

# Governing the School of the Future



department for  
**education and skills**  
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence



# List of contents

	Page
<b>Foreword by Derek Twigg</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Government's Ambitions for our Schools</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The role and contribution of Governing Bodies</b>	<b>5</b>
Governance and School Leadership	5
Membership of the Governing Body	7
The Challenge	8
<b>Governor support and training</b>	<b>9</b>
Future Developments on Support and Training	10
Investment in Governing Body Training and Support	10
Role of the Chair	11
<b>Governor recruitment and profile raising</b>	<b>13</b>
Support for Governor Recruitment	13
The School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS)	14
Raising the Profile of School Governorship	14
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Annex A: Further information</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Annex B: Categories of Governor</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Endorsements</b>	<b>20</b>

# Foreword



The aim of the Government is to ensure that all children have the best possible education, tailored to their needs, interests and aptitudes. Governing bodies are central to achieving this aim, and this document – *Governing the School of the Future* – looks at the role of the governing body in the early 21st Century, celebrates the many achievements of our system of governance, and looks ahead to the challenges and opportunities for the future.

*Governing the School of the Future* is essentially a document for school governors and potential school governors. But I hope it will also be of interest to employers. Employers who actively support their staff to serve as governors know that by doing so they are making an excellent investment in the development of their workforce and in the future of the community. I hope that more and more employers will be encouraged to follow the examples in this document.

The role of the governing body has changed beyond recognition over the past twenty years. With the introduction of local management of schools and further reforms, governing bodies have become the strategic leaders of schools. They are rightly responsible and accountable in law and in practice for major decisions about the school and its future. Governing bodies are equal partners in leadership with the head teacher and senior management team. We want to see them taking a full part in driving the improvement and culture of the school. I welcome the fact that LEA governors are increasingly appointed because of the contribution they can make to the school and not on the basis of political affiliation.

The time is now right to celebrate the contribution and achievements of school governors and to explore what Government and others need to do to support governing bodies to meet the challenges of the future.

I personally welcome the work that school governors contribute towards our education system and I recognise the huge debt owed to governors. I have been a governor myself at several schools, including a period as Chair of Governors at The Bankfield School, and I continue to be impressed by their enthusiasm and dedication. As the Minister with responsibility for school governance I am looking forward to meeting governors at schools and conferences and in other settings.

I also pay tribute to the work that national and local organisations do to support school governors. The national governor associations, Coordinators of Governor Services, diocesan bodies and the School Governors' One-Stop Shop all contribute to ensuring the effectiveness of governing bodies across the country. All have an important role to play in the future development of our schools and their government.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Derek Twigg". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**DEREK TWIGG**  
**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools**

# The Government's Ambitions for our Schools

## Introduction

1. The funding and reforms we have introduced to the education system since 1997 have made a difference. The number of teachers is at its highest level since 1981 and the proportion of schools with good or better leadership and management has risen to around three-quarters, as compared to around half in 1997/98. ICT is transforming education – with over 99% of schools in England connected to the Internet. We now have an education system that is amongst the best in the world. Compared to 1998 about 84,000 more 11 year olds at the end of their primary schooling are achieving the expected level for their age in maths and around 60,000 more are doing so in English. In the secondary phase 14 year olds are performing better than ever before in English, maths and science; and 53 percent of 16 year olds are now achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C, compared with 45 percent in 1997.
2. We should celebrate these achievements – they are down to the hard work of teachers, headteachers, support staff, pupils, and governors. But there is much to do and this is not the time to be complacent. The Government's recent *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners*<sup>1</sup> sets out a vision for a radically reshaped system for delivering education and children's services. For schools there are two central aspirations:
  - all pupils to benefit from personalised learning – that is, a broad and balanced curriculum and extra-curricular learning that suits them, builds on what they know, takes account of their needs, allows them to have a say about their learning, and helps them to reach their full potential;
  - all schools increasingly to drive their own improvement, enjoying more autonomy and freedom while being properly accountable for the services they provide and cooperating with other schools and providers of other services to drive system-wide improvement.
3. In order to support schools and improve outcomes for children and young people, the Government is committed to bringing together all those who provide services for children and families in each local area. These changes, which are set out in more detail in *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*<sup>2</sup> (and in subsequent documents), will provide unprecedented opportunities for new ways of working and for closer collaboration between schools and other service providers.
4. Personalised learning means tailoring education to individual needs so as to fulfil every pupil's potential. This is not a new initiative – many schools have tailored their curriculum and teaching methods to meet pupil needs with great success for many years. We want to help all schools and teachers establish their own approaches to personalised learning, so that across the education system the learning needs and talents of children and young people are used to guide decision-making. We would like schools and school governing bodies to join a national conversation about how personalised learning can be used to drive success in every school<sup>3</sup>.

