

SCHOOL & GOVERNOR SUPPORT

Strengthening School Governance



A Practical Guide 2017



A great city to grow up in

 **Birmingham**
City Council

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1. Introduction

Birmingham City Council (BCC) recognises that being a school governor requires time and dedication. It is grateful and appreciative of the work governors do to help improve schools for our young people.

A strategic goal of BCC is to ensure that sound and proper governance arrangements are in place and working effectively in our schools. This guide refers to the actions that Governing Boards (GBs) can take to strengthen governance in the interests of our young people.

The guide also refers to valuable sources of advice and support available, and the process that should be used when raising concerns about a GB failing to fulfil its three strategic roles or follow appropriate operating procedures.

2. Statutory context

The regulations explaining how the membership of GBs of maintained schools are composed, and how they conduct their day-to-day proceedings are:

- The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013 (as amended) www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/1624/contents/made
- The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/1034/contents/made

Academies are publically funded independent schools, and must abide by relevant sections of the Independent School Regulations 2014. Academy trusts are charitable companies limited by guarantee, which means that the trustees are subject to both the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Act 2011. As exempt charities they are accountable to a principal regulator. This power is exercised by the Education Funding Agency on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.

Academies must also comply with any requirements in relation to grant funding set out in the Academies Financial Handbook. www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-financial-handbook

3. Values

The GB has a legal duty to ensure that the school actively promotes the Fundamental British Values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

These values underpin all of the work that we do with children and young people; BCC is supporting schools and will continue to support schools in applying these values to all that you do.

BCC is clear that schools and all settings will not discriminate against anyone on the basis of gender, disabilities, ethnicity, faith, age or sexual orientation, and **requires every education setting to log any form of discrimination or bullying and show how they have acted to address the issues to ensure all children and young people feel included.**

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4. The role of the Local Authority in supporting strong governance

LAs should take an active interest in the quality of governance in maintained schools. To prevent schools becoming eligible for intervention LAs should promote and support high standards of governance. To do so, they should: be champions for high quality in school governance; help ensure that governors have the necessary skills, and have in place appropriate monitoring arrangements to identify signs of failure in relation to governors' oversight of finance, safety or performance standards.

LAs should also be able to provide governors with high quality training that is necessary to prevent schools from becoming eligible for intervention or at least be able to signpost governors to such training. LAs should have arrangements in place for maintaining up to date records of governors in maintained schools. This should include contact details for chairs of GBs, to aid communication with those accountable for schools.

4.1 Intervention – when things go wrong

Schools causing concern statutory guidance for LAs covers “schools causing concern” (within the meaning of section 44 of the Education Act 2005) that are “eligible for intervention” (within the meaning of Part 4 of the 2006 Act), but also other maintained schools about which the LA and/or the Secretary of State have serious concerns which need to be addressed. The statutory guidance refers to the giving of warning notices and the LAs powers of intervention that include the power to suspend authority to manage a delegated budget, the power to appoint the GB as an Interim Executive Board (IEB), power to appoint additional governors and require the GB to enter into arrangements.

Where a LA has concerns about governance within an academy in their area they should raise this with their local Regional Schools Commissioner or the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

5. Governance at Academies

Academies are publically funded independent schools and are subject to both charity and company law. Academy trusts are made up of the ‘members’ and the board of trustees who are also directors. Members have oversight of the governance arrangements and in some academy trusts are also trustees. Trustees are appointed to the academy trust’s board to enact the responsibilities of the academy trust and conduct the strategic operations of the trust. The documents which underpin the workings of academy governance will be specific to academy trusts, and the provisions made in them will vary between different academy trusts.

The funding agreement – the formal contract signed by the academy trust and the Secretary of State for Education when it is first established.

Memorandum and articles of association – set out the purpose of the academy trust and the composition of the board of trustees (or governors).

Scheme of delegation – the role of any local GB and the responsibility delegated to them should be set down in a scheme of delegation, set by the board of trustees of the academy.

