



Role of the Staff Governor

A Guide

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Governor Roles and Responsibilities

Staff Governor

Being a staff governor can be a very rewarding role.

The role of the staff governor is not – and should not – be any different to that of any other governors and staff governors can play a key part in helping the governing board fulfil its responsibilities. Staff governors are not elected to lobby the governing board or to argue the case for staff but to bring a staff perspective to the discussions and activities undertaken by the governing board. This is sometimes not easy which is why staff governors need to be fully cognisant of both the staff and governance Code of Conduct; of the boundaries around confidentiality; have undertaken governance and other training and commit to attending meetings (which are mostly after school hours). The role is unpaid. The role can be very rewarding in terms of increasing and widening your knowledge of the school and the role the governors play in school improvement. Effective governance relies on active participation and curiosity and the role of the staff governor brings an important dynamic.

All governors must uphold the values of the school and/or academy trust.

Advantages of having a staff member on a governing board include;

- Staff members bring education knowledge to the governing board
- They have knowledge of the school, for example, on behaviour and attendance.
- They can advise on how policies are being applied in the school.
- Remember not all academy trusts have staff governors or staff academy councillors.

What is a Staff Governor?

A staff governor can be someone who is either teaching staff or support staff and, is someone **elected, by an open and transparent process**, to the governing board by those paid to work at the school. The election must be open to all eligible members of staff and should be held by secret ballot. Staff are encouraged to complete the required nomination forms and provide a short personal description as why they wish to be elected and what they can bring to the board.

The staff governor also brings specialist knowledge and skills to board meetings which can help in several ways; including for example contributing to discussions by explaining the likely effect of any proposal on pupils' learning or wellbeing and helping staff governors understand the data presented by giving 'live' examples.

The Do's and Don'ts

Staff governors should not be seen or act as a 'go-between' or act as a staff delegate and should not either put themselves in, or find themselves put in by others, this

position. If they find themselves for any reason in such a position then they should seek the advice, and support of, the Headteacher, Chair, or the Trust Central Team e.g. HR or governance professional. Staff governors may be members of a Trade Union but are not representatives of that union when they are fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of the staff governor.

All governors must act according to their own conscience and this is the same for the staff governor.

You will be expected to sign a Code of Conduct (based on the Seven Principles of Public Life¹) and should follow the appropriate rules of protocol and confidentiality as set out by the governing board, the school and/or the Trust.

It is acknowledged that it is sometimes difficult to achieve a balance between being an impartial representative member of staff and your regular involvement in day to day issues.

Some practical ways to achieve this balance include:

- Never promise to 'solve a problem' on your own including staffing and employment issues
- Never press your own personal agenda at the expense of others and be very clear if you are expressing a personal opinion – this applies to all governors,
- Always be clear about what information can be reported back to colleagues –
- You should not participate in discussions where you have a personal interest in the outcome; when in doubt take guidance from the chair, headteacher or trust central team.
- You cannot hold the office of chair or vice-chair of the governing board but may chair committees if this is explicitly allowed in the terms of reference. This can be useful experience if you wish to be a governor in a school outside of the trust. However you must be aware of the workload required to chair a committee effectively and of the strategic/operational/confidentiality boundary.
- You should not be asked to take minutes unless it is an emergency – if you are taking minutes you cannot fully participate in discussions. The same applies to all governors/.
- You must withdraw and not take part in discussions relating to the appraisal or pay of any school employee. This doesn't apply to the headteacher, who should be involved in discussions about staff pay but not about his or her own pay
- You cannot take part in the headteacher's appraisal.

All staff governors:

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2>

- Have equal rights with all other governors – your vote has equal weight and value
- Should follow the agreed procedure for putting items on the agenda
- Should feel free to express their own personal views, it being recognised that this is not necessarily the view of the majority of staff.
- Do not have a mandate to express any views other than their own. However, they should report in good faith any widely held staff views, even if in a vote they decide to vote differently – it is acknowledged that this is not always easy and the governing board must respect this,
- Try to attend governance and governance training sessions both in school and outside.
- Should be aware of the sensitivity of meeting discussions and clarify before leaving any meeting which items can be reported to staff and which items the governors wish to remain unreported until the minutes of the meeting have been confirmed.
- Should play an active part in the board meetings.
- Can take on roles on the board which do not involve making comment about other members of staff e.g. it is not appropriate for the staff governor to take on the role of the Link governor for standards or statutory grants but your support in helping governors shape their questions is appreciated.
- If you are the office manager or School Business Manager and are elected to the role of staff governor you need to give very careful consideration as to how financial matters are reported and recorded. You need to think about how the third core function of governance, management of potential conflicts and inherent bias come into play.

Managing Conflict

- All staff governors are required to declare any business and pecuniary interests as well as interests in items on the agenda at every meeting and this applies to staff governors as well. If for example you have a child in school it is appropriate to bring this to the attention of the board. This is to ensure transparency.
- The chair of the board should create a climate where staff governors can speak freely even on those occasions when they may disagree with the headteacher or senior leaders. However, internal disputes that ought and should be settled by the senior management of the school or involve the Trade Union should not be brought to the governing board until internal procedures have been exhausted and due process is underway. You may wish to seek advice from HR.
- Where an issue arises which may be an area of conflict with the headteacher, you are advised to discuss this with chair before the meeting so that s/he knows that you may be putting an alternative view at the meeting. This should not prevent you from bringing such matters to the board but will help ensure that there is a balanced conversation.

Staff as Parent Governors

- In the maintained school sector you cannot be a parent governor if you work at the school for more than 500 hours in a school year. If you work in a trust seek advice from your clerk or trust governance lead. –The reason being that the governing board needs to demonstrate it has a broad and balanced skill set.

Other opportunities

- As a member of staff you may be eligible to become a Co-opted governor.
- The National Governance Association and the Chartered College of Teaching supported by others have recently launched a campaign to encourage teachers to be governors in schools other than their own.

Key Reading

If you are thinking of becoming a staff governor some key reading includes...

1. [Governance Handbook 2019](#)
2. <https://www.eteach.com/blog/being-a-staff-governor>
3. Educators on Board - <https://www.inspiringgovernance.org/educators-on-board/> -

Thank you for reading

The Author

SBW Governance is a small governance consultancy offering a range of governance services and is based in the North Midlands. SBW is run by Fee Stagg who is a National Leader of Governance, a Trustee, a local academy governor and a governor in the maintained sector at primary level. She is also a clerk and Governance Professional in a variety of schools and multi academy trusts. She writes blogs about governance and clerking, usually in the third person under the pseudonym of The Clerk's Elbow (colloquially known as The Elbow).

Please remember that the contents of this free guide are a personal opinion.

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