



# **GOVERNING BOARD HANDBOOK**

## **St John's Primary School**

This document sets out the principles and procedures by which this Governing Board operates. Alongside this document, governors will need:

- Membership information (available on Services to Schools or ask your clerk or SBM)
- Committee membership and link governor information (ask the clerk, SBM or see autumn term minutes)
- Code of conduct (agreed in the autumn term)
- Delegation planner (agreed in the autumn term)
- DfE Governance Handbook (available online)

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The Handbook will be reviewed and updated annually

Reviewed on ... 18<sup>th</sup> September 2025

St John's Primary School is a Foundation Trust school and is part of the West End Schools Trust (WEST).

The WEST was established to deliver a collaboration between local state schools. The aim of these schools is to raise aspirations and attainment to meet the current and future needs of our diverse young people. The schools in WEST are:

Bridgewater Primary  
Broadwood Primary  
Canning Street Primary  
Hawthorn Primary  
Lemington Riverside  
Moorside Primary  
St Paul's Primary  
Wingrove Primary

As a Trust school we are a Local Authority (LA) maintained school who are supported by a charitable Trust which appoints some of the governors. We remain part of the LA family of schools. The aim of the Trust is to use the experience, energy, networks and expertise from other schools and professions as a lever to raise standards in our schools.

We operate within the same frameworks as other LA maintained schools. This means teaching the National Curriculum, following the Admissions Code, and being inspected by Ofsted. A Trust school becomes its own admissions authority. The governing board is the employer of staff, and land, building and assets are transferred from the LA to the Trust to be held on trust for the Trust school.

Teaching staff are employed by the governing board under the terms of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document. The LA funds the school on the same basis as all other LA schools and retains its intervention powers if there are financial problems at the school.

Foundation Trust governors sit on the governing bodies of each school; their appointment is ratified by the Trust board and two from each school represents the schools at Trust board meetings.

The Trust will communicate its work to the governing board through updates at full governing board meetings and the individual schools will disseminate information relating to the Trust through their own regular newsletters and other correspondence with parents

## **Our School Vision**

At St John's Primary School we believe that learning is a shared lifelong experience. Our vision is to create an environment which enables all members of our community to be successful, inspired and equipped with the skills for life.

Our curriculum teaches children the values needed to grow up as a responsible, caring, hard working and tolerant citizen. These are widely referred to as 'British Values' but are understood by all members of our school to be 'Our Core Values.'

## **Introduction – the purpose of governance**

The purpose of governance is to provide confident and strong strategic leadership which leads to robust accountability, oversight, and assurance for educational and financial performance. All governance boards, no matter what type of school or how many schools they govern, have three core functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent

Effective governance is based on six key features:

- **Strategic leadership** that sets and champions vision, ethos, and strategy.
- **Accountability** that drives up educational standards and financial performance.
- **People** with the right skills, experience, qualities, and capacity.
- **Structures** that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- **Compliance** with statutory and contractual requirements.
- **Evaluation** to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance.

Strategic leadership and accountability are the core pillars of the board's role and purpose. People and structures define the way governance is organised, and compliance and evaluation ensure and improve the quality of governance (as described in the DfE Governance Handbook and Governance Competency Framework).

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook)

Each individual governor has a responsibility, working alongside other members of the governing board, to the staff and pupils of the school, the school's wider community and where they are representatives, to their constituency (parents, staff etc). Although some governors may represent constituencies (for example parents or staff) they are not delegates of that group, they are representative members.