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6. The functions of a Governing Board

The DfE governance handbook for maintained schools, academies and free schools says that in all types of schools, GBs should have a strong focus on three core strategic functions:

- **Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.**

Through ensuring that the school has a medium to long-term vision for its future and a robust strategy in place for achieving its vision.

- **Holding the Headteacher/Executive Leader to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff.**

Through supporting and strengthening the leadership of the Headteacher/Executive Leader, and holding them to account for the day-to-day running of the school, including the performance management of teachers.

- **Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.**

Through allocating resources in line with strategic priorities and outcomes for pupils, ensuring value for money and compliance with financial regulations.

The handbook for governors' is available on the gov.uk website:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook

6.1 Keeping Children Safe

In addition to the strategic core functions, overall responsibility for ensuring safeguarding procedures and policies are in place and efficiently managed lies with the GB and designated safeguarding officers within each school. Governors need to know that the school adopts recommended good practice across all areas of its work. The Safeguarding lead governor has an important role working alongside the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to evaluate the effectiveness of the School's safeguarding arrangements and report to the GB on these arrangements. Safeguarding lead governors should undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. The training should be updated every two years as it is for the designated safeguarding lead in school.

Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment is available on the gov.uk website.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

7. The competences required for effective governance

The DfE “**Competency Framework for governance**” is designed to help GBs assess what knowledge, skills and behaviours are needed to govern the school, or group of schools, most effectively. It is meant to help with things like performance reviews, succession planning and identifying training needs. There are 16 competencies grouped under the headings of the ‘six features of effective governance’ They are:

- **strategic Leadership** – setting direction, decision making, collaborative working, risk management, culture, values and ethos;
- **accountability** – educational improvement, data analysis, financial frameworks, financial management, staffing, performance management and external accountability;
- **people** – building a team;
- **structures** – roles and responsibilities;
- **compliance** – statutory and contractual requirements, and
- **evaluation** – managing self-review, personal skills, managing and developing the GBs effectiveness.

The National Governance Association (NGA) job description for governors titled “What does a governor do?” is available to download from: www.nga.org.uk/Be-a-Governor/Be-a-Governor.aspx

8. Electing the Chair

The Chair has a vital role in keeping the GB focused on its strategic role. The key roles of the Chair as stated in *Leading Governors – The role of the Chair of governors in schools and academies* (National College for Teaching and Leadership) is as follows:

- **leading effective governance** – giving the GB clear lead and direction;
- **building the team** – attracting high calibre applicants, developing their skills and deploying them effectively;
- **relationship with the Headteacher/Executive Leader** – being a critical friend offering support, challenge and encouragement;
- **improving the school** – ensuring that school improvement is the focus of the GBs work, and
- **leading the business** – ensuring that statutory requirements and regulations are met.

GBs should focus on appointing a Chair who has the skills for the role, not just the willingness to serve. Succession planning arrangements should be put in place so that any change in Chair does not impede the GB’s effectiveness. All Chairs should attend induction training for their role and are encouraged to join the Leadership Development Programme. To find out more about the Leadership Development Programme visit: www.leadinggovernance.org

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The DfE advises GBs to carefully consider how many times they re-elect their Chair to a new term of office. BCC encourages GBs to adopt the position taken by the NGA that the Chair should hold office for no more than six years at the same school.

9. Appointing a Clerk

The role of the Clerk to the GB is to:

- provide advice to the GB on governance, constitutional and procedural matters;
- provide effective administrative support to the GB and its committees;
- ensure the GB is properly constituted, and
- manage information effectively in accordance with legal requirements.

GBs should employ an independent clerk with suitable skills and training. The performance of the clerk should be evaluated on a regular basis and their pay should be commensurate with the professional service they provide. DfE has also published a “**Clerking Competency Framework**” setting out the competencies required to deliver professional clerking to school GBs and multi academy trusts. www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook

School and Governor Support (S&GS) maintains a register of independent professional clerks. The clerks on the register will have all provided evidence of relevant experience, accreditation, a high level of professional competence and a commitment to continuing professional development. The Clerks on the register are not provided by BCC and it is for individual schools to determine their suitability, make the necessary arrangements to appoint them and manage their performance. To view the register, follow this link:

www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20125/school_and_governor_support/1320/register_of_independent_clerks

10. Recruiting governors

The DfE governance handbook says that to build an effective GB, schools should aim to recruit, induct and continuously develop high calibre governors with relevant skills and experience. GBs should regularly review their size and composition to ensure that it is fit for purpose and effective.

