge, skills and behaviour are appropriate for a dynamic education environment.

Individual Governors may be given primary responsibility for particular functions such as standards/school improvement, budgets, safeguarding, community liaison and communication with the view to matching skills and experience to functions. This will not affect collective and overall individual responsibility and accountability but Governors are expected to use their skills and experience in the fulfilment of their duties.

Core Competencies and Skills

The following are the core competencies and skills expected of all Governors:

- To work as a team;
- To attend meetings and be prepared to contribute to discussions and commit to agreed actions;
- To be respectful of the views of others and to be open to new ideas and thoughts;
- To treat all confidential information confidentially;
- To act with integrity, avoiding any personal conflicts of interest and complying with the Trust's Conflict of Interest policy;
- To develop a deep understanding of the Pathfinder Schools vision and ethos and the contribution made by all in fulfilment of the Trust's objects and purpose;
- To understand the Pathfinder Schools policies and procedures and how these flow down to the Schools;
- To support Pathfinder Schools in public and act as a Pathfinder Schools ambassador;
- To commit to training and skills development;
- To be ready to ask questions;
- To be focussed on problem solving and be ready to learn from past experiences;
- To adhere to the Nolan Seven Principles of Public Life.

Personal Qualities and Values

The role of a Governor is challenging but should be rewarding. Governors are expected to be held in high regard and to provide an example to others. As such, Governors will have the following qualities and values:

- A desire to create positive change and life experiences for young people;
- A deep seated commitment to the aims of and objectives of the Trust;
- A willingness to devote time and energy;
- An ability to build productive and supportive professional relationships;
- A commitment to equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practices;
- An understanding of the importance of keeping children safe;
- An ability to think and act strategically;
- An ability to use financial and workforce data to inform decision-making;
- Appropriate levels of literacy in English;
- A person who is reliable, acts with integrity and is capable of good independent judgement;
- Is able to satisfy any requirements set by any foundation or trustee body or any specific conditions imposed by the Members of the Trust.

Specific skills may be needed if a Governor is to take responsibility for and lead on a specific area or to meet a skills shortage that has been identified. There are additional expectations of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Local Governing Body and these are appended to this Code of Conduct. A regular skills audit will be undertaken and Governors should expect to be able to articulate their contribution to the success of Pathfinder Schools.

Legal Requirements

Before appointment a DBS check will be made and enquiries made to establish that Governors satisfy on an ongoing basis the legal requirements for charity trustees. Any changes of personal circumstances which may affect suitability to serve as a governor must be reported to the Chair of Governors and the Trust Board immediately. A list of disqualifying reasons is provided by the Charity Commission, click [here](#) for details. Individuals who are disqualified from being a charity trustee are deemed to have resigned with immediate effect.

Removal of a Governor

Any concerns regarding a Governor's behaviour and actions which may impact adversely on the Trust, the School or fellow Governors will be addressed either by the Chair of the Local Governing Body or the Trust Chair (or the Diocesan Member where the Governor serves on the Local Governing Body of a Church Pathfinder School). Except where changes to the Local Governing Body are made for operational reasons, for example, to address skills shortages or to satisfy the requirements of any foundation or trustee body or the Members of the Trust, steps to remove a Governor for personal reasons are expected to be taken only in exceptional circumstances for example involving the following:

- There has been serious misconduct (which will be considered on a case by case basis but as a guide any breach of this Code of Conduct will give rise to a legitimate complaint);
- A Governor displays repeated and serious incompetence (e.g. consistently fails to attend meetings and/or engage with training or address any skills gaps such that their ability to make a meaningful contribution is compromised);
- The Governor has engaged in conduct or behaviour which is aimed at undermining fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
- The actions of the Governor are significantly detrimental to the effective operation of the Local Governing Body, the School or the Trust more widely, distracting the Local Governing Body from its core strategic functions and/or the actions of the Governor interfere with the operational efficiency of the School or the Trust thereby wasting a significant amount of executive, headteacher and/or senior leadership time;

The decision to remove a Governor will be made by the Trust Board (or relevant Diocesan Board of Education as the case may be), who will consult both the School headteacher and the Chair of the Local Governing Body. Other than in exceptional circumstances, any decision to remove a Governor for personal reasons will be communicated to the Local Governing Body and the Governor concerned will be given an opportunity to make representations (in writing or verbally) at a meeting at which his or her removal is being considered. The power to remove a Governor is vested in the Trustees and it is not expected (or required by law) that the written details of the case against the Governor will be provided.