To carry out this work we:

- work closely with the school team
- have five full Governing Board meetings a year
- work on committees to which the Governing Board has delegated key areas of responsibility. These meet on a regular basis (once each term)
- visit the school
- attend training
- recognise the Headteacher (HT) is responsible for the implementation of policy, management of the school and the implementation of the curriculum
- self-evaluate our own practice

## Roles and responsibilities

### School improvement

Governing Boards:

- Help to decide the priorities for the school when the school improvement plan is being developed
- Review progress against strategic plan and evaluate governing board effectiveness
- Receive information about the quality of education, curriculum, inclusion, pastoral care, behaviour, attendance, personal development and leadership and management in the school

### Curriculum and standards

Governing Boards:

- Ensure the national curriculum is taught to all pupils

- Monitor targets for pupil achievement
- Publish national test and exam results
- Compare the performance of their school to similar schools

## **Statutory and other responsibilities**

Governing Boards:

- Ensure statutory duties including health and safety / risk management / safeguarding issues are addressed
- Set the times of school sessions and term time and holiday dates
- Help develop school policies and procedures (including a complaints policy)
- To review structure including any conversion to Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) status

## **Resources**

**Governing Boards:**

- Approve the first formal budget plan each financial year
- Decide on a staffing structure
- Decide on levels of pay for teachers
- Consider the repair and maintenance of school buildings
- Consider the use of school premises outside school hours

**Governing Boards do the above by:**

- Working with the headteacher when making decisions
- Asking challenging question
- Appointing committees and link governors to look at specific issues such as finance, staffing, curriculum, and areas of the school improvement plan

**Governing Boards do not:**

- Inspect the school or make judgements about the quality of provision
- Write school policies or other school documents
- Share concerns about staff capability / individual pupils
- Decide on how pupils are taught different subjects
- Have the right to exclude a pupil
- Authorise all expenditure
- Rubberstamp recommendations from the Headteacher
- Need to be aware of the performance objectives which have been set for individual teachers

## **Chair**

The chair ensures the governing board works as an effective team and that all governors contribute towards corporate decisions. The chair delegates roles and ensures other governors are fully involved.

**Key Responsibilities:**

- To make sure, with the clerk, that the governing board's business is conducted in accordance with the law
- To ensure that governors know and follow the rules and codes of conduct
- To make it clear that all governors must accept collective responsibility for decisions taken at governors' meetings

- To be available to make “emergency” decisions under chair’s action and to report any urgent action taken on behalf of the governing board, making sure it is fully explained
- To ensure meetings are run effectively, focusing on priorities, and making the best use of time available, and to ensure that all members have an equal opportunity to participate in discussion and decision-making
- To construct and agree the agenda for meetings, together with the clerk, taking account of the recommendations of the headteacher and requests from other governors
- To keep good order in meetings
- To approve draft minutes for publication taking account of confidential items
- To use time effectively by planning the year’s cycle of meetings and a timetable for action
- Ensure governors' participation in and between meetings
- Help new governors become involved in the work of the governing board
- Ensure all decisions are understood and that necessary action is taken
- Ensure governors receive all relevant information and materials
- To check that decisions taken by the governing board are enacted
- To be proactive about recruitment and retention on the governing board.
- To ensure succession planning within the governing board
- To help the governing board understand its own strengths and weaknesses.
- To establish and foster an effective relationship with the headteacher based on trust and mutual respect for each other’s roles.
- To ensure that the governing board acts as a sounding board to the headteacher and provides strategic direction.
- To listen to and be a critical friend to the headteacher
- To hold the headteacher to account
- To carry out any duties delegated by the governing board, be seen in school regularly, attend school functions or make sure another governor represents them, work with the LA, be accessible to other governors, staff and parents and meet governors from other schools
- To report decisions of the governing board to parents, staff and other regularly.
- To co-ordinate the governing board role in Ofsted inspections and other reviews.
- To manage the complaints process
- To attend LA briefings where beneficial.
- To involve the vice-chair so that they can act if you are not available.

#### **Key skills:**

- Leadership
- Management of effective meetings
- Organisation
- Impartiality
- Delegation skills
- Good time management
- Excellent people skills

#### **Vice-chair**

The vice chair should work closely with the chair of governors. They should support the chair in ensuring other governors are fully involved and the governing board work as a team and all governors contribute towards corporate decisions.

