

Oak Cottage Primary School Governor Handbook

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Working together to learn together

1. WELCOME

Welcome to the Oak Cottage Handbook for Governors. The purpose of the handbook is to give you some background information that we hope will be of use to you.

The role of Governors has never been more demanding; as schools become more responsible for their own future, they are therefore more accountable for their actions. A key to successful governing Bodies is the ability to work in close partnership with the school. This is described as being a critical friend - always there to support, ready to offer constructive criticism and always with the best interest of the school at heart. There is obviously an element of confidentiality and professionalism attached to the role and our school is blessed with talented and committed governors.

Our key purpose is that of raising academic achievement in a happy, supportive and enthusiastic environment where all of our children are valued for their own sakes. We are proud of the manner in which our children respond to committed and skilful teachers and this is clearly seen in the extraordinary range of extra curricular clubs and activities.

Your involvement in School Improvement Planning is a significant driving force in ensuring that Oak Cottage remains a continuously improving school.

I look forward to working with Governors and wish you well during your term of office.

I thank you all for your commitment to the school.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Chairman of Governors

2. WHAT DOES A GOVERNOR AT OAK COTTAGE SCHOOL DO?

The Governing Body consists of 12 governors, 4 elected by parents, 2 by the LEA, 3 by the staff and 3 appointed by the governors to represent the local community. The Governors at Oak Cottage are actively engaged in the life of the school, though not in its day-to day management which is the responsibility of the Headteacher. The points below summarise what is expected of each Governor as a minimum requirement.

Governors:

- attend the 3 or 4 full Governing Body meetings a year and read agendas and minutes
- become members of committees which meet at least once a term, or as necessary
- try to attend training sessions as appropriate and remain aware of their own training needs
- be a "critical friend" ready to offer constructive criticism and support the school community

3. WHAT SKILLS AND QUALITIES DOES A GOVERNOR NEED?

We are a BLP (Building Learning Power) school and as such the skills and qualities that all adults need replicate those that we are trying to develop in our children, as good lifelong learning habits.

Within the BLP dispositions of Resilience, Resourcefulness, Reflectiveness and Reciprocity the following apply particularly to governors:

Resilience

Managing Distractions:

The ability to stay focused on the needs of this school and its community and not to be diverted by other agendas that will not have a positive impact on the standards in our school.

Perseverance:

A determination to persevere in the face of difficulties and to stand up for what we believe is right, by working to a set of shared values and working within the aims of the school.

A commitment to give time for attendance at meetings and participation in working parties.

Noticing:

Spotting trends, keeping an open mind being forward thinking, being alert to new opportunities that may help us to move the school forward.

Resourcefulness

Questioning:

Having a curiosity of mind to find out new things about education and the role of the governors.

Asking questions of the school to ensure that standards are as high as they can possibly be.

Imagining:

Helping to create a shared vision for the future of the school which is based in reality but places no limitations on what is possible.

Capitalising:

Being willing to listen to others, accept that everyone has a point of view and beliefs that are to be valued and use this diverse knowledge/skills base for the benefit of the school.

Reflectiveness

Revising:

A commitment to personal training in fulfilment of the governor role.

The ability to be a 'critical friend' to the school and to critically evaluate personal strengths and areas for development.

Planning:

The ability to work with others in planning the best way forward for the development of the whole school.

Reciprocity

Collaboration:

A readiness to work as part of a team, taking on a fair share of the workload and working to a common purpose.

Empathy and Listening:

A willingness to support the rest of the governor team, especially new colleagues.

An understanding that everyone has different strengths and weaknesses and the ability to exercise tolerance of others.

A commitment to equal opportunities, including disability and race equalities.

Imitation:

A willingness to learn by imitating others who model good practice or have a wider skills/knowledge base.

