



HEDINGHAM SCHOOL
AND SIXTH FORM

GOVERNORS' HANDBOOK

2025-2026

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Governing Body of Hedingham School.

Hedingham School and Sixth form converted to an independent academy on 1 January 2013. It achieved a good rating in a Full Ofsted Inspection in May 2013, with Behaviour and Safety being judged as outstanding. There was a one-day Ofsted Inspection in March 2017 which confirmed both these judgements. Ofsted subsequently inspected the school in March 2023 over a two-day period where a good rating was awarded.

If you are new to being a school governor there are likely to be many things you would like to know about what being a governor involves and many questions to which you would like answers. Your induction to the school will be with a meeting with the Chairman of Governors and either the Head or Deputy Head Teacher.

Being a School Governor can be like starting a new job. There is a lot to learn about the school and the way children are educated today. Methods of teaching children have made great progress in recent years, and the pace of change continues. In many ways it is likely to be quite different to how today's parents were taught when they were at school. To help with the learning process we have produced this handbook to help new governors understand their role and how a governing body works. The governing body is a democratic group, and the principles of operation are the same for any other similar group such as local councils and management groups of voluntary organisations. We all work very much as a team for the benefit of the school respecting each other's points of view but always acting as a corporate body accepting the decisions reached by the majority on the rare occasion, we are unable to reach a unanimous conclusion. Our relationship with the Headteacher and other staff at the school are excellent and all governors are committed to maintaining this – it is an essential part of our success.

This handbook helps to explain the roles and responsibilities of being a governor and how we as a governing body carry out our duties. For both new (and experienced) governors there are training courses run by the Local Authority and all governors are encouraged to take advantage of any training on offer. These courses are free of charge to members of the governing body. The Link Governor will keep the governing body informed on training courses available. In addition to this handbook Governors will be provided with a full list of meeting dates (please note these are set for the whole academic year each July) the Governing Body's Membership, Committee Structure, Committee Membership and Terms of Reference.

Governing Bodies have a strategic role in the development of the school and do not become involved in day-to-day management issues that are the role of the Headteacher.

Working in partnership with the Headteacher and staff we have made Hedingham School the success that it is today, and we very much hope your contribution will enable us to continue to build on this success.

Vision

This vision is driven through our school curriculum. Our aim is to ensure that the curriculum delivers the following principles:

- *To provide the knowledge and skills required to be successful learners*
- *To create resilient and independent learners who are able to meet the challenges of the 21st century*
- *To prepare learners for the next step in their education*
- *To broaden their horizons through a rich and varied enrichment programme*
- *To encourage learners to be active citizens who contribute positively to the community*

MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS

School will:	Governing Body will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand and respect its statutory role and purpose. • recognise the shared commitment to improving the education provided for all pupils • respect governors as volunteers who bring other skills, experiences and perspectives, and value their contribution • work openly with the governing body and provide clear, concise and relevant information on which to base decisions • enable all governors to become involved in the life of the school • contribute to the induction, training and development of governors • ensure that where educational jargon is unavoidable it is at least explained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respect the professional expertise of the Headteacher and staff • work openly in partnership with the Headteacher and staff for the benefit of the school and its pupils • demonstrate its commitment, collectively and individually • act and take decisions that are in the best interests of the school and not those of self, individuals or groups • support the school with parents and in the community • recognise the need for both governor induction and on-going training and development

The expectation of individual governors is that they will:

- enhance the work of the governing body
- demonstrate their commitment by getting to know the school and becoming involved in school life and activities
- prepare for meetings so that they are well informed, having at minimum read all the papers sent out with the agenda
- attend meetings (governing body/committees/working group) and play an active part
- support the school with parents and in the community
- recognise the corporate status of the governing body and the concept of collective responsibility
- respect confidentiality and the need to act with circumspection
- accept responsibility for their own training and development

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GOVERNING BODY

The governing body has specific responsibilities including:

- The responsibility for the conduct of the school
- Setting targets in standards and achievement
- Ensuring the School has a Curriculum policy, and delivers the statutory offer
- Monitor that Policies relating to the School's operation are prepared and are reviewed regularly
- Providing information for parents
- Financial management
- Personnel matters including staff appointments as appropriate
- Management and maintenance of buildings
- Pupil discipline and behaviour
- Monitoring and evaluating the activities of the school

ROLE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF GOVERNORS

The chairman's functions include:

- Ensuring the business of the governing body is conducted properly, in accordance with the legal requirements
- Ensuring that meetings are run effectively and efficiently, focusing on priorities and making best use of the time available
- Ensuring that all members are kept fully informed, they have equal opportunities to participate fully in discussions and decision making
- Encouraging all members of the governing body to work together as a team
- Liaising with the Headteacher
- Acting in cases which may properly be deemed "urgent". This is defined in statute and applies where a delay in exercising the function would be seriously detrimental to the interests of the school, a pupil, parent or member of staff
- Co-operate with other agencies to support school improvement.
- Making public statements on behalf of the governing body.