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1 Available at: [www.teachernet.gov.uk/5yearstrategy](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/5yearstrategy)

2 Available at: [www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters/)

3 More information on personalised learning is available at: [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning/](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning/)

5. The agenda set out in the *Five Year Strategy* is challenging, but offers real and exciting opportunities for schools:
- a. **Extra flexibility in the system for schools to innovate.** There will be guaranteed three year budgets for every school from 2006<sup>4</sup>, so that governing bodies and headteachers have unprecedented financial security and confidence to plan for the future. Every secondary school will be able to become a specialist school with a mission to build a centre of curriculum excellence and specialist schools will be able to take on a second specialism to develop their mission further.
  - b. **Collaboration between schools and other partners.** Schools will increasingly work with other partners, including private, voluntary and community sector providers and health and social care services, to determine how best to meet the needs of children, the school and the community, as part of the Every Child Matters agenda. Schools will also be able to form Foundation Partnerships, which will enable groups of schools to raise standards and to work together to take on wider responsibilities for the pupils within their local community.
  - c. **An intelligent accountability framework.** A New Relationship with Schools<sup>5</sup> will cut red tape and thus make it easier for governing bodies to play their key role in accountability, a role that includes responsibility for the school's performance management policy and for managing the headteacher's performance. The inspection burden on schools will be halved and there will be simpler data and information systems, making sure schools are not asked again and again for the same information. A school profile<sup>6</sup> will give quality information about the breadth and depth of the school's performance and ambitions.
  - d. **All schools will be encouraged to become extended schools<sup>7</sup>**, offering a wide range of services for pupils, families and the community, in partnership with other service providers. The *Five Year Strategy* sets out a core offer of extended services for each phase that we expect to see developing in schools over time. For the primary phase these services are a broad range of study support/enrichment activities before and after school, parenting support, swift referral systems to multi-agency support as well as the growth of 8am-6pm, year round childcare opportunities. For the secondary phase, the offer is similar but with more scope for schools to provide community access to sports, arts and ICT facilities, for co-location of multi-agency teams and to provide a wide range of things for young people to do. Provision will often be developed in partnership with other services and the voluntary and community sectors. Governing bodies will play a key role in supporting the development of these services and will often find themselves working with a broad range of partners to deliver improved outcomes for children.
6. Delivering the vision for schools will depend on strong governing bodies<sup>8</sup> responsible and accountable for strategic decisions about schools and their future. The *Five Year Strategy* sets out proposals for giving governing bodies more freedom and support to develop schools to meet the needs of pupils, parents and the wider community. Governing bodies will therefore need to have a strong and varied membership, with the energy and capacity to make the most of the opportunities available to schools. We need to make sure that all our schools, particularly those that are struggling to improve, are served by governors who can rise to the challenges set out in the *Five Year Strategy*.

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4 More information on school funding is available at: [www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/schoolfunding/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/schoolfunding/)

5 More information on the New Relationship with Schools is at: [www.teachernet.gov.uk/newrelationship](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/newrelationship). Some of the proposals may require legislative changes.

6 More information on the school profile is available at: [www.teachernet.gov.uk/schoolprofiles](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/schoolprofiles)

7 More information on extended schools is available at: [www.teachernet.gov.uk/extendedschools](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/extendedschools)

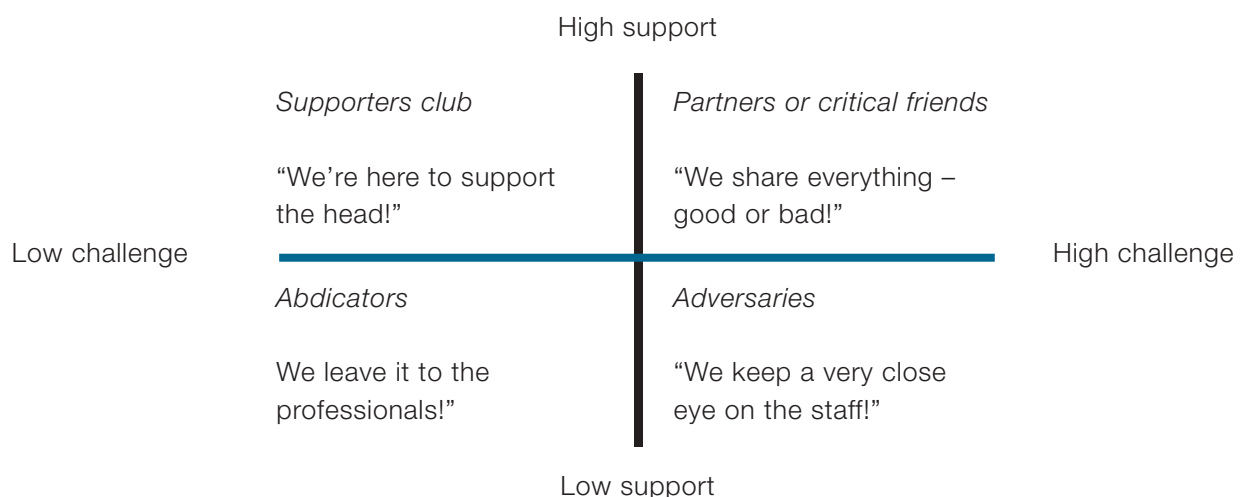
8 References to schools and governing bodies in this document apply to maintained schools and their governing bodies only (and not to Academies and independent schools).