10.1 What does effective recruitment practice look like?

- **Look at the skills and experience of current GB members:** Carry out a skills audit of existing members to the skills and experience across the GB. Download the NGA skills audit form and skills audit to help make sense of the responses from the audit. www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Workings-Of-The-Governing-Body/Governance-Tools/Skills-Audit.aspx
- **Identify the gaps in skills and experience:** Consider the expertise that the GB ideally requires at this time e.g. financial, human resource, interpreting data etc. and why it requires it. Also consider whether the GB reflects the diversity of the community it serves, as well its age, gender and social profile.

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- **Identify methods of recruitment:** Dependent on the governor category, required skills and context. This could involve advertising in the local press, approaching local business/employers, partner schools and or registering vacancies with the national governor recruitment services SGOSS at www.sgoss.org.uk and Inspiring Governance at inspiringgovernance.org/.
- **Meet with (interview) prospective governors:** Before recommending a candidate to the GB, the Chair and or Headteacher (or governor delegate with the task) should arrange a meeting or interview to make sure that they are suitable to join the GB, as well as giving the candidate the opportunity to make an informed decision themselves. The meeting/interview should inform the candidate of the current work of the GB and what is expected of them in terms of conduct, commitment and training.

The NGA has produced a detailed practical guide on recruiting volunteers to govern, including: who to look for, how to seek candidates, interviewing and references, exit interviews, succession planning and induction. To find out more visit: www.nga.org.uk

For BCC's guidance on the conduct of parent and staff governors visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/SGS-guidance

For BCC's Procedure for selection, appointment and removal of LA nominated governors visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/school-governors.

10.2 Governing at more than one school

Where a prospective governor has been or is already a governor of another school, the Chair should speak to the Chair of the other GB to discuss both the skills of the individual and, where appropriate, their capacity to commit sufficient time to serve effectively on an additional GB.

BCC expects schools and academies to monitor and account for the circumstances within which it is genuinely appropriate for any individual to be a governor of more than one school in Birmingham at any one time and supports the view of the NGA that unless there are genuinely exceptional circumstances, **it is not good practice for a governor to serve on more than two GBs at any one time.**

10.3 Limiting lengths of service for governors

BCC agrees with the Department for Education (DfE) that with effective succession planning in place, it can be beneficial for strong governors and chairs in particular to move on to another school after a reasonable time (e.g. two terms of office). It encourages GBs to adopt the position of the NGA that all governors should be restricted to two terms of office (eight years) at the same school. BCC will only nominate individuals to serve as LA governors on GBs where they have served for eight years or more when the GB has demonstrated that there are exceptional circumstances.

10.4 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on school governors

It is compulsory for all governors in maintained schools to apply for an enhanced DBS certificate within 21 days of their appointment. Academy trustees are required on appointment to obtain an enhanced DBS certificate and provide the enhanced certificate to the Chair. Academy committee members and non-trustees who are appointed to committees of the trust board must also provide enhanced certificates upon appointment/election.

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11. Governor conduct

Anyone holding the office of school governor must act with integrity, objectivity and honesty and in the best interests of the school; be open about the decisions they make, the actions they take and in particular should be prepared to explain their decisions and actions to interested parties.

Similarly, governors should be aware of and accept the **seven principles of public life** (see **Appendix 2** to this guide) as set out by Lord Nolan, that apply to anyone, locally and nationally, who is elected or appointed as a public office-holder. They are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

BCC has published a Model Code of Conduct for GBs and recommends that it is adopted by maintained school and academy GBs.

The Code of Conduct is available as **Appendix 1** to this guide.