ROLE OF THE CLERK

The clerk is appointed by the governing body and is responsible for it. The clerk has a central role in providing administrative and organisation support. Tasks include:

- Organising agendas for meetings of the full governing body
- Convening and minuting the meetings
- Sending draft minutes to the chairperson and Headteacher for approval
- Advising on appropriate governing body procedures
- Ensuring that all written reports and papers presented to the meeting are filed as part of the minutes and are made available for public inspection, subject to the governing body's ruling on confidentiality
- Maintaining records on governing body memberships and advising when appointments need to be made/elections held

Please note at this school the Chief Finance Officer is the Clerk to the Governors and the Headteacher's Personal Assistant carries out the day-to-day administration and is the minute taker at Governors' meetings.

HANDLING COMPLAINTS

All complaints have to be handled with care and in accordance with the complaints policy and procedures agreed by the governing body.

There are separate procedures for dealing with complaints about the curriculum and for considering complaints about the way in which pupils' special educational needs are met.

Principles

The following principles apply for the handling of general complaints:

- Wherever possible differences should be settled informally;
- Formal mechanisms for dealing fairly and effectively with complaints should only be used where it is impossible to settle a complaint informally;
- Procedures should be made available to parents, staff and Governors.

Procedures

1. Complaints in the first instance should generally be made to the class teacher and then, if necessary, to the Headteacher.
2. The Chairman of the Governing Body should be the first person to approach only in cases which could involve disciplinary or legal action against the Headteacher.
3. Any Governor approached by a complainant should refer him or her to the Headteacher, or the Chairman according to 1 or 2 above.
4. If discussions between the Headteacher and the complainant prove fruitless, the complainant will be told of their right to make formal complaint and how it can be made.
5. Formal complaints to the Governing Body are made to the Chairman, who should take care that no Governor can be accused of prejudice by ensuring that:
 - an individual Governor does not deal with the complaint;
 - the complaint is quickly referred to the relevant committee or to the Headteacher, if complaint procedures at that level have not been exhausted;
 - the complaint is not reported to the whole Governing Body until it is resolved and then not in detail;
 - all parties to the complaint are given a fair hearing;
 - the decision of the committee is given in writing to the complainant;
 - the complainant is told of any right of appeal if the decision is given against them.
6. Governors involved in a complaint by either an individual or a group cannot take part in any formal hearing of a complaint, or appeal against a decision made by the complaints committee.
7. Individual complaints cannot be raised at full meetings of the Governing Body, unless the meeting is part of the complaint's procedure.

GOVERNORS' VISITS

One important aspect of Governors' work is monitoring. Formal monitoring takes place in Governors' committees. Governor visits during the working day and at special events are an enjoyable and rewarding experience. They are valuable in giving governors a deeper understanding of the work of the school. Visits to the school are an important component of the role of the governor. However, there needs to be a protocol for their conduct to ensure their success.

Aims of Visits

A visit helps a governor to increase their background knowledge of the school. It provides a link to the real working life of the school. A visit is not an inspection. It provides an insight into the work of the school.

Frequency

The current governing body has 10 members. If governors conduct one or two visits per term, in the course of a four-year term of office an individual governor might expect to visit the school once or twice.

PROTOCOL FOR GOVERNOR VISITS

Before the Visit

All visits should be planned in advance to ensure that a timetable for the visit is arranged. The governor should contact the Headteacher's PA to ensure that such a timetable is arranged.

The Visit

- The visit should focus on gaining an understanding of the work of the school. Areas of focus will be linked to School Development priorities or current initiatives and innovation.

During the Visit

Do not comment on the teaching, the standard of work or class behaviour.

Use positive body language eg smile.

Focus any questions on the purpose of the visit.

Talk to students, if appropriate. Possible questions to ask students might include:

- Please explain to me what you are doing?
- What do you enjoy most about the school?
- What have you done at school that you are proud of?
- How do you know if you have done a good piece of work?

Do not ask students to comment on the teacher or their teaching!

- Interact with staff if appropriate with questions linked to the focus of the visit.

Governors should expect to be treated with courtesy.

At the End of the Visit

Reflect upon your visit with the Senior Leader supporting you during your time in school.

After the Visit

Complete the feedback section of the Governor Visit Report Proforma and send it to the Headteacher before being submitted to the Governing Body. Copies of visit reports are stored by the Clerk to the Governors. Give a brief verbal report of the visit at the next Full Governing Body meeting.

A form for use on such visits is attached.

GOVERNOR VISIT REPORT

Name of Governor(s) involved:

Date and purpose of visit (to be agreed by Headteacher):

Timetable for Visit:

Reflection on Visit:

Signed: _____

Dated: _____