# The role and contribution of Governing Bodies

## Governance and School Leadership

7. The governing body, headteacher and senior management team together constitute the leadership team of the school. Good headteachers recognise the importance of challenge and support from their governing bodies especially at a time when managing change has become a key role for all headteachers.
8. A great number of schools already have many of the characteristics we want for every school: specialism for secondary schools, an ethos of success and community responsibility, and autonomy and freedom for governors and heads to lead their schools and develop provision to meet the needs of their pupils. The challenges are increasing year on year but so are the rewards. Schools need strong governor and staff teams if they are to operate successfully in the first part of the 21st century.
9. The head is the key figure in the school, and the selection of a headteacher is arguably the most important decision a governing body will make. As schools become more responsible for driving their own improvement and take on wider roles in the community, appointing the right person to lead and manage the school becomes ever more critical.
10. The choice of governors to sit on the headteacher selection panel should be guided by the need to ensure that the governing body makes the best possible choice for the school. Governors on the selection panel need to feel confident that they can identify the personal and professional qualities needed to lead and manage the school and its school staff to achieve high educational standards.
11. Where governing bodies that do not have a great deal of experience in selecting and appointing senior staff are making senior appointments, they may wish to seek help from other schools. Governing bodies have been able to draw on the assistance of governors from other schools in carrying out their responsibilities since the introduction of the collaboration provisions in September 2003 and these collaboration arrangements provide an excellent opportunity to bring in expertise. In addition, local authority and diocesan staff are able to provide valuable technical and legal support from an education and employment perspective. Governing bodies might also seek advice from, for example, the Secondary Heads Association's (SHA) headship consultancy service.
12. Governors also have an important role to play in promoting leadership development in schools. They bring knowledge of leadership development opportunities from both inside and outside education. Governing bodies should be establishing a strategic framework for leadership development as well as championing continuous professional development (CPD) for all school staff.
13. The overall purpose of governing bodies remains to help the schools they lead provide the best possible education for pupils. This involves, in particular:
  - a. setting the school's vision and strategic aims, and agreeing plans and policies, making creative use of available resources;
  - b. monitoring and evaluating performance and acting as a critical friend to the headteacher to support and challenge them in managing the school;
  - c. ensuring that the school is accountable to the children and parents it serves, and to its local community and to those who fund and maintain it, as well as to the staff it employs.

14. In all they do, governing bodies need to focus on their strategic role and on how they can support the school to raise standards. We know that governing bodies do a good job: the Ofsted report *'The Work of School Governors'* indicates that the quality of school governance has been improving at a time when governing bodies have taken on more responsibilities, such as the performance management of headteachers. The same report indicated that 90% of schools have governing bodies that are satisfactory or better in fulfilling their responsibilities, and that about 60% of governing bodies were graded good to excellent.
15. We know too that good governance can make an impact in the classroom. Where governance is good, standards of attainment, the quality of teaching and pupil behaviour are all likely to be better than in schools where governance is weak.
16. On the other hand, schools with weak governance are likely to be less successful overall. We know that school governance tends to be less effective in disadvantaged areas and this presents a challenge we cannot ignore. If we know that good governance contributes to excellence, we must ensure that schools in disadvantaged areas have excellent governing bodies if we are to achieve our aim of a school system characterised by high equity where high standards are not reserved for those from advantaged backgrounds. Helping such schools recruit and retain governors who can make a difference must be a priority. This is discussed in more detail in paragraphs 44 to 49.
17. *'The Work of School Governors'* indicates that while governors in about 90% of schools have a satisfactory or better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their school, they are not always as successful as they might be in shaping the direction of the school's work.
18. Those governing bodies that do best in providing strategic leadership combine a high degree of challenge with high levels of support; they act as a 'critical friend' to the headteacher and senior management team. It is not always easy to get the balance right. The following diagram<sup>9</sup> shows the attitudes governing bodies may adopt in the relationship with the headteacher in the joint endeavour of leading the school:



19. Ofsted, in a report on how governors in schools in special measures have improved their work<sup>10</sup>, identified the following characteristics of effective governing bodies:
  - governors are clear about the aims of the school, and the values they wish to promote;
  - the governing body and all its committees have clear terms of reference, and an inter-related programme of meetings;

9 Based on page 9 of 'Research Matters' No 20, Summer 2003, NSIN, Institute of Education, University of London

10 Page 4, 'Making it Better – improving school governance', Ofsted 2001

- governors bring a wide range of expertise and experience, and attend meetings regularly;
  - the chair of governors gives a clear lead;
  - meetings are chaired well, and efficiently clerked;
  - there is a clear school plan, understood by all, which focuses on improving the school;
  - relationships between the governors and the staff are open and honest;
  - governors' training is linked to the school's priorities, and the needs of individual governors;
  - individual governors are clear about their role;
  - the school's documentation is systematically reviewed;
  - governors have rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work.
20. Good governance alone cannot guarantee that a school will be successful. Conversely, weak governance may not prevent a school from being successful overall, particularly where the headteacher and staff are strong. But it follows that such schools could be even more successful with a strong governing body.
21. We need to support all governing bodies to be as effective as the best in providing the support and challenge headteachers and senior management teams need to run successful schools.

### CASE STUDY:

'Our Ofsted inspection revealed how little governors knew about the school. Turning things around required a huge collective effort – we had to tackle behaviour, quality of teaching, assessment and target setting procedures, parental involvement, and quality of the learning environment – at the same time planning a move to a new site and working with a new headteacher. The majority of governors were willing, but finding it difficult to tackle their monitoring role. We were concerned that not enough was being done to make improvements but finding it difficult to access information without overburdening the head and staff.