11.1 Breach of the code of conduct

Where there is an allegation that the code of conduct has been breached, BCC expects the Chair (or Vice-Chair if the allegation is made against the Chair) to investigate as a matter of urgency, help resolve any difficulties and if necessary propose suspension or removal from the GB as a sanction.

12. Understanding roles and working effectively together

The NGA, National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) and Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) have produced a joint paper “what governing boards should expect from school leaders and what school leaders should expect from governing boards”.

www.nga.org.uk/what-we-expect.aspx

13. Training for governors

The BCC Model Code of Conduct for **GBs expects all governors to receive induction training as soon as is reasonably practicable following their appointment**. It is essential to ensure that all governors are clear about their powers and responsibilities. GBs should continually evaluate the performance of individual governors. As a team they should undertake any training that is required to be effective in their role. Every GB should identify its priorities for training and development, ensure that the training/ development has been arranged and funding is allocated in the budget.

The DfE governance handbook says that GBs should consider giving the Vice-Chair or another governor a specific responsibility for ensuring every governor develops the skills they need to be effective. Rather than simply track governors’ attendance at training courses, with administrative support from the Clerk, this governor would be responsible for ensuring that every new and existing governor develops their skills to make an active and valuable contribution to the work of the GB.

Any persistent skills gaps across the GB or for individual governors should be brought to the attention of the Chair.

S&GS provides a programme of core and specialist training and development courses that give governors the skills, knowledge and confidence to undertake their role effectively. The programme is available to download from: www.birmingham.gov.uk/governor-training

14. Transparency

The governance handbook says that in the interests of transparency, all schools and academies should publish, including on their website, the following information relating to each governor and associate member:

- their name;
- their category of governor;
- which body appoints them;
- their term of office;
- the names of any committees the governor serves on;
- the details of any positions of responsibility such as Chair or Vice-Chair of the GB or a committee of the GB, and
- their attendance record at meetings.

For academies, these details of their governance arrangements must also be provided within the governance statement of their published annual accounts.

The Secretary of State requires GBs to provide certain details they hold about people involved in governance, as volunteered by individuals, via Edubase (the DfE's database of all schools in the country) and keep the information up to date.

14.1 Declaring interests

It is good practice for the declaration of governor interests to be included as a specified item of business on the agenda of every GB and committee meeting.

There is a requirement in the Articles of Association of Academies for governors who have a personal interest (financial or otherwise) which may conflict with their duties as governors to declare it as soon as they become aware of it. Declarations should include the following:

- links with individuals, businesses, contractors etc;
- directorships, shareholdings or other appointments where the school may purchase goods or services from or who are directly employed by the school, and
- interests of related persons such as parent, spouse, co-habitee, child or business partners where influence could be exerted by that person over a governor or a member of staff.

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14.2 Managing conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest can arise when an individual's personal or family interests conflict with those of the school.

GBs should ensure through rigorous induction and (if necessary) training, that all governors understand what constitutes a conflict of interest and when to remove themselves from the situation when the conflict could arise. The Clerk to the GB should advise the GB on the relevant rules and procedures, including those that relate to withdrawal from meetings.

14.3 Publishing the register of interests

All GBs are required by law to set up and maintain a register of business interests.

GBs of maintained schools are under a duty to publish on their website their register of interests. The register should set out the relevant business interests of governors and details of any other educational establishments they govern.

The register should also set out any relationships between governors and members of the school staff including spouses, partners and relatives.

For academies, the latest edition of the Academies Financial Handbook requires them to publish the register. Trusts must also publish on their websites relevant business and pecuniary interests of trustees and members.

S&GS has produced a briefing note on meeting the above requirement.

www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/4937/publishing_governors_details_and_the_register_of_interests_on_the_schools_website

15. Providing effective challenge

The Governance Handbook says effective GBs hold their HT/Executive Leaders to account for improving school performance by asking the right questions. The handbook also refers to the questions that governors might ask.

