

# Seaton Sluice First School



## Governors' Instrument of Reference Policy 2023

Written by: Amanda Bennett      April 2023

Role: Headteacher

Approved by: Amanda Bennett

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## WELCOME

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for offering your support and commitment as a governor for Seaton Sluice First School.

Being a school governor is a vitally important role within the school and is an essential force in the continual drive for school improvement.

As a governor you will be able to bring your beliefs, values, views and experience to help influence the performance and vision of the future for the school. You will have a real opportunity to contribute to discussions that affect all aspects of school life.

As a governor you will have the opportunity to help give the children a good experience at school, one which they both enjoy, and which enables them to develop.

I hope you enjoy your time as a governor and embrace the opportunities offered which will not only help you fulfil your role as a governor but will undoubtedly bring you new skills and experiences.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Bennett', with a stylized, cursive script.

Amanda Bennett  
Headteacher  
Seaton Sluice First School

## The Full Governing Body Terms of Reference

This document outlines the key roles, responsibilities and structure of the Governing body at Seaton Sluice First School. It is not meant to be exhaustive in its content, rather giving a summary of all the main topics. For more detailed information please refer to The Governors Handbook 2015 (DoE), The School Inspection Handbook, September 2014 (OFSTED).

### Purpose

According to the Dept. of Education there are *three key responsibilities* of the Governing Body:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

These functions came into force in September 2013 and in the criteria Ofsted inspectors use to judge the effectiveness of governance in both maintained schools and academies.

According to the *Ofsted School Inspection Handbook* there are 14 key responsibilities of a governing body and inspectors should consider whether governors:

- carry out their statutory duties, such as safeguarding, and understand the boundaries of their role as governors
- ensure that they and the school promote tolerance of and respect for people of all faiths (or those of no faith), cultures and lifestyles; and support and help, through their words, actions and influence within the school and more widely in the community, to prepare children and young people positively for life in modern Britain
- ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction, including long-term planning (for example, succession)
- contribute to the school's self-evaluation and understand its strengths and weaknesses, including the quality of teaching, and reviewing the impact of their own work
- understand and take sufficient account of pupil data, particularly their understanding and use of the school data dashboard
- assure themselves of the rigour of the assessment process

- are aware of the impact of teaching on learning and progress in different subjects and year groups
- provide challenge and hold the headteacher and other senior leaders to account for improving the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and pupils' behaviour and safety, including by using the data dashboard, other progress data, examination outcomes and test results; or whether they hinder school improvement by failing to tackle key concerns or developing their own skills.
- use the pupil premium and other resources to overcome barriers to learning, including reading, writing and mathematics
- ensure solvency and probity and that the financial resources made available to the school are managed effectively
- are providing support for an effective headteacher
- monitor performance management systems and understand how the school makes decisions about teachers' salary progression, including the performance management of the headteacher, to improve teaching, leadership and management
- engage with key stakeholders
- are transparent and accountable, including in terms of recruitment of staff, governance structures, attendance at meetings, and contact with parents and carers.

### **Membership**

The Governing Body of Seaton Sluice First School consists of 14 governors as follows:

9 Community/member appointed Governors

2 Parent Governors

2 Staff Governors

Head Teacher (HT)

### **Terms of Office**

Member Appointed Governors hold their post for a four-year term, Staff Governors and Parent Governors hold their post for four years. All governors except Co-opted Governors are Trustees

Governor Eligibility, forthcoming post ending dates, current vacancies & other current details will be reviewed termly

The appointment to the post of Clerk is agreed annually at the first GB meeting of the Autumn Term.

### **Member's Details**

The Governing Body maintains the following records about its members:

Personal contact details  
Committee membership  
Link Governor appointments  
Governors Pecuniary/Business Interest declarations  
Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checks  
Confirmation of Eligibility declarations

These are reviewed at each GB meeting and updated annually, or more frequently if necessary

### **Chair and Vice Chair**

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to appoint a Chair & Vice-Chair at the first meeting of the GB after such a post becomes vacant. We have agreed that their term of office is three years, reviewed and reconfirmed by the Full Governing Body annually. These posts cannot be held by employees of the school.

The Governing Body is also empowered to remove the incumbent Chair and Vice-Chair during the term of office should the Governing Body consider this action appropriate.

### **Clerk to the Governing Body**

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to:

- Appoint a Clerk to the Governing Body at the start of the Autumn Term, or re-affirm the appointment of the existing Clerk.
- Remove the incumbent Clerk during the term of office should the Governing Body consider this action appropriate, and appoint a replacement Clerk to cover the end of the outgoing Clerk's current term.
- Appoint a replacement Clerk at the next full meeting of the Governing Body if the Clerk resigns during the one-year term. This Clerk will hold the post until the end of the existing term of office.

The post of Clerk cannot be held by any of the existing Governors including the Head Teacher. In the absence of the Clerk, a meeting may be clerked by one of the attending Governors, but not the Head Teacher.