It was agreed to link the governors' monitoring to the evidence collected for Ofsted in the S3 and S4 forms<sup>11</sup>. Having identified key tasks for each committee, explicit links were made between the S3, S4 and School Improvement Plan with questions divided between the committees and the full governing body. All governors have copies of the working draft of the S4 and checklists on where to look for evidence to reach a view on strengths and areas for development. This helped the head and staff plan their evidence gathering and reporting and kept governors focused on the important issues.

This year's SATs results were better than all the neighbouring schools, and just over 10% of pupils achieved level 5 in Maths, Science and in English, whereas 18 months earlier no one in the school was prepared to predict any children achieving level 5.'

Chair of governors of Orchard Meadow Primary School in Oxfordshire – the school came out of special measures on 11 March 2004.

### Membership of the Governing Body

22. The school governance 'stakeholder model' is designed to ensure representation of key stakeholders (parents, staff, community, local authority, foundation and sponsors). The stakeholder model helps governing bodies to be accountable to parents, pupils, staff and the local community.

11 Form S3 – Governors' audit of statutory requirements, Form S4 – Self-evaluation report. More information on these forms is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). To be replaced by Self Evaluation Form under new framework, as part of the New Relationship with Schools.

23. Governing bodies need to reflect the contribution of the key stakeholders:
- Parents – representing the consumers of the school and its services;
  - The community – representing the consumers of the school (and, in the case of extended schools for example, may also represent the providers of other services);
  - School staff, the headteacher and the foundation (where one exists) – representing the providers of the school;
  - The local authority – responsible for ensuring sufficient education provision in the area, and for funding;
  - In addition, the governing body can appoint sponsor governors – representing those who support the school and its services.
24. We encourage extended schools to draw governors from the various agencies of the services that they provide, such as health and social care, adult and community learning, and from voluntary, community and private sector organisations providing services such as childcare, youth services etc.
25. We know that extended schools have been considering how best to make governance arrangements work. The existing governance framework gives considerable flexibility and makes it possible for individuals from a wide range of services to be appointed on a governing body, but we are considering if the current framework offers sufficient flexibility. We would be interested to hear from schools that would like to share their experiences with us (please send your comments to [Future.GOVERNANCE@dfes.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Future.GOVERNANCE@dfes.gsi.gov.uk)).

## The Challenge

26. The best governing bodies will include people with a wide range of skills, experience and backgrounds. They will include:
- People who have the skills and abilities to allow the governing body to drive forward school improvement. Governing bodies benefit from candidates with experience of building or running a successful organisation in the public, private or voluntary sectors. Experience gained outside the education service can be as valuable as that gained within.
  - People who represent the local community. Both schools and local communities are better served when governors bring the perspective of the community to their decision-making, and the community feels connected to the school through its governing body. The membership of the governing body should, wherever possible, represent the community. Governing bodies have a valuable role to play in developing strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds and in contributing to community cohesion in their local area.
27. Of course these groups are not mutually exclusive.
28. Some schools carry governor vacancies and do not have the governors they need to provide accountability and strategic leadership. Some governors do not get the support they need. Our priority is to ensure all governors get the support and training they deserve and to help schools and others recruit high-calibre governors.



# Governor support and training

29. Good governor training and support is the key to ensuring that all governing bodies are as effective as the best and equipped to fulfil the important functions we now demand of them. Central and local government, their agencies, the governor organisations and other partners all have a valuable role to play in supporting governing bodies. The challenging agenda outlined in the *Five Year Strategy* means this is becoming even more important.
30. As part of the Department's Governor Support and Training Strategy we have worked in partnership with Consortium 52, local authority Co-ordinators of Governor Services (COGS) and other key partners to deliver:
  - *the National Training Programme for New Governors and*
  - *the National Training Programme for Clerks to School Governing Bodies.*
31. In addition the Eastern Leadership Centre, working with COGS, produced a Chairs and Heads Programme this year:
  - *Taking the Chair* (a national skills based programme for governing body chairs, vice chairs and committee chairs) aimed at giving chairs the skills they need to operate effectively.
  - *Leading Together* (a nine month school based joint development programme for governors, the headteacher, and other members of the school leadership team, focused on a school improvement activity selected by the school itself).
32. The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) has been involved in advising on the development of these programmes and in the regional roll-out of the materials to governor trainers. In partnership with the national governor associations and the local authorities' National Co-ordinators of Governor Services (NCOGS) we have been working with NCSL to ensure that governing bodies are recognised as equal partners in school leadership.
33. Working with these important partners and NCSL the following governor development needs have been identified:
  - Opportunities to develop and practise the skills of effective governance (including communication skills, organisational skills, team working, strategic and analytical skills; effectively challenging as well as supporting the school leadership team).
  - Enjoying opportunities to build effective relationships with school leaders through some joint training so that, as school governors, they can take their rightful place as partners in school leadership and as community leaders.
  - Understanding what knowledge, experience, skills and attributes contribute to effective leadership so that they are able to draw on this knowledge when appointing headteachers and other members of the school's leadership team.
  - Understanding the Government's agenda for education in schools (including leadership, an explicit focus on learning and teaching, remodelling the school workforce, transformational partnerships and specialisms and collaboration).
  - Where governors wish, to have their commitment, learning and development recognised by the provision of accredited training opportunities.

