

‘EVERY SCHOOL A GOOD SCHOOL THE GOVERNORS’ ROLE’

A GUIDE FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chapter 1: Introduction about the Guide

‘Every School A Good School – The Governors’ Role’ is an on line reference guide for governors on the DE website. It provides easy access to information about the roles and responsibilities of school Boards of Governors.

Chapter 2: Membership

This chapter contains information on the membership of the Boards of Governors of grant-aided schools.

The role of the Board of Governors is to help ensure that its members are equipped to fulfil its statutory functions in relation to the school.

Chapter 3: Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the strategic and corporate roles and responsibilities of the Board of Governors.

The role of the Board of Governors is to manage the school with a view to providing the best possible education and educational opportunities for all the pupils. This involves:

- setting the strategic direction for the school; and
- taking corporate decisions in relation to the statutory functions of the Board of Governors.

Chapter 4: The Board of Governors in Operation

This chapter explains how the Board of Governors should conduct its business.

The role of the Board of Governors is to fulfil its statutory functions in relation to the school and to be accountable for ensuring that its decisions support the best interests of the school and its pupils. To do this, it has to:

- set the structures for the delegation of management functions;
- set the limits for delegation at each level ie committee, Principal;

- ensure that there are formal written procedures for handling complaints in relation to the school;
- respect the role of the Principal and work with the Principal on all matters affecting the school;
- ensure that it has all of the information necessary to make sound management decisions and that it seeks additional advice from the ELB School Support Services as necessary;
- share responsibility for setting the agenda for its meetings;
- adhere to the procedures for the conduct of business as set out in the scheme of management (and the procedures agreed for dealing with employment matters – chapter 9 refers);
- encourage the involvement of pupils in the development of school councils.

Chapter 5: Promoting Equality, Good Relations and Diversity

This chapter outlines the role of the Board of Governors in relation to the promotion of equality, good relations and diversity. It highlights the need to address current inequalities in pupils' educational attainment and the relevance of the Department's Transfer policy to raising standards for all children.

The role of the Board of Governors is to promote equality, good relations and diversity and to comply with education and employment legislation and anti discrimination, human rights and equality legislation that affect its statutory duties in relation to the school.

Chapter 6: Education Standards

This chapter describes the role and the responsibilities of the Board of Governors in relation to education standards including school development planning. It also explains the role of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the Department (DE) in relation to raising standards across all schools.

The strategic role of the Board of Governors is to fulfil its functions in relation to the school with a view to promoting the achievement of high standards of educational attainment. The vision and aims set for the school, the school ethos, and the plans and policies agreed for the school all have the potential to contribute to the raising of education standards. In addition, the Board of Governors should work with the school Principal in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and to promote self evaluation as a means to achieve school improvement.

Chapter 7: The Revised Curriculum

This chapter describes the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Governors and the Principal in relation to the curriculum, assessment and reporting.

The role of the Board of Governors and the Principal is to exercise their respective functions in relation to the school so as to ensure that the revised curriculum:

- is effectively delivered as required by law;
- is balanced and broadly based;
- includes religious education and the minimum content for the areas of learning required by law;
- provides access from 2013 to the Entitlement Framework;
- provides for pupils to be assessed as required by law; and
- that arrangements are in place for handling complaints that a school is failing to meet its statutory duties in relation to the revised curriculum.

The Board of Governors has to determine and keep under review its policy in relation to the curriculum; that policy must be compatible with the law and the school Board must have regard to it when carrying out its management functions in relation to the school.

Chapter 8: Financial Management

This chapter applies to all schools other than special schools. It explains how schools are funded and sets out the main responsibilities of the Board of Governors and the Principal in relation to the management of the school's finances. It also offers guidance on the components to maintaining a high standard of financial management.

The role of the Board of Governors is to manage the school funds economically, efficiently and effectively for the purposes of the school in accordance with a Financial Memorandum published by DE or by the education and library board (ELB).

The Board of Governors must:

- have a 3 year financial plan approved by DE or the ELB for the school;
- contain expenditure within the annual budget approved for the school;
- ensure that expenditure is monitored and controlled during the financial year.

Chapter 9: School Staff

This chapter explains the employment functions of a Board of Governors that also has responsibility for the school's finances. Decisions about staffing are

important as they can affect the quality of the school's education provision. Staffing issues can be complex and Boards of Governors should make use of the training and support services available.

The role of the Board of Governors is to exercise its functions in relation to employment matters with a view to maintaining and raising standards of education performance in the classroom.

The Board of Governors is required to:

- recruit and select staff for appointment to the school;
- determine the school's staffing complement;
- regulate staff conduct and discipline as required by law;
- take decisions on payments relating to staff dismissals or resignations;
- exercise other employment functions, such as the management of the performance of the Principal, staff attendance, staff training and development.

Chapter 10: Pupil Admissions

This chapter explains open enrolment policy and legislation including the duties and responsibilities of the Board of Governors in relation to the admission of pupils to mainstream schools. It also explains the Department's policy on transfer from primary to secondary education.

The role of the Board of Governors is to make arrangements for the admission of pupils to the school and to approve the criteria to be applied when the school is oversubscribed. The Board of Governors must ensure that these arrangements comply with the timetables issued by DE and all appropriate legal requirements.

Chapter 11: Religious Education

This chapter explains the duties of the Board of Governors in relation to the provision of religious education and collective worship in a grant-aided school.

The role of the Board of Governors is to ensure that there is provision for:

- religious education in the curriculum;
- collective worship through school assemblies;
- pupils and teachers to be exempted from such provision;

in accordance with legal requirements.

Chapter 12: Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

This chapter explains DE policy and legislation and the role and responsibilities of the education and library boards and the Boards of

Governors of mainstream schools in relation to pupils with special educational needs.