To help governors hold their schools to account, NGA has produced a 'Knowing your School' briefing about questions for governors to ask. The briefing is available to members of the NGA.

www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Holding-your-school-to-account/Challenge.aspx

15.1 Objective data

GBs must have objective, high quality and timely data to help them to know the questions they need to ask and to provide answers to their questions. The GB should make effective use of school performance tables and the "Analyse School Performance" service www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZxymO3Rsj8. It is essential that every board has at least one person with the skills to understand and interpret the full detail of the educational performance and the financial data available.

15.2 Headteacher reporting to the GB

To assist the GB in carrying out its functions, the HT/Executive Leader has a duty to provide the GB with such reports in connection with the management of the school. The responsibility lies with the GB to make it clear to HTs what they need at that point in time to help them in carrying out their functions.

HT/Executive Leader reporting will typically cover:

- progress made towards implementing the school's strategy and against the key performance indicators;
- pupil attainment, results and progress;
- the quality of teaching;
- the impact of teaching on learning and progress in different subjects and year groups with particular reference to vulnerable groups, particularly Looked After Children (LAC);
- the performance management of teachers, appraisal outcomes and its relationship to salary progression;
- where applicable the use and impact of pupil premium, year 7 catch up premium and the primary school sports funding;
- curriculum issues, developments and initiatives;
- pupil numbers and attendance;
- pupil behaviour, wellbeing and safeguarding;
- staffing matters - deployment, appointments, resignations etc.;
- finance and budget;
- buildings and site, including health and safety and access;
- stakeholder feedback e.g. parental involvement, school council etc., and
- extra-curricular, extended service and community matters.

16. Self-evaluation and quality assurance

It is good practice for all GBs whatever their school's strengths, to review their own effectiveness regularly and identify improvements. There are a range of self-evaluation tools available that suggest suitable questions to help with self-evaluation.

16.1 Framework for Governance

The NGA and the Wellcome Trust have jointly developed the Framework for Governance, an essential document for all GBs to help them effectively carry out their role. It is a flexible guide, so can be used by any school regardless of phase, type or governance structure. The Framework for Governance sets out how governors can evaluate their own practice, using 'Twenty key questions for a governing board to ask itself'; how to set the strategic direction for a school; and how to monitor progress against the strategy using high-level performance indicators that go much further than just exam results.

The Framework for Governance is available free of charge from the NGA website:

www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Workings-Of-The-Governing-Body/Governance-Tools/Framework-for-Governance.aspx

Twenty-One Questions for Multi-Academy Trusts: Key questions a MAT board should ask itself are published by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Governance (APPG) and the NGA. The questions are available from the NGA website: www.nga.org.uk/News/NGA-News/Pre-2016/21Q.aspx

16.2 BCC Audit Tool

S&GS publishes an Audit Tool that is intended to help GBs to review their effectiveness in five key areas, review and manage the documents that they are required to maintain. The Audit Tool is available on request to subscribers of S&GS via governors@birmingham.gov.uk

16.3 External review of governance

A review of governance looks at how well the GB is working. The review is offered as support to improve and develop governance, and not as an additional inspection. It will help the GB identify priorities for improvement, and provide support on what steps to take. Schools can choose whoever they want to conduct a review of governance. They should ensure that the reviewer has a good understanding of governance and successful experience of leading governors and school improvement.

Those suitable to undertake external reviews of governance include:

- trained National Leaders in Governance (NLG);
- National Leaders in Education (NLE);
- S&GS and the NGA.

Guidance on arranging an external review of governance is available on the gov.uk website:

www.gov.uk/guidance/reviews-of-school-governance

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16.4 Governor Mark

BCC encourages GBs to apply for Governor Mark a national award which provides external evaluation of the quality of governance in a school. Many schools value an external assessment against the Governor Mark standards. An assessment follows the Ofsted framework and expectations on GBs, and success really stands and falls on the GB's impact on school improvement and learning outcomes for children. It also examines relationships between governors and senior staff, as well as recent developments in the Ofsted Framework about preparing pupils for life in modern Britain.

