

Governor Induction Handbook

Information for New Governors
of Liverpool Schools





The Liverpool Governance Forum ('LGF') was formed in 1996 to represent the views of all governing boards of Liverpool schools and academies.

It is the voice of governance on various strategic education committees within Liverpool. LGF seeks to:

- Liaise with all boards connected with education, both locally and nationally
- Provide a forum for discussion and mutual support
- Promote best practice in fulfilling statutory and other responsibilities with sensitivity
- Raise awareness of educational issues
- Provide a basis for pursuing common ideals and objectives.

All Liverpool schools are members of LGF, and all governors/trustees are welcome to attend LGF meetings and engage with keynote speakers.

Meetings are held in local schools roughly every month during term time – dates, venues, agendas and minutes for the current academic year are published on this website.

In addition, twice-yearly informative conferences offer the opportunity to network, share best practice, and learn from high profile speakers from the world of education.

LGF committee members offer on-going support to all involved in school governance.

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We aim to support our educational settings to enable every child and young person to develop, learn and achieve.

We will support this through our knowledge, responsive services, training and products.

Collaborative

We champion and broker collaborative working. Learning with our settings, for our settings. Securing and enabling high-quality educational improvement capacity, utilising school, sector and other capacity, and effectively marshalling limited resources.

With

Purpose

We advocate and deliver against needs, championing children and young people, supporting our schools and settings to enable every child and young person to be safe, develop, learn, achieve.

Knowledge

Our staff stay abreast of national developments and emerging research, continuously improving knowledge, experience and skills, helping our customers navigate the complexities of the system. The application of our knowledge is always tailored to the needs of the setting.

Integrity

We are trusted and trust each other. Honest and transparent in the delivery of our services.

We demonstrate ethical behaviours, holding the needs and outcomes of those we serve central in all that we do.

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**COLLABORATIVE
WITH PURPOSE
KNOWLEDGE
INTEGRITY**

Foreword

We are delighted to welcome you to the important role of school governance here in Liverpool. As a newly appointed school governor, you are joining a dedicated community of individuals committed to ensuring that every child in our schools receives the highest quality education and care. This induction pack, produced collaboratively by the Liverpool Governance Forum and SIL, is designed to support you in your journey and provide a comprehensive introduction to your role.

The role of a school governor is one of great responsibility, but also of tremendous reward. Governors are a vital part of the leadership team in our schools, bringing diverse perspectives, experiences, and skills that help shape the direction and success of the school. You will work closely with the senior leadership team, supporting them in their efforts while holding them to account for the performance and well-being of the pupils. Your contribution will directly influence the strategic development of your school and its capacity to meet the needs of all children, including the most vulnerable.

Liverpool is proud of its strong tradition of collaborative governance, and we believe that the success of our schools is rooted in the effectiveness of their governing boards. This induction pack will equip you with the foundational knowledge you need to carry out your role confidently and effectively. It provides guidance on the key responsibilities of governors, insights into best practices, and practical advice on navigating the challenges you may face.

Both Liverpool Governance Forum and SIL are committed to supporting you throughout your time as a governor. We encourage you to make use of the resources and networks available to you, including ongoing training and development opportunities. By working together, we can ensure that every governor is well-prepared and empowered to contribute to the success of their school.

Thank you for stepping into this vital role. We look forward to seeing the positive impact you will have on the lives of the children and young people in our schools.



The Role of the Governing Board

Governing boards are the strategic leaders of schools and have a vital role to play in making sure every child gets the best possible education.

The core functions of the governing board of a maintained school include, but are not limited to, ensuring:

- That the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined
- That the headteacher performs their responsibilities for the educational performance of the school
- The sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources

In academy trusts, the purpose of governance is to provide:

- Strategic leadership
- Accountability and assurance
- Strategic engagement

The trust board has collective accountability and strategic responsibility for the trust. It has a focus on ensuring the trust delivers an excellent education to pupils while maintaining effective financial management and must ensure compliance with:

- The trust's charitable objects
- Regulatory, contractual and statutory requirements
- Their funding agreement

Top tip: the Department for Education provides guidance on governance in two formats:

- [Governance in Maintained Schools](#)
- [Governance in Academy Trusts](#)

In maintained schools, the headteacher, or principal, is responsible for the day-to-day management and control of the school, and for the implementation of the strategic framework established by the governing board. The Head is ultimately answerable to the governing board, which provides support and constructive challenge.

