



Inspire
Education Group

GOVERNORS' HANDBOOK

A guide for members of the Corporation

*Be Bold, Be Brave,
Be Exceptional*

o April 2025

INTRODUCTION

We are delighted to welcome you to **Inspire Education Group (IEG)**, a leading Further Education college with over 10,000 students. We are passionate about transforming lives through inspirational and innovative learning. This mission underpins everything we do, empowering not just our students, but the employers, communities and region we serve.

Building on our recent **Ofsted inspection result of 'good' overall, with a 'strong' judgement for meeting skills needs**, we are now ready to take the next exciting step on our journey towards achieving excellence - a journey which you are invited to join us on as part of the IEG Corporation Board.

Inspire Education Group is an innovative, proactive, resilient forward-thinking College Group which delivers further education to young people and adults, Apprenticeships, and Higher Education through its University Centre Peterborough. The Group has campuses at Stamford and Peterborough serving local communities across Lincolnshire, Rutland, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.



R. Nicholls

Rachel Nicholls
CEO of Inspire
Education Group



D. Pennell

David Pennell
Chair of Corporation

We are passionate and ambitious for our students and strive to give them all the tools they need to achieve their full potential. A key part of that ambition is to ensure that the Group is clear and focussed in its strategies, resilient in navigating the ever changing financial challenges and opportunities posed by government funding and that it is led and governed by a strong and effective Corporation Board, working closely with the Executive Management team. The unwavering commitment of our Executive Team, Governors and all IEG staff fuels this collaborative spirit and absolute focus on excellence.

Our governors are key to our success and we invite you to join us on this exciting journey. **Welcome to Inspire Education Group, where together, we will empower futures.**

ROLE OF GOVERNORS

The key attributes sought in an Inspire Education Group (IEG) governor encompass a blend of personal qualities, professional skills, and a commitment to the Group's vision, mission, values, strategic priorities and the wider community.

Our governors:

- Have a **genuine interest** and **belief** in the value of further education and training for individuals and the community.
- Understand and **support** the Group's vision, mission, and strategic priorities.
- Act with honesty, impartiality, and maintain confidentiality, adhering to the **standards of behaviour** in public life.
- Display a **commitment** to ongoing learning about the Further and Higher Education sector, governance practices, and the Group's specific context, including attending induction, training, and development events.
- Demonstrate the ability to **work effectively** with other governors, the Chief Executive Officer and senior staff in a spirit of openness, accountability, and mutual respect, contributing positively to discussions and decision-making processes.
- Have the capacity to **think independently**, analyse information critically, and provide constructive challenge to the Executive team in the best interests of the Group.
- Display a **genuine passion** for the role and a proactive approach to contributing to the Group's success.
- Understand the needs of the local community that IEG serves and are willing to act as an **advocate** for the Group within that community.

Governors are required to:

- Complete and maintain a current entry on a Register of Interests.
- Accept and keep the requirements of the Governor's Code of Conduct.
- Declare they are eligible to be a governor.
- Complete a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check.
- Complete an annual skills audit questionnaire.
- Understand the **different roles** of the governing body (strategic oversight and accountability) and the Chief Executive Officer and senior management team (day-to-day operational management).
- Recognise that decisions are made collectively by the governing body, and all governors **share responsibility** for those decisions, even if they personally held a different view during the discussion.
- Are willing to **represent IEG** and act as an advocate for its interests with external stakeholders.
- Are able to **dedicate sufficient time** to prepare for and attend Board and Committee meetings, group events, and undertake other governor duties.

The term of office for a governor is usually four years and, normally, a governor is eligible for re-appointment for a second term. The Corporation Board is the appointing authority for new governors, other than staff and student governors.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

GOVERNORS HAVE FOUR KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:



Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.



Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the group and its students.



The effective and efficient performance management of staff.



Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and securing its solvency.

Under the further education insolvency regime, governors, like company directors, have a personal liability for the solvency of the group and for wrongful or fraudulent trading. Insolvency arrangements are invoked very rarely and only when colleges are in severe financial difficulties. IEG maintains its excellent financial standing through best practice in financial management and detailed, transparent reporting. A Governors' Dashboard and regular RAG-rated performance reports support the Corporation Board and Finance and Resources Committee's oversight of group finances. Governors have additional protection under s.145 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 provided the individual has acted honestly and reasonably. The Group also has a directors' and officers' insurance policy.

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

There is collective responsibility amongst governors for decisions taken by the Corporation and Committees. Most decisions are made by reaching general consensus without the need for a formal vote. Even where a decision is not unanimous, each governor has a duty to stand by the decisions made by the Corporation or the Committee.

POWER AND DUTIES OF THE CORPORATION

The Corporation acts within a legal framework set out within the **Instrument and Articles of Government and the Standing Orders**. Certain Corporation responsibilities cannot be delegated:

- The determination and periodic review of the educational character and mission of the institution and the oversight of its activities.
- Publishing arrangements for obtaining the views of staff and students on the determination and periodic review of the educational character and mission of the institution and the oversight of its activities.
- Approving the quality strategy of the institution.
- The effective and efficient use of resources, the solvency of the institution and the Corporation, and safeguarding assets.
- Approving annual estimates of income and expenditure (the Group Financial Plan).
- The appointment, grading, suspension, dismissal and determination of the pay and conditions of service of the senior postholders and the Governance Director.
- Setting a framework for the pay and conditions of service of all other staff.