4. HOW DOES A GOVERNOR AT OAK COTTAGE SCHOOL WORK?

We actively encourage Governors to play as full a part as they can in the life of the school. The staff appreciates the support and interest of Governors in helping to make this a school in which high quality teaching and learning is the norm.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Governors have a responsibility to monitor and evaluate the progress of school and contribute to the self-evaluation process. This can be done through:

- Monitoring progress made towards the targets set out in the School Improvement Plan (e.g. the head teacher's report to Governors)
- Reports/presentations by members of staff at meetings
- Analysis of statistical data
- Analysis of external reports
- Visits to school

Link Governors

The Governing Body invites governors to take on a link with particular priorities from the School Improvement Plan and gives governors particular responsibilities, for example where there is a statutory duty to name a governor to have responsibility for Special Needs or Child Protection/Safeguarding

The link Governors enable the Governing Body to be better informed about aspects of the curriculum and the School Improvement Plan. They are also a means of building up a positive relationship between the Governing Body and the staff. A link Governor could undertake some of the following:

- Become better informed about relevant documents and legislation
- Liaise with the relevant member of staff in order to become better informed and monitor progress
- Attend training and development opportunities
- Disseminate knowledge gained with the Governing Body

Visits to School

Governors are always welcome in school and, apart from attendance at formal meetings, governors can arrange visits to develop a knowledge and understanding of the curriculum, how it is taught and how the school operates. These visits can take a variety of forms including meetings with staff, visits to classrooms, accompanying school trips, attending assemblies etc.

Governor visits should:

- Have a clear purpose
- Be arranged and agreed before the visit takes place
- Be an opportunity to celebrate what the school does well

- Provide an opportunity for Governor's to ask questions and develop their understanding
- Develop positive relationships between staff and Governors
- Inform decision making

Classroom visits/trips/assemblies:

Classroom visits are primarily for Governors to gain knowledge about the school. The visits should be supportive of the Governor's role but not be seen as an inspection. The purpose, timing and length of visits will have been agreed in advance so staff and children will try to make you feel comfortable and welcome. Teachers will provide you with somewhere to sit and a copy of their lesson plan. When you are in the classroom please:

- Be positive, not critical or confrontational
- Get involved if you can
- Talk to the staff and children about their learning when appropriate
- Make rigorous observations during your visit but remember that no professional teaching judgements should be made.
- Thank the member of staff when you are leaving

Meetings with Staff

Before you meet familiarise yourself with the appropriate school policy, check the actions listed in the SIP and any progress summarised in the head teacher's reports..

The purpose of your meeting is to gain information. You could ask questions about:

- How the subject is taught in different year groups
- How children's progress is assessed
- Whether the resources used to support this area are adequate
- The views of the staff about the particular initiative you are concerned with
- What impact any changes or developments in the subject/area have had
- What has worked well/not so well
- What exactly has made the difference? Is it a change in practice generally, or is it attributable to one aspect of the new policy/initiative, in particular?
- The next steps - Is the change sustainable? Can you improve on it?
- Whether it would be appropriate for you to make further visits to school

After any visit to school, Governors should feedback to the head teacher, outlining positives and raising any questions. A short verbal report can be prepared to share with Governors at the next meeting.

5. WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE GOVERNING BODY?

Work as a Team

- Energetic commitment
- Make use of Governor expertise
- Share the workload
- Give and take on issues but ultimate loyalty to collective decisions, whether or not it concurs with you own view

Good Relationships with the Headteacher

- Understand respective roles
- Respect the position of the Head as the professional leader of the school

Effective Time Management and Delegation

- Identify issues for whole Board discussion
- Delegate within clear terms of reference and accountabilities

Effective Meetings

- Planned agendas with no AOB (see item 9 below)
- Clerical efficiency
- Purposeful chairing
- Clear minutes with appropriate action points

Know the School

- Planned visits to the school (see code of practice)

Training and Development

- Consider Governors own training needs and identify ways to meet them.

However the Governing Body needs to undertake many activities other than those required by law in order to ensure that the school is effective. How these responsibilities are undertaken and how the Governors work together will significantly affect the outcomes.

It must be remembered that a Governing Body comprises individual people who need to work together for the benefit of the school and the pupils. Making sure that the group works effectively as a team is not simple and needs continuous effort. The character of every Governing Body depends upon the people in it.