As the executive answerable to the board, the Head of course leads on strategy too, but it is ultimately the board's responsibility to set the strategic direction for the school. In short, staff are hands-on, governors are hands-off, but eyes-on. What is essential is that governors and the head work together in partnership for the benefit of the school. The school exists to serve present and future pupils.

Within a Multi Academy Trust (MAT), the head is ultimately responsible to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or executive head. The trust usually delegates a number of its functions to a local academy committee or council. The trust's Scheme of Delegation will clarify what is and is not delegated.

Your governance role is both demanding and rewarding. There is a rich variety of sources of help and guidance available to you, both nationally and locally within Liverpool. Many are free of charge, whilst some require a subscription which your governing board may have signed up for. For example, you can receive Governance Digest, the termly newsletter for Liverpool governors published by SIL free of charge. It includes the latest news nationally and city wide.

Top tip: you can access SIL's Governance Digest at www.schoolimprovementliverpool.co.uk/governor-news

All schools in the city can access GovernorHub (<https://governorhub.com>), where news of local and national governor training events, and updates on national matters related to education can be found.

Many Liverpool schools also use GovernorHub as the means of communication between governors; relevant governance documents including minutes, agendas, and associated papers for meetings can be securely stored there, and you can receive an email notifying you when new information is posted for your attention. Some schools pay an enhanced subscription so they can access GovernorHub Knowledge (formerly known as The Key for School Governors), a very useful resource for governors.

Top tip: Check with your school to see if they have signed you up for GovernorHub via your email address. If not, ask SIL to sign you up free of charge at governorservices@si.liverpool.gov.uk.

Nationally, support is also available from the National Governance Association (NGA), which offers advice and guidance free of charge on its website. Again, many schools choose to subscribe at various levels for enhanced support and resources, including on-line learning modules. You can learn more about the NGA at www.nga.org.uk.

Safeguarding

The safeguarding of children in education, including child protection, is of paramount importance. The DfE publishes a statutory document, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), which is updated annually. All staff and governors are required to be familiar with this document. You can access KCSIE at www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

Code of Conduct

Being a school governor is seen as akin to holding a public office. As such, you may be required to sign up to a code of conduct, which sets out expectations of behaviour and commitment of governors, emphasising the need for confidentiality and the fact that no governor has the authority to speak as an individual or make decisions on behalf of the board (with the rare exception of the chair on occasions where urgent action may be required in between board meetings).

Declarations of Interest

Governing boards control large amounts of public money and must be seen to be using it wisely. Governors have a responsibility to avoid any conflict between their business or personal interests and the interests of the school. To demonstrate transparency in achieving this responsibility and to meet legal requirements, all local authority-maintained schools and MATs must publish a Register of Interests on their website.

Disclosure of interests should include not only the interests of the individual governor, but also any relevant interests of their relatives and personal associates.

At the beginning of each academic year, you will usually be asked to update your assent to the Code of Conduct and your Declaration of Interests.



The Seven Principles of Public Life

The Seven Principles of Public Life outline the ethical standards those working in the public sector are expected to adhere to. They were first set out by Lord Nolan in 1995 in the first report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life and are included in a range of codes of conduct across public life.

- **Selflessness:** Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
- **Integrity:** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity:** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- **Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness:** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands this.
- **Honesty:** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any public interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Leadership:** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.



Ethical Leadership

In 2017, the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) announced a commission on ethical leadership in education. This commission developed the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education, which builds on the Nolan Principles of Public Life. Later, in 2019, the National Governance Association (NGA) launched the Pathfinder Project aiming to gain an understanding of the practical application and impact of the Framework.

In Liverpool, an Ethical Leadership Working Party was formed as part of the city's Education Improvement Plan, with representation from educational leaders from across the city. The group worked together to plan the most effective way to drive the virtues and characteristics of the Nolan Principles of Public Life and Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education forward. Leaders should demonstrate the following personal characteristics or virtues:

TRUST | leaders are trustworthy and reliable We hold trust on behalf of children and should be beyond reproach. We are honest about our motivations.

WISDOM | leaders use experience, knowledge and insight We demonstrate moderation and self-awareness. We act calmly and rationally. We serve our schools and colleges with propriety and good sense.