**Key Responsibilities:**

- To liaise on a regular basis with the chair and headteacher
- To take on responsibilities delegated by the chair
- To deputise for the chair in their absence
- With the chair, use time effectively by planning the year's cycle of meetings and a timetable for action
- With the chair, ensure governors' participation in and between meetings
- With the chair, help new governors become involved in the work of the governing board
- With the chair, ensure all decisions are understood and that necessary action is taken
- With the chair, check that decisions taken by the governing board are enacted
- To be proactive about recruitment and retention on the governing board
- With the chair, ensure succession planning within the governing board
- To help the governing board understand its own strengths and weaknesses
- To establish and foster an effective relationship with the headteacher based on trust and mutual respect for each other's roles
- To listen to and be a critical friend to the headteacher
- To hold the headteacher to account
- To carry out any duties delegated by the governing board, be seen in school regularly, attend school functions, work with the LA, be accessible to other governors, staff and parents and meet governors from other schools
- To report decisions of the governing board to parents, staff, and other stakeholders regularly
- To attend LA briefings where beneficial, on behalf of the chair.

**Key Skills:**

- Leadership
- Management of effective meetings
- Organisation
- Impartiality
- Delegation skills
- Good time management.
- Excellent people skills

**Headteacher – responsibilities**

- The internal organisation, management, and control of the school
- Formulating aims, objectives and policies for the governing board to consider adopting
- Advising on and implementing the governing board strategic framework
- Giving governors the information needed to assist in raising school standards
- Reporting to the governing board at least three times per year via a headteacher's report

**Meetings****Attendance and apologies**

Good attendance at meetings, both full governing board and committees, is important so that all governors develop a good overall understanding of school business and are involved in making corporate decisions.

All formal meetings of the governing board must be quorate to make decisions. Meetings are quorate when at least 50% of the governors are present. Committee meetings must also be quorate for decisions to be made (at least 3 governors).

Attendance at meetings is monitored by the clerk to the governing board. If governors cannot attend a meeting then they should give their apologies to the clerk or via the headteacher or the chair. The governing board decides whether to accept apologies. If a governor's apologies are not accepted and the governor does not attend meetings for a continuous period of six months or more, then they can be disqualified from the governing board. (This date is calculated from the date of the first full governing board meeting missed without permission). Where governors fail to send their apologies in advance of a meeting, their apologies may not be accepted or approved after the meeting.

All governors may ask for items to be included on the agenda of the full governing board by contacting the chair and the clerk at least two weeks before the meeting. The chair decides whether to include an item. If three governors ask for an item to be included then this must appear on the agenda.

## **Committee meetings**

St John's Primary school has the following named committees:

Curriculum & Community

Staffing, Resources & Finance

## **Planning the business over the year**

We adapt the Governor Services model agendas and plan our committee business across the year.

### **Terms of reference for full governing board and committees**

- The delegation planner determines what is decided at full board level and what is decided at committees
- Full Governing Board - quorum: 50% of current membership
- To determine the strategic direction and vision of the school and ensure focus on the three core strategic functions.
- To monitor and evaluate the performance of the school receiving reports from the headteacher and to hold the headteacher to account
- To monitor statutory responsibilities (including safeguarding)
- To consider inclusion and equality of opportunity
- To receive reports and ratify recommendations from committees
- To approve the annual budget (unless decided at committee level) and ensure financial probity
- To agree selection panel for headteacher and deputy head appointments
- To ratify or reject decisions of appointed selection panels
- To consider whether to exercise delegation of functions to committees
- To review and adopt the governing board delegation planner
- To establish and review the governing board procedures (where not set out in law)

- To set the structure and remit of the governing board and any committees including governor appointment details, term of office and attendance records
- To review at least once a year the establishment, terms of reference and membership of committees
- To consider whether to exercise delegation of functions to individuals or committees
- To regulate the GB procedures where not set out in law
- To agree governor induction and training programme
- To review progress against strategic plan and evaluate governing board performance
- To produce a written set of principles for the school behaviour policy and present for consultation
- To set the times of school sessions and term/holiday dates (where applicable)
- To consider the school's self-evaluation assessments
- To adopt the Local Authority Financial Regulations
- To consider risk analysis regularly
- To review the performance of the governing board and consider training needs
- To ensure adequate safeguarding procedures are in place
- To publish proposals to change the category of the school
- To consider forming or joining a group of schools or Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)
- Review of structure, including any subsequent conversion to MAT status
- To consider approach and timescale to academy conversion
- To consider forming a federation or joining an existing federation
- To consider requests from other schools to join the federation
- To leave a federation
- To propose to discontinue voluntary foundation or foundation special school
- To have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and to oversee the incorporation of the necessary procedures and practices outlined in the Prevent Duty into the Child Protection policy