34. Although there is more to do, progress has been made. On the first of the bullet points above, NCSL's Remodelling Team has collaborated with DfES, NCOGS, the National Governors' Council (NGC) and the National Association of School Governors (NASG, formerly NAGM) to produce three briefing and information packs for governors on workforce remodelling. The packs include practical advice as well as case studies. The new programmes, *Taking the Chair* and *Leading Together*, support the second point. Accreditation will take longer to achieve. As a first step, we are exploring with NCSL the possibility of a certificate jointly signed by both bodies for governors completing *Taking the Chair*.
35. NCSL has recognised that the strategic leadership role of governors needs to be acknowledged and promoted appropriately through its own programmes. NCSL's affiliated centres are aware of the importance of governance in strategic leadership.

## Future Developments on Support and Training

36. Future developments will include:
- Joint team working involving local authority school improvement officers and governor support officers to deliver *Leading Together*. This will create increased opportunity for continuing professional development (CPD) in relation to governance and school improvement. A new Standards Framework for governor support service staff, building on the one developed for school improvement officers in local authorities, supported by the DfES and developed by COGS and other partners, should help to support joint working.
  - DfES, COGS and the NSSIPs Partnership (National Standards for School Improvement Professionals) developing joint guidance to support governing bodies in carrying out their crucial role in school self evaluation.
  - NCSL contributing to COGS' and other governor trainers' CPD. For example, the recent *Taking the Chair* roll-outs, organised through NCSL by the Eastern Leadership Centre, have provided some facilitation skills training. NCSL's Consultant Leader Programme provides relevant materials which could be shared more widely.
  - NCSL supporting and promoting some joint training for headteachers and chairs of governors. With KPMG they plan to offer a second phase of the successful Financial Management in Schools (FMIS) Programme to schools. The programme, which is also available through GovernorNet<sup>12</sup>, began in October 2003, and has been extended so that in 2004/5 it will support schools in both financial management and Workforce Remodelling issues. The programme aims to help schools plan and manage their resources effectively in order to achieve the highest possible standards, and create greater financial stability. Strategic financial management is a key skill for governors and headteachers and it is a powerful tool for managing change, such as implementing the National Workforce Agreement and remodelling the school workforce.
  - We are working with NCSL and other key partners on joint training for governors and headteachers to enable them to recruit staff effectively to meet the Bichard Report's recommendations on the need to protect and safeguard children.

## Investment in Governing Body Support and Training

37. It is important that governors take responsibility for their own learning and development, both individually and collectively. Many governing bodies have found that a skills audit of their own membership can be a useful way of ensuring that the corporate governing body makes maximum use of its collective expertise and that work is shared out more equally between members. Information about skills gaps can also be used to inform decisions about filling governor vacancies.

Governing body self-evaluation has also been developed by many local authorities as a powerful way of informing governing body development.

38. There will always be a need for some specialist courses, e.g. for new governors and performance management governors, to be offered centrally or through families or federations of schools within a local authority. Governors who attend these courses value the opportunity to meet governors from other schools, share experiences and compare good (and not so good) practice.
39. There is, however, also a strong case for school-based training for individual governing bodies, particularly in the broad areas of Ofsted preparation and school improvement. The growing prevalence of governing body self-evaluation programmes should drive the move towards needs-led rather than centrally prescribed governor training.
40. The best local authorities are providing and effectively promoting a balanced package of centrally-run courses, cluster group training and school based training for whole governing bodies on request. This is commonly supplemented by the diocese (or other providers) for the governors of voluntary schools. Many local authorities offer bespoke training specially tailored to meet individual governing body or governor needs. Greater personalisation and choice should apply as much to governors as to other learners. All DfES national programmes are available in self-study versions to recognise the fact that governors lead busy lives and cannot always find the time to attend face-to-face training.
41. The Government believes that it is extremely important that schools take seriously the need for governor support and training when deciding how to allocate their budgets. Governing bodies need to overcome any understandable reluctance to spend money on their own needs, including professional clerking and training. With guaranteed three year budgets for every school from 2006, governing bodies will have unprecedented financial security and freedom to forward plan, which should make it easier for them to make provision for their own training.

## **Role of the Chair**

42. School governance is a corporate activity, but an effective chair is essential to ensure that business is dealt with appropriately and meetings conducted efficiently. Maintaining work/life balance is as important for governors as it is for school staff. Just as senior management teams in schools cannot depend solely on the headteacher for effectiveness, governing bodies cannot rely solely on their chair. Through the way they conduct meetings and deal with business in between, chairs can ensure that the skills of all governors are effectively utilised and developed.
43. The new *Taking the Chair* programme will help to develop the skills of chairs and vice-chairs as well as committee chairs. The programme (which is also available as a self-study option) will provide a route through to being chair which emerging chairs will find useful in developing their skills and confidence. This should increase the pool of individuals able and willing to take on this important role. Working with NCSL, we also plan to explore ways in which the cadre of 'super chairs' able to support other chairs, announced in the Department's *Five Year Strategy*, could be developed through a mentoring scheme.