KINDNESS | leaders demonstrate respect, generosity of spirit, understanding and good temper We give difficult messages humanely where conflict is unavoidable.

JUSTICE | leaders are fair and work for the good of all children We seek to enable all young people to lead useful, happy and fulfilling lives.

SERVICE | leaders are conscientious and dutiful We demonstrate humility and self-control, supporting the structures, conventions and rules which safeguard quality. Our actions protect high-quality education.

COURAGE | leaders work courageously in the best interests of children and young people We protect their safety and their right to a broad, effective and creative education. We hold one another to account courageously.

OPTIMISM | leaders are positive and encouraging Despite difficulties and pressures, we are developing excellent education to change the world for the better.

Top Tip: You can access SIL's booklet Celebrating Ethical Leadership across Liverpool [here](#).

Board Membership

The make-up of a board in a maintained school is determined by its Instrument of Government (see example, right). This lists how many governors are appointed/elected, and by whom. The default term of office is four years unless your Instrument of Government states otherwise. For example, the headteacher (if they choose to be a governor – some do not) remains a governor for as long as they are in post.

The make-up of the board of trustees of a MAT is determined by its Articles of Association. If the board of trustees decides to delegate some of its authority to a local academy council or committee, it will also determine its make up.

Committees

If there are any, the following are typical (but may be known by another name). At the first full meeting of each academic year committee membership is agreed and terms of reference ratified. Governors are expected to become a member of at least one committee.

Finance Committee

Typical Remit: Educational objectives; scheme of delegation (for MATs), statement of internal control, value for money; effective monitoring; best value principles; budget setting; review of previous year's budget; end of year budgets, risk register. The Committee will ensure compliance with local and national financial regulations.

Staffing Committee

Typical Remit: To ensure that staff appointments are undertaken fairly and employment law is adhered to; disciplinary issues, grievances, competency/capability.

Pay Committee

Typical Remit: To ensure that pay progression is managed in line with school policies.

Instrument of Government	Exemplar School
	1. The name of the school is Exemplar School
	2. The school is a community school
	3. The name of the governing board is The Governing Board of Exemplar School
	4. The governing board shall consist of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 2 Parent governors- 1 LA governor- 1 Head teacher- 1 Staff governor- 6 Co-opted governors
	5. Total number of governors: 11
	6. The term of office of all categories of governor is 4 years
	7. This Instrument of Government comes into effect on 14 March 2024
	8. This Instrument of Government was made by order of Liverpool Local Authority on 15 March 2024



Liverpool Children and Young Peoples Service

Standards Committee

Typical Remit: Appropriateness and effectiveness of curriculum: delivery of key stages; key stage outcomes e.g. tests; assessment and tracking of pupil progress; pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND); equality, diversity & inclusion issues; opportunities issues; differentiation including progress of disadvantaged and more able pupils; the use and impact of pupil premium; literacy; numeracy; daily act of collective worship.

Buildings Committee

Typical Remit: To ensure the buildings are maintained to a high standard of safety and cleanliness. Compliance to statutory health & safety regulations is imperative.

Minutes from all committee meetings should be presented at the subsequent meeting of the governing board or local academy council within a MAT.

Top tip: to avoid repeating committee discussions, the chair of each committee should present a brief (normally less than 5 mins) verbal summary of relevant issues.

Lead Governor

Whilst responsibility for everything lies corporately with the board, individual governors will be asked to lead on specific areas. e.g. SEND, safeguarding/child protection, training & development, health & safety, attendance or area of the curriculum etc. There must be a lead governor for both safeguarding and SEND, and, in secondary schools, a lead governor for careers guidance. Other areas of responsibility will be decided by the board.

Expenses

Governors should not be out of pocket due to work undertaken in connection with their role. Boards may reimburse expenditure incurred in connection with governance duties, such as childcare or caring for a vulnerable adult, printing and travel/mileage. Production of receipts may be required in line with school policies.

Training and Development

The DfE expects all governors to attend training and development courses relevant to their position within the board. SIL runs courses regularly, including an induction course which newly appointed governors are strongly encouraged to attend. Most schools have a service level agreement (SLA) which allows governors to attend these courses at no cost to themselves.

Listings of SIL courses available are advertised via GovernorHub. If there is a particular training course you are interested in attending, please approach your chair in the first instance.