#### **Curriculum & Community Committee - Quorum: 3 members**

- To assist in the development of the School Improvement / Development Plan
- To monitor and review School Improvement / Development Plan
- To contribute to school self-evaluation
- To review, monitor and evaluate the curriculum offer
- To monitor and review pupil and school performance
- To monitor targets for pupil achievement
- To consider recommendations from external reviews of the school (e.g., Ofsted, external School Improvement Advisors), agree actions because of reviews and regularly evaluate the implementation of the plan.
- To develop and review policies identified within the school's policy review programme and in accordance with its delegated powers.
- To ensure that the requirements of children with SEND are met, as laid out in the SEN Code of Practice, and receive regular reports from the Headteacher / SENDCO and an annual report from the SEN governor (where appointed).
- To advise the finance committee on relative funding priorities necessary to deliver the curriculum.

### **Staffing, Resources & Finance - Quorum: 3 members**

- To consider and set the annual budget each financial year for formal agreement by the full governing board.
- To agree annual action plans and monitor how school premiums are spent (i.e., Pupil Premium, PE & Sports Premium, SEND funding).
- To establish and monitor links between the School Improvement / Development Plan and budget taking account of priorities
- To evaluate the effectiveness of spending decisions linked to the School Improvement / Development Plan
- To consider longer term financial planning linked to the future needs of the school
- To ensure school meets its statutory obligations and complies with the Newcastle Scheme for Financing Schools
- To monitor the budget throughout the year
- To consider relevant contracts including Service Level Agreements (SLA) and monitor effectiveness of these services.
- To monitor the school roll and income levels
- To review delegated spending limits annually
- To review a Charging and Remissions policy
- To receive information on grants and miscellaneous income
- To consider outturn statement
- To consider and determine response to any financial matters including consultation on changes to funding formula
- To investigate irregularities
- To approve and set up an expenses scheme
- To ensure sufficient funds are set aside for pay increments as set out in the Pay Policy and as recommended by the Headteacher
- To ensure appropriate administration and audit of the School Fund
- To oversee the submission of the Schools' Financial Value Standard (SFVS) annually
- To self-evaluate the financial competencies of governors
- To always consider and ensure best value
- To consider financial benchmarking data
- To provide support and guidance for the GB on matters relating to the maintenance and development of the premises and grounds, including Health and Safety.
- To receive any health and safety reports and ensure any issues are met
- To receive and act upon any issues identified by an LA audit.
- To receive reports on condition of buildings and school environment
- To agree maintenance work to be done
- To seek advice on buildings insurance and personal liability where appropriate

### **Staffing**

- To determine staff complement
- To review staffing structure
- To receive reports and monitor status of any staffing issues
- To establish and review annually an appraisal and capability policy
- To be responsible for the review of a Pay Policy
- To make pay decisions in line with the Pay Policy and legal requirements (pay review committee)
- To review salary scale for the Leadership team
- To determine dismissal payments / early retirement

- To conduct agreed arrangements for recruitment and selection
- To conduct agreed procedures for capability, discipline, grievance, attendance, and welfare issues
- To conduct dismissal procedures
- To conduct staff dismissal procedures according to agreed policy / procedures and in accordance with delegation planner.
- To suspend staff (except headteacher)
- To end suspension (except headteacher)
- To consider, adopt or adapt Local Authority advice on procedures and practice
- To approve leave of absence for headteacher
- To consider requests for leave of absence / early retirement / sabbaticals

#### **Admissions Committee – Quorum: 3 members**

- To review admissions arrangements and to make any recommendation for change to the governing board prior to formal consultation
- To determine within statutory provisions and the governing board policy whether any child should be admitted to the school

In voluntary aided (VA) and foundation schools, the governing board is the admission authority. Similarly, in academies, the academy trust is the admission authority.