Governors must abide by the **Code of Conduct for Members of the Corporation** which sets out the requirements for the standard of conduct expected of them and promotes effective and well-informed group governance. The Code of Conduct enshrines the seven principles of public life.



THE NOLAN PRINCIPLES

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

As a governor, you are expected to operate within the Nolan Principles. These are the ethical standards which apply to everyone working in the public sector and those, like governors, who are appointed to public office:

1 Selflessness - Taking decisions solely in terms of the public interest.

2 Integrity - Acting without obligation to or influence from outside organisations/individuals (the group holds a Register of Interests which all Governors are required to complete annually by registering business interests, financial or otherwise, of themselves or a member of their close family).

3 Objectivity - Taking decisions on merit, without discrimination or bias.

4 Accountability - Being accountable for decisions and their subsequent scrutiny.

5 Openness - Being as transparent as possible and giving reasons.

6 Honesty - Being truthful, declaring private interests and avoiding conflicts of interests.

7 Leadership - Promoting and supporting the principles by leadership and example, and being willing to challenge poor behaviour when it occurs.

CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR ENGLISH COLLEGES

The Code of Good Governance for English Colleges was developed by the Association of Colleges to help Boards of Governors to meet and exceed basic governance requirements. As autonomous bodies, individual colleges are free to adopt the Code as they see fit - the IEG Board of Governors has adopted the Code in full.

The Code contains:

- Provides six fundamental principles which form the core of this code, presented in the context of Further Education using sector-specific language.
- Emphasises sources of assurance, both internal and external, without being an audit tool or checklist.
- Avoids unnecessary complexity, promoting autonomy, and flexibility.
- Encompasses the entire organisation.
- Brings together structures, policies, processes, behaviours, and relationships.
- Is designed not to duplicate or repeat other documents but to serve as a signpost to relevant sources.



The Code of Good Governance for English Colleges sets out six guiding principles for Corporations:

- 1** Determination of organisational aims and strategic oversight
- 2** Responsibility and accountability
- 3** Leadership and integrity
- 4** Collaboration and stakeholder engagement
- 5** Regulatory compliance
- 6** Board and organisational effectiveness

Governance Self-Assessment

The Corporation self-assesses against the above six fundamental principles annually. In addition, it undertakes an annual Corporation Board and committee self-assessment to ensure that each delivers under its terms of reference and also individual governor self-assessment to review contribution and engagement, and to identify future training needs.

Analysis of the above informs the IEG Governance Improvement Plan which is updated annually to support the delivery of first class exemplary governance.

GOVERNING BODY ARRANGEMENTS

CORPORATION MEMBERSHIP

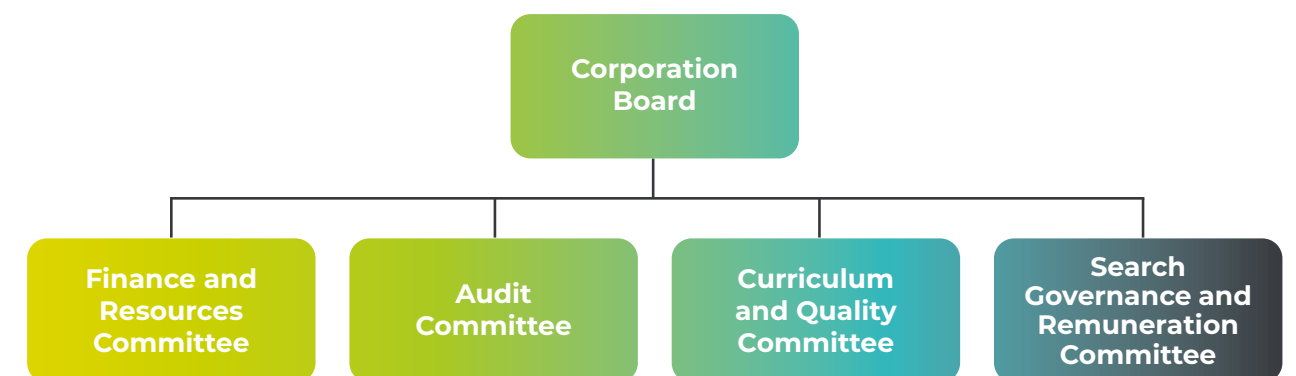
IEG's governors are volunteers from a range of occupations and mostly from the local area. They make up the Corporation Board, the College's governing body, and represent the interests of the local community in particular and the public interest in general. Strong, effective and independent governance is critical to Inspire Education Group's (IEG) operation and success. The IEG Board of Governors (the **College Corporation**) comprises:

- 16 core members (externally recruited governors, all of whom act in a voluntary capacity)
- Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of IEG
- 2 staff Governors (one per campus)
- 2 student Governors (elected by the Student Union at each campus).