Top tip: Check with your school if they subscribe to SIL governor training. If not, request agreement in advance to pay for you to attend a course.

Mentoring

As part of your induction process you should be allied to a member of the governing board who will act as your mentor. This governor will be there for support and guidance and to help you settle into this very important position.

Top tip: If you need help in your role as a governor, do not be shy about approaching governorservices@si.liverpool.gov.uk or admin@livgovforum.org.uk for advice and support.



Categories of Governors

Headteacher

The Head usually becomes a governor when they take up post but is free to choose not to do so. They cease to be a governor when they leave post.

Parent Governors

Parent governors are elected by and from among the parents of registered pupils at the school. They should be parents of pupils currently at the school at the time of their election. If insufficient parents stand for election to fill the vacancies available, the governing board may appoint a parent to fill the post. Parent governors are entitled to serve out their term of office even if their child has left the school. People who are elected members of the local authority or, at the time of election are paid to work at the school for more than 500 hours in a school year are disqualified from being parent governors.

Local Authority Governors

LA governors are nominated by the local authority which maintains the school (i.e. Liverpool City Council). They bring an independent perspective to school decision-making. Anyone eligible to be staff governor is disqualified from appointment as an LA governor to that school. Typically, MATs do not have an LA Governor.

Foundation Governors

Foundation governors (at voluntary aided, voluntary controlled and some foundation schools only) are usually appointed by the school's founding board, church or other organisation named in the school's Instrument of Government. For example, the local priest may be an ex-officio Foundation Governor. Foundation governors are appointed to secure compliance with the school's trust deed, for example to preserve and develop the religious character of a faith-based school.

Co-opted Governors

Co-opted governors are appointed by the current board members to enhance their skill set. They can be people who live or work in the community served by the school or anyone else who is committed to good governance and the success of the school.

Staff Governor

One staff governor is elected by and from the staff at the school. Staff governors may not continue to be governors if they cease to be employed by the school.

Associate Members

The board may choose to appoint associate members, often to benefit from their particular skills, knowledge or experience. Associate members are not governors and cannot vote at board meetings but can be given voting rights on a committee.

Meetings

Governing boards are required to meet at least three times a year, although many meet more frequently either as a full board or in committees. The venue, date and timing of the meeting is at the discretion of the governors. Governors should make every effort to attend all meetings.

Most boards will meet either termly or half termly. Meetings should normally be no longer than two hours, and this can be aided by the publication of a timed agenda prior to the meeting. A timed agenda for 90 minutes can allow overrun to a maximum of two hours when necessary. Governors are expected to read the documentation ahead of the meeting.

Board members must be given at least seven days' written notice of the time and date of the meeting. In advance of the meeting, relevant papers are circulated, usually on GovernorHub, e.g. an agenda, minutes of the previous meeting and other papers such as the head's report or committee reports. The papers should be read ahead of the meeting in order to prepare relevant questions and to contribute effectively to the debate. Some boards operate on a formal basis whilst others prefer a more relaxed atmosphere especially if governors know each other well. For example, you may be expected to submit questions in advance of the meeting so that informed answers may be given.

Voting is not always needed because decisions are often reached by general consensus. Should a vote be required, a show of hands usually suffices although there may be times when the board feels a secret ballot is necessary.

Governors must always declare an interest, and if necessary, withdraw from the meeting if personal interest may prevent them from acting objectively and impartially.

Top Tip: If in doubt whether you have an interest it is better to be transparent. You may want to discuss this with your chair ahead of the meeting.

Roles at board meetings

All governors are of equal status, having equal rights to contribute to discussions. There are however some roles which are defined, and which carry specific responsibilities. These include:

The chair

The chair, and vice chair, are elected by the board from amongst their number. Any governor is eligible to stand as chair except for those employed at the school. The chair is often an experienced governor who knows the school well.

In some MATs, the chair of the local academy council may be appointed by the trust board.

The chair is responsible for setting the tone of meetings, ensuring that one person speaks at any one time, inviting questions and allowing every governor to have his/her say on the matter in hand. The chair may set a ground rule that no one speaks twice until everyone has had the chance to speak once. This does not require everyone to speak, unless they have something relevant to say; but it does ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to contribute.