In paragraph 2.7, the School Admissions Code explains:

... a decision to offer or refuse admission must not be made by one individual in an admission authority. Where the school is its own admission authority the whole governing board, or an admissions committee established by the governing board, must make such decisions.

#### **Complaints / Appeals Committee – Quorum: 3 members**

The membership is to be established on an ad hoc basis and not include any governors involved in the original decision and be a minimum of 3 governors. This committee would deal with any appeals (salary reviews, staff grievances, staff dismissals, complaints).

#### **Election arrangements**

The arrangements for the election of parent and staff governors are delegated to the Headteacher. The governing board appoints co-opted governor and Local Authority governors. In a Foundation Trust school, appointment of foundation trust governors may be authorised by the Trust Board.

#### **Appointment of the chair**

Term of office: to be agreed at the first governing board meeting of the autumn term

**Election process:** By nomination at the first meeting of the autumn term.

#### **Appointment of the vice chair**

Term of office: to be agreed at the first governing board meeting of the autumn term.

Election process: By nomination at the first meeting of the autumn term.

## **Suspension of governors**

The governing board may decide to suspend a governor from all or any meetings of the governing board or its committees for a fixed period of up to six months on one or more of the following grounds:

- that the governor, being a person paid to work at the school, is the subject of disciplinary proceedings in relation to their employment.
- that the governor is a subject of proceedings in any court or tribunal, the outcome of which may be that they are disqualified from continuing in office as a governor (Under Constitution Regulations 2014).
- that the governor has acted in a way that is inconsistent with the ethos or religious character of the school and has brought or is likely to bring the school or the governing board into disrepute.
- that the governor is in breach of their duty of confidentiality to the school or to any member of staff or pupil at the school.

If the governing board is considering this action it may wish to seek the advice of the Clerk to ensure actions occur in a legal manner.

## **Support for new governors**

To help new governors learn about their role and quickly contribute to the work of the governing board, there will be an initial meeting with the chair and the headteacher and a mentor (a named and experienced governor) will be appointed as appropriate. Introductions will be made at the first meeting.

### **New governors are asked to:**

- Undergo a DBS check on (within 21 days of starting as a governor). The school office staff will help you with this
- Wear ID badges when in school
- Provide information on themselves for website, newsletters etc
- Provide details to be published on the DfE Get Information About Schools (GIAS) website

New governors are encouraged to take up training opportunities – particularly induction – offered by Governor Services and/or the Diocese.

### **New governors will be provided with the following:**

- Governing Board Handbook
- Minutes from last full governing board meeting
- School Improvement / development plan
- Last Ofsted report
- Any self-evaluation documents
- Access to Services to Schools online site
- Signpost to DfE Governance Handbook and Competency Framework

## **How governors are involved in monitoring**

Monitoring is an essential part of the role of governors in supporting the school's own self-evaluation process which help to raise standards. By being involved in monitoring, governors, working in partnership with the headteacher and teaching staff of the school, will develop a better understanding of how well the plans and policies are working in practice. They will then

be able to use this information to better inform future strategic planning. The work of the governing board should also be monitored and evaluated.

The purpose of monitoring is to:

- check that agreed plans are being implemented
- identify what's going well and celebrate it
- identify what is not going well and the reasons for this
- modify plans, if appropriate
- be accountable as a governing board

## **Methods of monitoring:**

### **Committee work**

Each committee will identify its remit and the areas of the school improvement / development plan it has responsibility for, monitor those aspects of the school for which it is responsible and report each term or half term to the whole governing board. Each committee also needs to set up a rolling programme of policy review.

### **School visits / link governors**

It is expected that all governors visit the school at least once a year during the school day.

Some governors may be linked to specific priority areas from the School Development Plan (see Appendix 1).

Visits may involve meeting teachers and pupils, visiting classes, book scrutinies, learning walks or attending events (for example, assemblies, productions). All visits should be planned in consultation with the headteacher and the Visits Protocol should be followed (see Appendix 2).