## CASE STUDY:

Essex County Council carried out an information audit – ‘Governing for Success’<sup>13</sup> – to better understand the information and communication needs of governors. Two projects were developed as a result of this: ‘The Virtual Village’ and ‘The Next Chapter’. Both projects were launched in September 2003 and were designed by governors for governors, on the recommendations of governors.

The Virtual Village and The Next Chapter are two very practical ways of making it easier for governors to find, use and share information. The Virtual Village offers governors an online community on which to meet, share documents, and work together, either individually or in groups. The aim is to enable governors to be better informed, more confident and more effective. The Next Chapter offers case studies and easy to use, flexible self evaluation tools, including models and check lists that help governing bodies identify information gaps and ways of tackling them. Governing bodies can also use it to review and improve the understanding and quality of information new governors have received as part of their induction. Quality induction through courses, and within the governing body itself, addresses the key issue of enabling new governors to contribute and benefit more quickly and positively.<sup>14</sup>



13 More information on this audit and related projects is available at [www.essexcc.gov.uk/governors](http://www.essexcc.gov.uk/governors)

14 Page 33, Governing for Success, 2003, Essex County Council

# Governor recruitment and profile raising

44. Of the 350,000 current governor places in England around 12% are unfilled, with the highest proportion of vacancies amongst community governors<sup>15</sup>. While the average rate does not vary greatly between types of authority, we know that many inner-city and disadvantaged areas have particular problems attracting and retaining governors.
45. Given that we know that good governance goes hand in hand with high quality of provision for pupils, encouraging people to serve as governors in such schools must be a priority for all those responsible for governor appointments. There will always be a turnover of governors, but vacancies create additional burdens on serving governors, disturb the balance between the stakeholder groups, and reduce the overall effectiveness of governing bodies. Governing bodies, local authorities and other appointing bodies should make every effort to fill vacant places quickly with suitable candidates.

## CASE STUDY:

'I have been a governor at Audley Infant School in Blackburn for over five years. I started as a parent governor and now serve as an LEA non-political governor. It took a great deal of persistence from the headteacher to persuade me to become a governor in the first place. She felt that my knowledge of the diverse local community would be an asset to the school. I received excellent governor training and support, which really helped me, and I find being a governor a rewarding experience.

The emphasis is usually on what members of the community can bring to the school, not on what the individual can gain from being involved in the school. It has given me great satisfaction to know that in some small way I have helped to make a positive difference to children's lives. By acting as the school's ambassador in the community and the community's ambassador in the school, I feel that I have helped to build bridges between home and school.'

Rokaiya Foolat, LEA governor at Audley Infant School in Blackburn.

## Support for Governor Recruitment

46. Governing bodies and local authorities are responsible for deciding how best to recruit good quality, suitable candidates. Both governing bodies and local authorities should make efforts to draw from a wide and varied pool of prospective governors. The Education Network (TEN) publication *Do the Right Thing*<sup>16</sup> reports on the wide range of methods used to recruit new governors, including local press, websites, community and voluntary groups and through existing governors. *Do the Right Thing* offers a number of good examples of successful recruitment activities. We welcome the fact that many local authorities use a wide range of recruitment channels in order to find suitable, high-calibre candidates and have moved away from making appointments based on political affiliation. We hope that all authorities will adopt this approach in order to create more opportunities to strengthen governing bodies and provide the best possible support to schools.

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15 Community governors are appointed by the governing body, but this does not apply to Voluntary Aided schools as these schools do not have community governors.

16 This is a priced publication (£4.95) available from [www.ten.info](http://www.ten.info)

47. The DfES provides support to the recruitment activities of schools and local authorities with its generic Help Schools Help Children booklets and recruitment toolkit<sup>17</sup>.

## **The School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS)**

48. The School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) was established in 1999 by the Department in conjunction with private sector partners to recruit school governor volunteers with transferable management skills. The remit of the SGOSS, originally linked to the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative, has been extended and now includes 89 local authorities across England. However, if SGOSS receives candidates from outside those areas they will refer them on to the appropriate local authority.
49. SGOSS has fostered links with a number of large companies and have used these links to successfully identify governor candidates by carrying out in-company recruitment events. SGOSS works with employers to identify significant benefits that they can gain from supporting staff in their role as governors. When volunteers contact SGOSS they forward their details to the local authority in the area where they live or work. Local authorities should aim to place these volunteers with a suitable school as soon as possible so that they can start helping to make a difference.

### **CASE STUDY:**

'I would like to thank School Governors' One-Stop Shop for the opportunity you gave me to help make a difference in a local school. I joined a governing body that was dealing with a lot of issues. Within six months I had been elected Chair and found myself with a steep learning curve! I have relished every minute! I have learnt new skills and gained an enormous amount of satisfaction from what we have achieved.

I find it truly amazing that these opportunities could be on your doorstep and you may never know!'

Carolyn Stokes, Chair of Governors, Beechdale Primary School.

## **Raising the Profile of School Governorship**

50. Recent research<sup>18</sup> has suggested that although school governors are the largest volunteer force in the country, there is a lack of understanding amongst the general public of the governor role and its importance. Governors' duties and responsibilities have increased considerably in recent years and we know that some governors feel that they are not sufficiently appreciated and that they would like more recognition for their hard work.
51. The DfES values the important role governors play as part of the school leadership team. Governors can already be nominated for national honours<sup>19</sup> and we are working to raise public awareness of school governors to highlight and celebrate their work and publicise the importance of the role they play in raising educational standards. We are considering further proposals and we would welcome your comments and suggestions (please send your comments to [Future.GOVERNANCE@dfes.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Future.GOVERNANCE@dfes.gsi.gov.uk)). Raising awareness and celebrating achievement will, we hope, encourage people to become governors and will also help the retention of serving governors.
52. Employers are also being encouraged to recognise the benefits brought to their companies by staff who volunteer to become school governors.