The chair is supported by the governance professional (or clerk) and can seek further support from SIL and LGF. They are encouraged to attend SIL's (free of charge) termly briefing for chairs to ensure they keep abreast of national and city-wide issues. The briefing is usually led by the Director of Education.

Top tip: Get to know your chair and governance professional – they value your presence on the board, and are there to help answer any questions.

Governance Professional

The governance professional (clerk) is not a governor and is not entitled to vote. The clerk is appointed by the board and is responsible for admin support, including taking minutes, agenda, correspondence, etc. The clerk cannot be the head or a governor although a governor (but not the head) can minute a meeting in an emergency. Governance professionals should be pro-active in setting the agenda. Support is available from SIL, including a termly briefing specifically for governance professionals.

Within a MAT, there may be a governance professional responsible for all levels of governance, in addition to clerks who work with local academy councils.

What is discussed at meetings?

An agenda will be sent to you (usually on GovernorHub) ahead of the meeting indicating the items to be discussed. The agenda for the termly business meeting will usually include the following items:

Apologies for absence

It is courteous to send apologies if you are unable to attend a meeting. If you do not attend a series of meetings and do not offer apologies, then you may be removed from the board. A record of attendance is required to be published on the school website.

Top Tip: If you are unable to attend a meeting it is a courtesy to the school to send your apologies prior to the meeting.

Minutes

Minutes of previous meetings have to be accepted by the board as a true and accurate record and signed as such by the chair. Any inaccuracies in the minutes can be raised under this item.

Matters Arising

Allows governors to be updated on action (including action by the chair on behalf of the board) taken on issues raised at the previous meeting.

Headteacher's Report

The headteacher must give the board all the information it needs to do its job well. In particular, the board will need to see information relating to the priorities it has identified for improvement. This would usually include data on:

- The quality of teaching, pupil learning and progress.
- Pupil applications, admissions, attendance and exclusions
- Staff absence, recruitment, retention, morale and performance, and
- Financial performance

Any other business

Issues that have arisen since the publication of the agenda may be discussed under this item if considered important enough.

Other items will appear on the agenda usually with accompanying papers. Often a staff member with responsibility for a specific area may be invited to address the meeting.

Any governor can raise an item for inclusion on the agenda by contacting the chair.

Incorporation

Governing boards are incorporated so that they have a legal identity. Providing the board acts with reasonable care and within the law, its members are not personally liable for any financial loss caused by its actions.

Except where the board delegates specific tasks or functions to a committee or individual, governors discharge their responsibilities collectively.

Visiting the school

Regular, purposeful visits to the school allow governors both to get to know more about school life and to demonstrate to staff and pupils how governors take their responsibilities seriously. Some schools have a policy on visits by governors to enable them to be more structured and purposeful.

The head may invite governors to concerts, sports days, school trips, etc. Accepting invitations gives an opportunity to visit and become involved.

In the case of all visits the first step is to contact the head and make an appointment. Give some indication of what you would like to see and how long you expect the visit to last.

Top Tip: Visits are more effective if aligned to the school's development plan.

As part of your induction, the head will usually arrange for you to have a guided tour of the school to provide you with an overview of the premises and resources. This gives an opportunity to ask the head to provide you with an initial insight into the school's activities. In large schools you may not have time to see everything but you should see enough to give you an impression of the facilities available both to pupils and staff.

An introduction to members of staff will give you the opportunity to speak to them and to ask any questions you may have.

Top Tips: Discussing in advance with the head the purpose and focus of the visit will enable you to draw up a list of relevant questions.

Following your visit, recording relevant comments on the school visit template (if available) will enable relevant issues to be discussed at the next committee or board meeting.

With all visits, please remember:

- A governor does not have an automatic right to visit the school, especially without agreeing the time and purpose in advance
- On arrival report to the school office and sign in
- Observe safeguarding protocols
- Visits make demands on your time and that of staff at the school. It is important to ensure that your visit is useful to the work of the board.
- Even if you are involved in education yourself, it is not the role of a governor to assess the quality of teaching.

Final Remarks

We hope this induction pack provides a comprehensive introduction to your role as a school governor.

Your involvement will make a significant impact on the school's success and the educational experience of our city's students.

Once again, welcome to the team!

The latest pdf version of this handbook can be found at the LGF website: <https://livgovforum.org.uk>



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