

Governor roles and duties sheet

England: check your governing documents and scheme of delegation.

Understand the governing board's collective role

The DfE's maintained schools governance guide describes core functions covering strategic direction, the headteacher's responsibility for educational performance, and sound use of financial resources. It also identifies strategic oversight of safeguarding. These are collective governing-board responsibilities; they do not give each governor a separate mandate to manage the school.

Prepare and contribute as an individual governor

The maintained-school guide requires governors to act with integrity, objectivity and honesty in the school's best interests, and to be open about decisions and actions. Translate those expectations into your preparation: read the papers, ask for missing context and approach a proposal with an independent mind. Follow the applicable interests and confidentiality arrangements.

Chair: lead effective discussion and follow-through

The chair helps the governing board use its time and expertise well. A practical approach is to work with the headteacher and governance professional on an agenda that distinguishes decisions, scrutiny and information. Identify significant questions in advance and allow enough time for governors to consider them, including those joining their first meetings.

Clerk or governance professional: support sound decisions

The governance professional can help the governing board understand procedure, organise its business and maintain usable records. Agree who prepares and circulates the agenda, checks papers and maintains the action record. Distinguish this governance support from the school's general administrative work so important tasks do not fall between roles.

Committees and link roles: define the remit

A governing board may organise work through committees covering areas such as finance and resources or curriculum and standards. These are examples, not a universal required structure. For maintained schools, the DfE guide explains delegation and its limits: some functions cannot be delegated, and the governing board remains responsible for delegated work. Check the applicable rules before allocating a decision.

Financial oversight: make the figures understandable

You do not need to prepare the accounts to contribute to financial oversight. Ask for reports that explain the reporting period, comparison with budget, significant changes and decisions needed. If a variance is unclear, request an explanation of its cause and the proposed response. Connect financial choices to the school's priorities and longer-term position.

Academy local governors and MAT trustees are different roles

The DfE's academy trust governance guide identifies a MAT as one legal entity with a trust board accountable for its academies. Local committees work within the trust's delegated arrangements. A local governor should therefore check the scheme of delegation rather than assume the powers of a maintained-school governing board.

Review your role and development needs

At an agreed review point, consider which responsibilities now feel clear and which need more support. Use governor training requirements to identify relevant learning, then add specific actions to the governor development plan. Include an owner, date and evidence of follow-through.

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