The role of the Board of Governors of a mainstream school is to exercise its functions in relation to the school with a view to ensuring that provision is made for registered pupils with special educational needs.

The Board of Governors has a statutory duty to:

- take account of the provisions in the DE Code of Practice on identifying and assessing special educational needs;
- ensure that the necessary special educational provision is made for pupils identified with SEN and that parents are notified of their child's special needs;
- maintain and operate a policy on SEN;
- ensure that where a registered pupil has special educational needs, those needs are made known to all who are likely to teach them;
- ensure that the teachers in the school know the importance of identifying those registered pupils with SEN and of providing appropriate teaching;
- allocate funding for special educational needs and disability;
- prepare and take forward a written accessibility Plan.

Chapter 13: Pupil Pastoral Care and Child Protection

This chapter explains the role and responsibilities of the Board of Governors in relation to the pastoral care and protection of registered pupils at a grant-aided school.

The role of the Board of Governors is to ensure that the school's pastoral care arrangements protect the pupils from harm, safeguard their health and welfare and support their learning and development.

The Board of Governors has a statutory duty to:

- decide on the measures to be taken by all persons associated with the school to protect pupils from abuse, whether at school or elsewhere, and review them from time-to time;
- safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils at the school at all times when the pupils are on the school premises or in the lawful control or charge of a member of school staff.

Chapter 14: Educational Visits

This chapter provides advice to the Board of Governors in relation to the arrangements for educational visits involving registered pupils at a grant-aided school.

The role of the Board of Governors is to ensure that best practice procedures operate with regard to safeguarding the welfare of the school's registered pupils during educational visits.

The Board of Governors has a statutory duty under Article 17 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 to safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils at the school at all times when the pupils are in the lawful control or charge of a member of the staff of the school.

Chapter 15: Pupil Behaviour and Discipline

This chapter explains the responsibilities of the Board of Governors and the Principal in relation to pupil behaviour and discipline and the procedures for pupil suspensions and expulsions.

The role of the Board of Governors is to promote good behaviour and discipline among pupils attending the school in order to safeguard their welfare and facilitate their educational progress at school.

The Board of Governors should:

- ensure that the school has policies about the promotion of good behaviour and discipline and the use of reasonable force;
- have a written statement of 'general principles' about pupil behaviour and discipline;
- ensure that the school has appropriate procedures for dealing with the issue of bullying and about complaints about bullying;
- ensure that the school has a scheme for the suspension and expulsion of pupils in accordance with legal requirements; and
- ensure that scheme operates in the school.

Chapter 16: Pupil Registration and Attendance

This chapter provides the Board of Governors with information about the legal requirements with regard to the registration and attendance of school pupils.

The role of the Board of Governors is to ensure that the Principal keeps a General Register of the pupils at the school and a Pupil Attendance Register and that appropriate action is taken to encourage good attendance at school.

Chapter 17: Schemes to Assist Low Income Families

This chapter informs the Board of Governors of the assistance available for low income families in the form of free school meals and school uniform grants and the Education Maintenance Allowance Scheme which applies to pupils aged 16+ at a grant-aided school.

The role of the Board of Governors is to ensure that appropriate arrangements operate within the school with regard to these assistance schemes.

Chapter 18: School Days of Operation and Closure

This chapter explains the statutory requirements relating to school days of operation and closure.

The role of the Board of Governors is to ensure that the school complies with these statutory requirements.

Chapter 19: School Fees, Charges and Remissions

This chapter provides information about the law governing the fees and charges that can and cannot be levied by the Board of Governors in respect of registered pupils at a grant-aided school and about requests for voluntary contributions to support the school and school activities.

The role of the Board of Governors is to ensure compliance with the statutory requirements relating to school fees, charges and remissions and requests for voluntary contributions.

Chapter 20: School Milk, Meals and Related Facilities

This chapter explains the responsibilities of the Board of Governors in relation to the arrangements for the provision of meals in a grant-aided school.

The role of the Board of Governors is to ensure that appropriate arrangements operate for the provision of school meals and to promote and encourage healthy eating by pupils in schools.

Chapter 21: School Premises/Wider Use of the School in the Community

This chapter describes the responsibilities of the Board of Governors regarding the school premises including maintenance and health and safety and insurance issues. It also encourages the Board of Governors to promote the use of the school in the community.

The role of the Board of Governors is to:

- ensure that the school premises and grounds are maintained;
- maintain an inventory of equipment, furniture, plant and vehicles;
- ensure health and safety on the premises;
- prepare, maintain and implement an Accessibility Plan for disabled pupils;
- promote and determine the arrangements including charges and insurance cover for the wider use of the school in the community.

Chapter 22: School Publications

This chapter identifies the information that the Board of Governors is required to publish in respect of a grant-aided school.

The role of the Board of Governors is to ensure that the school meets the statutory requirements in relation to the publication of information.

Chapter 23: School Records and Handling of Information

This chapter describes the role and responsibilities of the Board of Governors in terms of the keeping, maintaining and transfer of pupil records. It also includes the requirements of the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act relating to the handling of requests from members of staff, pupils, parents and the general public for information held by a grant-aided school.

The role of the Board of Governors is to ensure that the arrangements operated by the school for the retention, management and release of public records comply with statutory requirements.

Appendix 1

Glossary of the abbreviations used in the guide.

Appendix 2

The Nolan Principles of Conduct Underpinning Public Life. The same principles apply to service as a school governor.

Appendix 3

A list of the policies, schemes and procedures (and their legal status) required by schools.

Appendix 4

Guidance for governors (and schools) on parental rights and responsibilities.