Governor Services have link governor proformas to support link governors. These are available on the Services to Schools resource page.

### **Notes of visit from external adviser**

Notes of visit from the Achievement Partner will be shared with the full Governing Board (unless there are confidential items).

### **Information provided in the headteacher's report**

Over the year, the headteacher's report will include information on the following:

- Admissions – number on rolls and mobility. To discuss changes and reasons for any underlying trends.
- Attendance / persistent absence – attendance against targets and un/authorised absences. To explain any changes since previous report and discuss analysis of impact.
- Achievement & Standards – internal and external data on pupil standards. To discuss comparisons with national data and analyse performance of individual groups and gaps in attainment/progress.
- Behaviour and safeguarding – details of exclusions, racial, homophobic, sexual harassment, and safeguarding incidents. Governors need comparative data and an indication of any trends.
- SEND / CiC – Number of SEND / CiC pupils. Impact of interventions and spend.
- Pupil Premium – number of pupils on PP and impact of interventions and spend. Analysis of gaps and focus on progress of PP pupils.
- Complaints & compliments – summary on complaints and how they have been dealt with. Sharing positive feedback.

- Ethos & vision – how is the school ethos and vision being promoted and is this understood by everyone.
- School Improvement / Development Plan – monitoring the plan and update on progress against priorities. To discuss what has/has not worked well and emerging priorities for following year. To consider impact of actions.
- Curriculum – changes to the curriculum and enrichment activities. Is the curriculum broad and balanced and appropriate?
- Leadership & management – information on the impact of raising standards by leaders and work carried out in conjunction with other schools/partnerships.
- Links with parents and school community – information on surveys and community links. How does the school/governors collect stakeholders' views?
- Quality of teaching – report on performance management of staff and pay progression. To discuss consistency of quality of teaching and action taken as necessary.
- Staffing / CPD – staff updates, absences, and training. To discuss any trends and impact of staffing issues and training.
- Calendar of events – governors may want to attend events as a way of raising their profile within the school community

## Claiming expenses

Expenses may only be paid to governors or associate members where a scheme is in place. Regulation 28 of the Roles, Procedures and Allowances Regulations 2013 allows governing bodies to set up a scheme for the payment of allowances (out of pocket expenses) to members of the governing board and associate members.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a governor or associate member is not out of pocket where the school has derived benefit from such outlay. The policy also reaffirms the governing board's commitment to ensuring equality of participation for all governors.

Provisions relating to governors' allowances are incorporated into the 2013 Regulations.

Allowances and expenses necessarily incurred for which a claim may be made could include the following:

- Childcare or babysitting expenses

Where a governor does not have a spouse, partner, or other responsible adult to care for a child/ren during a period of absence in which that governor attends meetings of the governing board or its committees or in otherwise representing the school or governing board; claims will be limited to reimbursing the actual cost paid to a registered childminder or the cost of a babysitter.

- Care arrangements for an elderly or dependent relative

Costs may be refunded in similar circumstances to childcare. Claims will be limited to reimbursing the actual amount paid to a person providing the care that the governor would have provided during the period of their absence.

- Governors with a special need

Where the school or governing board does not provide facilities or equipment to enable a governor, for example, to communicate or otherwise take part in the activity in question, claims will be limited to reimbursing the cost of, for example, provision of a signer, audiotapes, Braille documentation, or travelling and subsistence for a person providing the support.

- Governors whose first language is not English

The translation of documents or provision of an interpreter may be met in circumstances like a governor with special needs.

- Travel

The mileage rate used should not exceed the Revenues and Customs approved rates.

- Stationery/Printer Ink

Governors may have to print out documents and assistance could be offered with the associated costs.

Suggested claiming procedures

To reduce administration, unless substantial sums are involved, governors are asked to claim termly in arrears, prior to the end of the financial year in question.

Claims should be supported by relevant invoices or receipts. Claims should be made to the school administrative officer and authorised by the chair.

The GB will review the policy annually as part of the Governing Board Handbook.