For further information about Governor Mark visit glmpartnership.org/governor-mark/

17. Raising concerns about governance

The LA, DfE and Ofsted have an obligation to ensure that a robust assurance system exists to support and challenge – including intervening in – schools to ensure they fulfil their responsibilities. BCC will not hesitate to exercise its statutory powers or refer concerns to the Regional Schools Commissioner in response to GBs who, in its view, have not acted robustly or decisively to address issues of governor conduct or a breach of the model Code of Conduct for GBs.

In most cases concerns about governor and GB conduct should be dealt with through direct challenge using the relevant procedures. S&GS can advise and support on applying the relevant procedures in the context of the concern.

17.1 Whistleblowing and Serious Misconduct Policy

The policy applies automatically to community schools, community special schools, voluntary controlled schools, pupil referral units and maintained nursery schools in which BCC is the employer of staff.

Other schools may adopt the new policy. Employees in schools are normally expected to raise their concerns within the school, unless they have good reason to believe that the complaint will not be managed properly within the school. In those circumstances they may make a complaint directly to BCC.

In addition, citizens or any other individual concerned about apparent serious misconduct will be able to contact a central whistleblowing email and postal address or a telephone number.

The full policy is available at: www.birmingham.gov.uk/whistleblowing

Referrals of allegations can be made by Email: Whistleblowing@birmingham.gov.uk.

In writing to: **Whistleblowing, c/o the Director of Legal Services, Birmingham City Council, PO BOX 15992 Birmingham B2 2UQ**

By telephone on: **0121 303 7602**

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18. Support for strengthening governance

Effective GBs make the most of the resources and guidance that is available to develop their knowledge and skills. Effective GBs also engage with the support that is available to strengthen governance.

18.1 School and Governor Support provided by BCC

S&GS is an established traded service of BCC. It has a proven track record of providing expert advice, guidance and training required to deal effectively with day-to-day leadership and management issues as well as creating strong governance. Through effective support and challenge S&GS aims to maximise the capacity of school leaders, managers and governors in almost any situation.

Email governors@birmingham.gov.uk or visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/SGS

BCC recommends subscription to S&GS.

18.2 Birmingham Education Partnership

Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) is a school led, membership organisation committed to building deeply good academic, civic and social outcomes for every child and young person across every Birmingham school. BEP has a commissioned role to deliver school improvement across Birmingham.

BEP encourages governors to engage with its mission to deliver a deeply good education for all. To find out more about the work of the BEP visit: www.bep.education.

BCC recommends membership of the BEP.

18.3 National Leaders in Governance (NLG)

NLGs are experienced Chairs with excellent leadership skills and a track record of contributing to school improvement through the effective leadership of a GB. NLGs focus on developing leadership capacity on GBs, primarily by offering coaching and mentoring support to the Chair.

The support of an NLG can also help improve GB processes and help the Chair build their relationship with the Headteacher or Principal.

NLGs are expected to provide the equivalent of ten days of free support for schools each year, after which they may charge for their time. To contact your local NLG and arrange a discussion email: governors@birmingham.gov.uk

BCC recommends engagement with NLG to strengthen governance.

18.4 National Governance Association (NGA)

The NGA aims to represent all school governors and trustees in England; there are over 300,000 governors/trustees, one of the largest volunteer groups in the UK. It is an independent charity that aims to support and promote good governance in our schools; it does this through lobbying, via a range of contacts with ministers, policy makers and education organisations. It also runs national conferences and a number of regional events.

The NGA has a number of membership options. For further information visit: www.nga.org.uk or email: membership@nga.org.uk.

BCC recommends membership of the NGA.

18.5 Birmingham Governors' Network

Birmingham Governors' Network (BGN) is a local governor association. Amongst its stated aims are to broaden participation in school governance and provide a democratic forum for the exchange of ideas and enable governors to be more effective through the sharing of good practice and the mutual support of all serving governors of publically funded schools in Birmingham.

The BGN runs local events throughout the year, which are free to attend for subscribers and produces a termly newsletter "In the Know", which is sent to all its subscribing members.

For further information visit: www.bhamgovernorsnetwork.org.uk or email: info@bhamgovernorsnetwork.org.uk.