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17 These can be found on the 'training and recruitment' page of GovernorNet ([www.governornet.co.uk](http://www.governornet.co.uk)).

18 'Barriers to Participation for Under-Represented Groups in School Governance', Institute for Volunteering Research. DfES Research Report 500, December 2003.

19 Any person can nominate an individual for a UK honour. More information on nominating a person for an honour can be found at: [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/ceremonial](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/ceremonial)

*'Successful schools need effective governing bodies. Skills learnt in the workplace can add real value to these governing bodies and there are real business benefits to getting involved. Employees benefit from developing their skills and gaining new experiences. For companies, the benefits include a more motivated and better skilled staff and improved community relations through active support for schools.'*

Digby Jones, Director General, CBI

*'Union members can make a real difference as part of a school governing body. By applying their experience from the world of work to the strategic leadership of a school they can make a valuable contribution to their local community. Being a school governor is also a great opportunity for employees to develop their skills in a different environment.'*

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber

53. Governors with a business background have said<sup>20</sup> that being a school governor has enhanced skills such as 'negotiating, conflict resolution and influencing', and that it 'has increased my sense of doing something worthwhile', 'improves your perspective', is a 'thoroughly worthwhile, and importantly, enjoyable experience'. Headteachers have commented in the same study that these governors have 'the ability and confidence to ask challenging questions' and that they 'listen to ideas in a non-threatening way and hold things together'.
54. The SGOSS has forged close links with many companies including the BBC and HSBC Bank, who both offer support to staff who serve as school governors. The BBC recognises that 'being a school governor is an excellent opportunity for staff to get involved in the community', and HSBC Bank is extremely happy that members of their organisation have become school governors and actively encourages staff to volunteer.
55. Governors need to be able to visit their schools during the working day and they are entitled by law to reasonable time off from work; however, it is for local agreement between employer and employee as to whether this time off is paid and the amount of time off that is granted. The Government would like to thank the many companies, such as Co-operative Financial Services and Carphone Warehouse, who give their staff paid time off to undertake their governance work.



20 From: 'Skills Development in School Governor Volunteers: The Experience of Staff from Linklaters and Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein in Hackney Schools' by Dr Anne Punter and Professor John Adams, University of Hertfordshire'.

# Conclusion

56. Governing bodies are vitally important to our schools. Above all, they provide strategic leadership to schools and ensure accountability and challenge for parents and communities. These twin elements are essential to our devolved system and our determination to provide autonomy and freedom to frontline providers.
57. Given the importance of the role of governors, it is right that we celebrate their commitment and achievements. But we also need to think about what more we can do to make governing bodies even better. Hence our plans to develop mentoring arrangements for experienced and effective Chairs of Governors to provide support to others. Governing bodies also need to invest in their own support and development. Expenditure on governing bodies should be seen as an essential investment in the future of the school. We hope that the financial security of three year budgets for schools will encourage governing bodies to do this.
58. The *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* envisages important changes to the way schools work and the way they work with other schools and providers. What will not change, however, is the role of the governing body and our commitment to robust and confident governance for all schools.
59. We have set out in this document what the Department will do to support governing bodies; this will include building on the programmes *Taking the Chair* and *Leading Together* to develop mentoring programmes for chairs, and further work on joint training for headteachers and chairs of governors. We invite schools, local authorities, employers, governor organisations and others to help governing bodies rise to the challenges and make the most of the opportunities available to schools.
60. There will be quite a number of changes to the school system, as we have set out earlier in this document. But there is one critical element that will offer continuity: governing bodies are and will be school leaders.
61. We hope that you have found this document interesting and that it has introduced you to new ideas that may have something to offer for your school. We would be interested to hear your views on any of the issues discussed in '*Governing the School of the Future*'. If you would like to comment, please email: [Future.GOVERNANCE@dfes.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Future.GOVERNANCE@dfes.gsi.gov.uk) or contact the school governance team on 020 7925 5594.



# Annex A

Further information about training and support for school governors can be provided by Coordinators of Governor Services in local authorities, and by the following organisations:

- **GovernorLine** – a *free* professional helpline offering email and telephone support to school governors, clerks and individuals involved in school governance in England. **GovernorLine** is available Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., excluding public holidays, and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends.