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

All governors (with the exception of individuals who are co-opted for a specialist role with one Committee only) sit on the Corporation Board.

The Corporation is supported by four Committees with oversight of key aspects of governance, and each governor will usually sit on one Committee as well:



There are also two separate Boards of Directors which oversee IEG's subsidiary companies and report regularly to the Corporation:

- University Centre Peterborough
- Quality Resourcing Solutions

There is information about the current governors on the Group website: www.ieg.ac.uk/governance-leadership

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

An annual schedule of meetings is agreed with the Corporation Board well in advance of the academic year. This supports governors to manage the dates and times of group meetings alongside their other commitments and to meet/exceed the expected threshold of 80% attendance.

The schedule of meetings includes two or three Governor Development events per year to explore questions, issues or government policy in greater detail and to review the Group's vision, mission and strategic objectives. These Development Events allow governors to focus on key aspects of group strategy and decision-making.

CORPORATION AND COMMITTEE PAPERS

IEG uses a software package called Team Engine to circulate Corporation and Committee papers a week in advance of each meeting. This allows governors to read through their papers in advance via their laptop or tablet (the group can provide a device if needed) and also to view the papers electronically during the meeting. Team Engine also acts as a repository of previous Board papers and reference documents. The Group's IT Services team can support governors to set up Team Engine on their own, or a College, device.

GOVERNOR COMMITMENTS

- Governors are expected to:
- Keep the student experience to the fore when considering decisions.
 - Read all papers before Corporation and Committee meetings and attend meetings ready to question and challenge the authors.
 - Commit to their own training and development, including completing mandatory online training modules.
 - Use their knowledge, experience and expertise to ensure the success of Inspire Education Group.

Chairs of Committees are expected to:

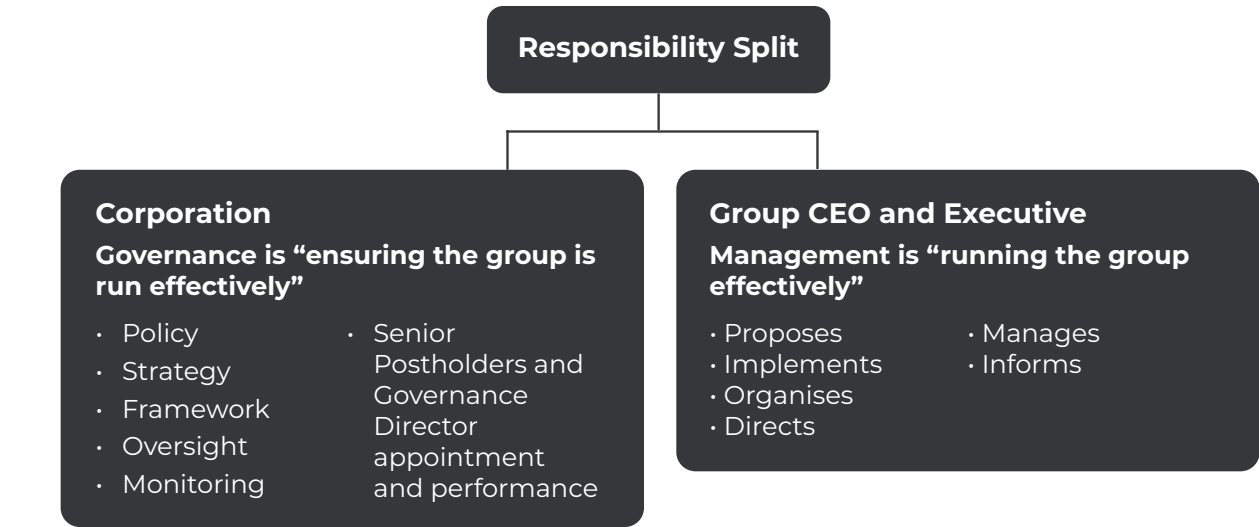
- Manage the agenda with a sense of purpose, enabling all members to contribute, and ensuring that decisions are made where required.
- Agree the draft minutes of meetings.
- Present key points from Committee meetings to the Corporation Board and be prepared to answer any questions.



GOVERNORS AND LEADERS WORKING TOGETHER

Governors and leaders work together to ensure the group runs effectively and students are provided with an excellent education. Governors bring a wide range of skills and expertise from their professional lives which help them to provide both challenge and support to leaders, and enable them to act as critical friends in decision-making.

In effective governance there is a balance between governance and the responsibilities of the Group CEO and the Group Executive team:



GOVERNOR LINK SCHEME

The Group operates a Governor Link Scheme whereby each governor is paired with a department or area of group activity and makes between one and three visits a year. Through the Link Scheme, governors gain an insight into the day-to-day life of the Group and an understanding of the ways in which the Corporation's strategic decisions feed through to the student experience.

The visits also help to raise the profile of governors with staff and students and support governors in holding the Group Executive to account.

A short feedback form is completed after each visit, highlighting particular points of interest or actions to be taken. A summary of key themes, concerns and areas of excellent practice is considered annually by the Search and Governance Committee.

For further information, support or guidance, or to apply to become a governor please contact the Governance Director: jane.spurgin@ieg.ac.uk



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