BCC recommends membership of the BGN.

18.6 GovernorLine

GovernorLine is a national helpline offering free, confidential and independent advice, information and support to school governors, clerks and individuals involved directly in the governance of schools and multi-academy trusts in England. GovernorLine comprises of a telephone advice line and an email enquiry service.

The telephone service is available free on **0800 151 2410** between 09:00 and 20:00 Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

Questions and queries can be emailed at any time to governorline@entrust-ed.co.uk for a full reply within two working days.

18.7 Peer-to-peer support online

There are growing opportunities to share experiences with other governors online through groups such as UKGovChat which aim to enable governors to share good practice, and support and challenge each other. Visit: ukgovchat.wordpress.com/about/

19. S&GS contact details

Governance Support and Training

Governor Services Manager: Stephen Edmonds

Assistant Governor Services Manager: Bill Welsh

Email: governors@birmingham.gov.uk

Governance Oversight Officer: Alison Hicks

Email: governanceoversight@birmingham.gov.uk

School Support

School Support Managers: Karen Davies, Kathy McDonough, Dave Yardley

Assistant Managers: Jenny Ramoul, Adrian Axinte, Fiona Chamberlain

Email: school.support@birmingham.gov.uk

Professional Support Services

Governing Board Support: Christine Stewart, Charlie Keane, David Walters

Email: gbso@birmingham.gov.uk

Governor Recruitment: Sheila Sandhu

Governor Training: Lorraine Byrne

Email: governors@birmingham.gov.uk

School and Governor Support

Directorate for Children and Young People

PO Box 16260

Birmingham, B2 2WU

Website: www.birmingham.gov.uk/SGS

Follow us on Twitter [@SGSBCC](https://twitter.com/SGSBCC)

Appendix 1

Model Code of Conduct for Governing Boards (Updated: September 2017)

1. Introduction

The following Code of Conduct applies to governors and trustees at all levels of school governance and promotes effective working practices that are mutually supportive, respectful of roles and responsibilities.

Birmingham City Council (BCC) commends this model code of conduct for adoption by maintained school and academy Governing Boards.

2. General

School governors make an invaluable contribution to the lives of our children. Being a governor involves significant amounts of time and energy. All those elected or appointed to Governing Boards should fulfil their duties in line with the law, the Governance Handbook and the seven principles of public life (see 3.1). In addition governors and trustees should comply with the DfE Competency Framework for Governance, which expects all those involved in governance to be:

- Committed;
- Confident;
- Curious;
- Challenging;
- Collaborative;
- Critical, and
- Creative.

Where a prospective governor has been or is already a governor of another school, the Chair should speak to the Chair of the other Governing Board to discuss both the skills of the individual and, where appropriate, their capacity to commit sufficient time to serve effectively on another Governing Board.

BCC expects Governing Boards and academy trusts to monitor and account for the circumstances within which it is genuinely appropriate for any individual to be a governor of more than one school, and give careful consideration as to whether it is in the interests of their school(s) to re-appoint governors and office holders for successive terms. The advice of the National Governance Association (NGA) is that all governors should be restricted to two terms of office (eight years) at the same school and that the Chair should hold office for no more than six years at the same school.

3. Standards of conduct, behaviour and practice

As individual governors of.....

(Name of School Governing Board)

we will play our part in setting an ethos of professionalism and high expectations of the governor role. We will:

3.1 Abide by the Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are included as Appendix 2 at the end of this Code of Conduct.

3.2 Support the elimination of discrimination and advance equality of opportunity

We recognise that Birmingham is, outside of London, the UK's most diverse city, made up of a wide range of cultural, faith and other communities. The City benefits from positive community cohesion within this diversity. We share the equality objectives of BCC and are mindful of our responsibilities under equality legislation, including recognising and encouraging diversity and inclusion.

3.3 Ensure that the school or academy follows all relevant policies and procedures to ensure that young people in need of protection are effectively safeguarded.

3.4 Remain focused on our three core strategic functions of:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- holding the Headteacher or Executive Leader (as appropriate) to account for the educational performance of the school, and
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

3.5 Attend meetings and take a full part in the Governing Board

Accepting the office of governor at.....