6. WHAT TRAINING AND SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR GOVERNORS?

The Governing Body's role is an important and demanding one but there is much support available:

- opportunities for open discussion with other governors
- regular briefings from the Headteacher and the staff on curriculum matters, standards, School Improvement Planning etc.
- access to LA officers and the Inspectorate
- an LA Governor Training programme with both general sessions and those that are specific to the needs of the school
- regular access to school
- access to numerous web sites, where up-to-date information can be found

New Governors will also:

- receive specific LA training
- be linked to a mentor Governor who will meet with you regularly to answer questions, give advice and support
- have organised introductory visits to school to learn about how it operates and to meet staff

7. A CODE OF PRACTICE FOR GOVERNORS

General

The Governing Body has adopted the following principles and procedures:

- We have responsibility for determining, monitoring and keeping under review the broad policies, plans and procedures within which the school operates.
- We recognise that the Headteacher is responsible for the implementation of policy, day-to-day management of the school and the implementation of the curriculum.
- We accept that all governors have equal status and, although appointed by different groups (i.e. parents, staff, LA), our overriding concern will be the welfare of the school as a whole.
- We have no legal authority to act individually, except when the Governing Body has given us delegated authority to do so.
- We have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer.
- We will encourage open government and shall be seen to do so.
- We will consider carefully how our decisions might affect others.

Commitment

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the Governing Body, attend regularly and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.
- We will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for training and development.

Relationships

- We will strive to work as a team.
- We will seek to develop effective working relationships with the Headteacher, staff and parents, the LA and other relevant agencies and the community.

Confidentiality

- We will observe confidentiality regarding proceedings of the Governing Body in meetings and from our visits to schools as governors.
- We will observe complete confidentiality when required or asked to do so by the Governing Body, especially regarding matters concerning individual staff or pupils.
- We will exercise the greatest prudence if a discussion of a potentially contentious issue affecting the school arises outside the Governing Body.

Conduct

- We will encourage the open expression of views at meetings, but accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the Governing Body or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak out against majority decisions in public or private outside the Governing Body.
- We will only speak or act on behalf of the Governing Body when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school we will follow the procedures established by the Governing Body.
- Our visits to school will be undertaken within the framework established by the Governing Body and agreed with the Headteacher.
- In discharging our duties we will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school.

8. FINANCE

Sources of funding:

- The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is passed on in its entirety to schools annually, together with the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) which is distributed to schools based on a formula which accords with regulations made by the Secretary of State. These funds, when added to income from sources such as lettings, rents, donations fees and charges, cover the school's revenue expenditure.
- In addition, the school received annually Devolved Capital and, occasionally, targeted capital funds
- As the Governing Body is a corporate body, and because of the terms of s.50 of the SSAF Act 1998, governors will not incur personal liability in the exercise of their power to spend the delegated budget share *provided* they act in good faith.

How the Governing Body decides on its spending

- Each March the Governing Body puts together and agrees its spending plans for the forthcoming financial year and submits details to the Council. The budget is based on known commitments (e.g. business rates, salaries as known at the time of budgeting), estimates for pay awards, estimates of expenditure on utilities based on the previous year's usage, etc.
- Subject to approval, there can be virement between budget heads during the year.

The processes and controls in place to ensure probity, Best Value, Health and Safety and Child Protection

- Governors and key staff are asked to sign a register of pecuniary interests; no governor or member of staff can take part in discussions/decisions where they have a pecuniary interest
- The school is required to abide by the Council's Financial Regulations, School Rules for Contracts, VAT requirements and its own Purchasing Policy and should demonstrate Best Value.
- The Council's "Speak Up" policy sets out the procedure to be followed by persons working in the school or by governors who wish to raise serious concerns about any aspect of the school's operations, including financial management.
- The Governing Body will ensure that an enhanced CRB disclosure is undertaken for all posts and must comply with any national or local guidance issued by the Government or the Council
- When considering its budget, the Governing Body should have due regard to its duties in relation to the health, safety of staff, pupils and visitors.