Call **08000 722 181** or email at [www.governorline.info](http://www.governorline.info)

- **National Association of School Governors** (NASG, formerly NAGM)

2nd Floor SBQ1  
Smallbrook Queensway  
Birmingham B5 4HG  
Tel: 0121 643 5787  
[www.nasg.org.uk](http://www.nasg.org.uk)

- **National Governors Council** (NGC)

Lonsdale House  
52 Blucher Street  
Birmingham B1 1QU  
Tel: 0121 616 5104  
[www.ngc.org.uk](http://www.ngc.org.uk)

- **Information for School and College Governors** (ISCG)

Avondale School  
Sirdar Road  
London W11 4EE  
Tel: 020 7229 0200  
[www.governors.fsnet.co.uk/](http://www.governors.fsnet.co.uk/)

- **Church of England Education Division**

Church House  
Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3NZ  
Tel: 020 7898 1515  
[www.cofe.anglican.org/info/education/](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/education/)

- **Catholic Education Service**

39 Eccleston Square  
London SW1V 1BX  
Tel: 020 7901 4880  
[www.cesew.org.uk](http://www.cesew.org.uk)

■ **School Governors' One-Stop Shop**

64 Essex Road

Islington

London

N1 8LR

Tel: 0870 241 3883

[www.schoolgovernors-oss.org.uk](http://www.schoolgovernors-oss.org.uk)

**Other addresses for further information**

■ DfES School Governors' website, GovernorNet: [www.governornet.co.uk](http://www.governornet.co.uk)

■ DfES website for schools: [www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)

■ DfES School Governance Unit Tel: 01325 391183

■ DfES Publications Centre Tel: 0845 602 2260

■ Your local authority (see the GovernorNet Link: [www.governornet.co.uk/lealinks](http://www.governornet.co.uk/lealinks)) or Diocesan Governor Support Services.



# Annex B

This annex provides brief details of the categories of school governor:

- **Parent governors** – (all state schools) Parents, including carers, of registered pupils at the school and parents of children for whom provision (educational or other) is made on the premises of the school, are eligible to stand for election for parent governorship at the school. Parent governors are elected by other parents at the school (or appointed by the governing body if insufficient people stand for election).
- **Staff governors** – (all state schools) Both teaching and support staff paid to work at the school are eligible for staff governorship. Staff governors are elected by teaching and support staff paid to work at the school. The headteacher is a staff governor by virtue of his or her office (unless he or she chooses to resign as a governor).
- **Community governors** (Community, Foundation and Voluntary Controlled schools) – Appointed by the governing body to represent community interests. Community governors can be persons who live or work in the community served by the school, or persons who do not work or live close to the school but are committed to good governance and the success of the school.
- **LEA governors** (all state schools) – Appointed by the LEA. LEAs can appoint any eligible person as an LEA governor.
- **Foundation governors** (Foundation and Voluntary schools) – Appointed by the school's founding body, church or other organisation named in the school's instrument of government or may hold the governorship ex-officio, as the holder of an office specified.
- **Partnership governors** (Foundation schools without a foundation only) – Replace Foundation governors if the school does not have a foundation.
- **Sponsor governors** (all state schools) – Discretionary category; individuals who give substantial assistance to the school, financially or in kind, can be appointed by the governing body as sponsor governors. If the governing body wants to appoint one or two sponsor governors it must seek nominations from the sponsor(s).
- **Associate members** (all state schools) – Discretionary category; can be appointed by the governing body to attend committee meetings and are entitled to attend full governing body meetings. The definition of associate member is wide and pupils and persons representing providers of other services can be appointed as associate members.

## Endorsements for ‘Governing the School of the Future’:



*NCSL is committed to promoting governors as partners in the strategic leadership of schools. When governors are effective in this partnership they help maximise our young people’s life chances.*

**NCSL**



*I believe ‘Governing the School of the Future’ has an important contribution to make to effective school governance. It successfully acknowledges the contribution governors make, the changing nature of their responsibilities and the future challenges they will be required to deal with. Critically it highlights the importance of team work between the governing body and teaching staff. I look forward to ensuring the One-Stop Shop continues to contribute to improved school standards through its provision of high calibre and committed governor volunteers.*

**Steve Acklam, SGOSS**



*The dioceses and parishes of the Church of England are fully committed partners, with the government and with LEAs, in working for the highest quality of educational opportunity for young people in all schools. A majority of governors in VA schools, a minority in VC schools and many in Community schools are appointed by or emerge from the local Church. The Church of England Board of Education is glad to endorse this document as a further underpinning of the valuable service offered by these volunteers.*

**D.J. Whittington OBE**  
**National School Development Officer for the**  
**Church of England**





*HSBC Bank actively encourages staff to become school governors and we are delighted that this document celebrates the work of governors and the contribution business governors make to schools.'*

**HSBC Bank**



*FASNA is pleased to endorse this document. It provides a useful and positive summary of the role of Governors in the 21st Century and would be very helpful to give to new Governors as an overview of the expectations of them.*

**FASNA**



*An important criterion for a successful school is an effective governing body working in partnership with the headteacher and Senior Management Team. The NAHT is pleased to support the overall thrust of this document. We are sure it will be a valuable aid to building on the good practice which is already established in schools.*

**NAHT**



*The National Governors' Council welcomes the recognition, in 'Governing the School of the Future', of the importance of governing bodies in the leadership of schools. NGC supports the aim to raise the profile of governors and shares the desire to see a continued improvement in the standards of governance.*

**NGC**

*The National Association of School Governors (formerly NAGM) has campaigned for some 35 years on behalf of school governors. We are pleased to note official recognition of the value added to educational provision by the work of almost a third of a million volunteer governors. The appropriate support and resourcing of governance will be an essential aspect of the enhanced leadership role anticipated in "Governing the School of the Future".*

**NASG**

















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