(Name of School Governing Board)

involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy. We will make full efforts to attend all meetings, get to know the school or academy well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.

3.6 Demonstrate a professional attitude

By attending regularly, being punctual, reading all relevant paperwork before meetings, arriving prepared to make an informed and positive contribution and by observing meeting protocols.

3.7 Work as members of a team and promote effective working relationships

We will seek to develop effective working relationships with the Headteacher (and/or Executive Leader as appropriate), staff, parents, BCC other relevant agencies and the community. We will always be mindful of our responsibilities to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the School/Academy. Our actions within the School/Academy and the local community will reflect this. In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the School/Academy, we will follow the procedures established by the Governing Board or Trustees.

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3.8 Express views courteously and be respectful in all communication

3.9 Respect lines of demarcation and the role of the Headteacher and/or Executive Leader (as appropriate) to manage the school/academy

As governors we accept that our role is strategic and focused on the three core functions referred to in 3.4 of this code. We will not involve ourselves in the day-to-day management of the school/academy or attempt to micromanage senior leaders. Any visits that we undertake at the school/academy will be arranged in advance with relevant staff, be agreed by the Headteacher (and/or Executive Leader as appropriate) and be within the framework established by the Governing Board.

3.10 Acknowledge majority decisions, except those that conflict with the Nolan principles of public office, the core functions of the Governing Board or may fail to ensure the safety of pupils

We will confront malpractice by speaking up against and bringing to the attention of the relevant authorities' any decisions and actions that conflict with the Nolan principles of public office or which may place pupils at risk.

3.11 Respect the duty of confidentiality to the School, Academy, any member of staff or pupil at the school

When asked to do so by the Governing Board especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, pupils or parents.

3.12 Undertake induction training as a minimum and any other training that is required to be effective in the role

We will request, and attend induction training as soon as is reasonably practicable following appointment as new governors. We will continually evaluate our performance as individual governors and undertake any training that is required to be effective in our role.

3.13 Declare conflicts of interest

We recognise that a conflict of interest can arise when an individual's personal or family interests conflict with those of the school. We will declare any business, personal or other interest that we have in connection with the Governing Board, the School or Academy in general for recording in the register of business interests including the following:

- links with individuals, businesses, contractors etc.;
- directorships, shareholdings or other appointments where the school may purchase goods or services from or who are directly employed by the school, and
- interests of related persons such as parent, spouse, co-habitee, child or business partners where influence could be exerted by that person over a governor or a member of staff.

We will withdraw for an appropriate length of time from any meeting or discussion of the Governing Board when our governor colleagues agree that there is a conflict of interest.

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3.14 Be transparent

As the Governing Board our first line of accountability is to parents, the wider school or academy and local community. We will demonstrate transparency by publishing on the school website up to date details of the structure of the Governing Board and any committees, together with the names of the School's/Academy's governors and their particular roles and responsibilities within that structure. We will also publish on the school/academy website the register containing the relevant business interests of governors and details of any other educational establishments they govern.

We will comply with the requirement to provide details about people involved in governance at our School or Academy, via Edubase and keep the information up to date.

We are committed to publishing an annual statement setting out the key issues that have been faced and addressed by the Governing Board over the last year, including an assessment of the impact of the Governing Board on the school/academy.

4. Breach of this Code of Conduct

If following investigation it is deemed that this Code of Conduct has been breached by a member of our Governing Board and the matter cannot be resolved in a constructive way, then the Governing Board will consider their suspension or, in some circumstances, removal from the Governing Board.

Adopted by**On**.....
(Name of School Governing Board) (Date)

Signed
(Chair of Governors)

For clarification or any queries please contact: governors@birmingham.gov.uk

Appendix 2

The Seven Principles of Public Life

Originally published by the Nolan Committee: The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established by the then Prime Minister in October 1994, under the Chairmanship of Lord Nolan, to consider standards of conduct in various areas of public life, and to make recommendations.

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

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