Provision of financial information

- The school is required to provide the Council with reports and financial information to enable the Council to fulfil its statutory responsibilities, particularly regarding Section 151 responsibilities, monitoring, statutory returns to government bodies with regard to taxation, pensions and other financial data, and the Council's own statutory financial reporting requirements.
- Reports will ensure reconciliation between the School's and the Council's systems, be consistent with the requirements of the Consistent Financial Reporting Framework, and should show that the School is properly managing its financial affairs.

See also <http://www.fmsis.info/>

9. PROCEDURES FOR GOVERNORS

Absence:	If you have to miss a meeting, please send apologies to the Clerk. These apologies have to be formally accepted by committees and the main Governing Body
Complaints:	Governors being approached by members of the community with complaints should check with the complainant whether the normal school procedures have been used. In usual circumstances this should be enough to deal with issues. If in doubt, a Governor should contact the Headteacher.
Committees:	Governors committees have delegated powers apart from specifically identified matters which must be dealt with by the full Governing Body.
Cluster:	Oak Cottage is part of the Langley Cluster of schools which also includes Langley School, Langley Primary, Reynolds Cross, Kington Green Primary and St. Margaret's C of E Aided.
Confidentiality:	Assume matters are confidential unless declared otherwise. Many decisions are public but the discussions leading to the decisions should be regarded as confidential. Confidential items, such as where an individual pupil or member of staff can be identified, are minuted separately and are not available for public inspection.
Detail:	All governors receive The Guide to the Law, a summary of the law and procedures relating to the governing body role, issued by the DCSF on CD.
Disqualification:	Conditions for disqualification for governors are in the DCSF Manual; these are drawn to the attention of potential candidates prior to nomination as a governor and relate to bankruptcy, multiple membership and failure to attend meetings.
Emergency:	In the case of an emergency, the Chair would be contacted and the matter dealt with in accordance with the school's Critical Incidents Policy.
Policies:	<p>The school has numerous policies which are regularly updated and constantly added to and relate to all aspects of school life (see appendix)</p> <p>Copies of school policies are available from the Clerk to the Governors</p>
Raising an item:	'Any other business' should not be considered by the Governing Body or its committees. If a governor wishes to raise an item, he/she should contact the Clerk at least 8 days prior to a meeting so that an item can be placed on the agenda.

10. **USEFUL INFORMATION**

You may find the following information useful

Links

www.solgrid.org.uk/governors

www.dcsf.gov.uk

www.teachernet.gov.uk

www.nga.org.uk

Glossary of terms

Attached as Appendix A is a glossary of frequently used terms

List of staff

Attached at Appendix B is a list of staff and their current responsibilities.

OAK COTTAGE SCHOOL

GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR GOVERNORS

(The Guide to the Law for School Governors contains, at Annex 1, a glossary of terms used in that document. This might also be of interest to governors).

AFL	Assessment for learning
APP	Assessing Pupil Progress – new initiative September 2007
APT&C	Administrative, professional, technical and clerical – the nationally negotiated pay scales for non-teaching staff
AWPU	Age weighted pupil unit – see Formula Funding
BLP	Building Learning Power – an initiative to enhance Learning
CPD	Continuing professional development
Cluster	Solihull's schools are grouped into clusters around secondary schools. Oak Cottage is in Langley Cluster
CVA	Contextual Value Added
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act, 1995
Early Years	The term to cover Foundation Key Stage and Key Stage One.
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FKS	Foundation Key Stage – Nursery and Reception
Formula funding	The method by which funds for school budgets are calculated, based mainly on the number of pupils in a school and age weighted (hence Age Weighted Pupil Unit)
FSP	Foundation Stage Profile
GTC	General Teaching Council
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
HRBQ	Health Related Behaviour Questionnaires
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan

liP	Investor in People
Inclusion	The inclusion of pupils with special needs within mainstream schools
INSET	In service training
ISR	Individual School Range – this is the range of seven consecutive spine points on the Heads’ salary scales, within which the Head of a school can be paid. The Teachers’ Pay and Conditions Document (published annually) details the way this should be determined.
ITP	Individual teaching programme
KS1	Key Stage 1 – Years 1 and 2
KS2	Key Stage 2 – Years 3 – 6
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
Leadership	The Leadership pay scale relates, for Oak Cottage, to the pay range for the posts of Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher. In larger schools, there may be other staff paid on the scale.
LMS	Local management of schools
LSA	Learning support assistant
LSC	Learning and Skills Council – the body responsible for the Planning and funding of post 16 education
LSL	Linking sounds and letters – part of Foundation Stage Curriculum
Main Pay Scale	For classroom teachers – points M1 – M6 (see Threshold), with progression annually after successful appraisal
MCP	Monitoring Children’s Progress
MGP	Making Good Progress
MFL	Modern Foreign Language
MTP	Medium Term Planning
NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NDS	NDS devolved formula capital is funding devolved to schools for use on capital schemes, and now some ICT expenditure, which should be used within 3 years of the date of allocation.

NGfL	National Grid for Learning
NHSS	National Healthy Schools Standard
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
NNEB	This was the traditional qualification for nursery nurses. Now teaching assistants take NVQs
NNS	National Numeracy Strategy
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headteachers
NRT	National Remodelling Team – for workforce remodelling
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification – work related competence based qualifications at various levels from an initial GNVQ basic qualification through to NVQ level 5.
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NUT	National Union of Teachers
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
Oracle	The finance and accounting system used by Solihull MBC to which the school has direct access.
PANDA	Performance and assessment data from Ofsted.
PAT	Pupil Achievement Tracker
PM	Performance Management
PNS	Primary National Strategy – builds on the NLS and NNS and extends that support to other subjects.
PPA	Planning preparation and assessment – the National Agreement on Workforce Reform sets out a guarantee of 10% of timetable time to be given to teachers for these tasks from September, 2005.
PSD	Personal and social development
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RAISE	Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through School Self-evaluation (produced by Ofsted)
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests
Schools Forum	Set up to enable representatives of governing bodies to meet with members and officers of the Council to consider matters of educational strategy, funding, etc.
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning

SEF	Self-evaluation Form
SEN	Special educational need
SIAS	School Improvement and Advisory Service – provided by and purchased from the LEA
Single Status	This is an agreement which seeks to standardise conditions of service of <u>all</u> categories of staff employed in local government (with the exception of teachers). The Solihull scheme, negotiated with unions, came into effect mainly in 2001 and staff appointed since that date are automatically on the new conditions. Staff in post before that date had their conditions amended and, in some areas, protected.
SIP	School Improvement Plan – sets outline plans for 3 years and detailed plans for the forthcoming year.
SISS	Specialist Inclusion Support Service (local authority experts on SEN)
SMT	Senior Management Team
SPOKI	Solihull Profile of Key Indicators – a file of our data
SSE	School Self-evaluation
SSG	Schools Support Grant – previously known as ‘Brown’ money after the Chancellor – is part of the school budget but is not ring-fenced.
Standards Fund	Funds, both revenue and capital, allocated by central government through the LEA for specific purposes.
Statement of SEN	The statement that identifies all a child’s special educational needs and the arrangements needed to meet those needs, either within mainstream or a special school.
SSE	School self evaluation
STP	Short term planning
Threshold	After point 6 the main scale, teachers then have to fulfil certain criteria to pass through the threshold to get to the Upper scale.
UPS	Upper pay scale – for teaching staff. Now runs from UPS1 to UPS 3. Staff achieving UPS1 remain there for 2 years and are then eligible for progression to the next point, subject to successful appraisal.
Virement	The movement of funds between budget headings
Workforce Reform	The national agreement is introducing phased changes to teachers’ contracts by removing administrative tasks, limiting time spent covering colleagues, giving guaranteed non contact time (see PPA), and leadership and management time for those with management roles.

APPENDIX B

STAFFING

To be updated for September 09

APPENDIX C

CURRENT POLICIES

To be updated following Governing Body meeting in September