## Meetings

### Conduct

**Legality:** A full meeting of the GB is only legal when it has been formally convened by the Clerk to the Governing Body at least 7 days prior to the meeting taking place.

**Attendees:** All Governors are expected to attend GB meetings. Other invites to GB meetings are issued at the discretion of Chair of Governors.

**Apologies:** Apologies must be made in advance; Governor apologies will be considered at the GB meeting and accepted if agreed by the majority of attending Governors

**Quorum:** A GB meeting is able to proceed when at least 50% of Governors in post are present.

**Chairing the meeting:** The Chair of the GB will chair GB meetings unless they delegate the task to another Governor. In the unplanned absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair will officiate at the meeting.

**Decisions:** The GB will generally make decisions by consensus. Where voting is applied to the decision-making process, unless otherwise decided by the GB beforehand, the outcome of any vote will be determined by a majority of greater than 50%. In the event of a tied vote the Chair of the meeting has a deciding second vote or the right of veto.

**Pecuniary / Business Interest:** The *“Standing Order for the Declaration of Pecuniary / Business Interests”* applies.

**Confidentiality:** All items discussed at GB meetings are confidential to the Governors until the minutes of the meeting are approved, unless otherwise clearly stated in the meeting.

**Electronic Attendance:** Any Governor will be able to participate in meetings of the Governors by telephone or video conference provided that the governor participates in the whole agenda item discussion and not just the vote; and if after all reasonable efforts it does not prove possible for the person to participate by telephone or video conference the meeting will still proceed with its business provided it is quorate.

## Frequency

As a minimum, the Governing Body meets as follows, exceeding its legal obligations to meet 3 times a year:

Autumn Term Planning Meeting (at start of year before any committees meet so that terms of reference and membership of these committees can be ratified and the year planning is agreed. Chair and Vice Chair are elected).

Autumn Term Committee Meeting

Autumn Term Full FGB Meeting (at the end of term after Committee meeting).

Spring Term Committee Meeting

Spring Term Full FGB Meeting (at the end of term after Committee meeting).

Summer Term Committee Meeting

Summer Term FGB Meeting (at the end of term after Committee meeting).

## Agenda

The agenda is prepared by the Chair in partnership with the HT and Clerk & will incorporate all matters arising from the previous meeting. Any items submitted by other governors for consideration must be sent to The Chair and Clerk 2 weeks prior to the full governing body meeting to ensure inclusion in the agenda.

## Minutes

Minutes are taken at the meetings by the Clerk. The draft is checked by chair and HT, and minutes issued to governors within two weeks of meeting. Minutes are approved at the following meeting, and then published on the website.

At each FGB meeting there is a facility for a Part 2 meeting. The type of things in part 2 include – confidential items where student or staff names might be revealed; additionally, time-sensitive items, which are confidential at the moment, but might be public in future. Part 2 minutes are not published on the website.

### **Statutory Responsibilities**

Supporting people with SEND: Nicola Taylor

Teachers pay: David Gray

PSHE: Emma Elliott

Admissions: Elaine Erskine

School statement of behaviour: Elaine Erskine

Staff discipline, capability and grievance: Elaine Erskine

Child protection: Rachel Turner and Emma Elliott

Supporting pupils with medical needs: Amanda Bennett

Health and Safety: David Gray

### **Delegation of Responsibilities**

The Governing body may delegate any of its functions (with the exception to those listed below) to:

- A committee.
- Any governor other than a governor who is the head teacher.
- The head teacher, where the function being delegated does not directly concern the head teacher.

Where the governing body has delegated functions, this does not prevent the governing body from exercising those functions.

The governing body must review annually the functions they have delegated.

The governing body may not delegate the following functions to an individual, although they can be delegated to a committee.

- Approval to the first formal budget plan of the financial year
- Suspension of governors
- Permanent exclusion of pupils

Any individual or committee with delegated responsibility must report to the governing body advising of all actions taken or decisions made relating to that delegated function.

### **Retained Responsibilities of the Governing Body**

The following responsibilities remain the responsibility of the whole governing body.

- Review and document approval of all delegation arrangements annually.
- Review the committee structures annually.
- Review the purpose and delegated authority of Working Parties annually.
- Annually appoint the following Link Governors
- Admissions Governor
- Equalities Governor



- Training & Development Governor
- Safeguarding Governor
- Inclusion (inc SEN & EAL) Governor
- Year Link Governors
- EYFS Governor
- Finance Governor
- Health & Safety Governor
- Together with the Senior Leadership Team set the strategic direction of the school.
- Together with the Senior Leadership Team set the school's vision, mission, values, ethos & priorities in line with strategy
- Determine the standards of conduct for the entire school community.
- Contribute to, approve and review the school's Self Evaluation Form (SEF)
- Review & approve the School Improvement Plan (SDP)
- Review & approve all statutory School Policies. Non-statutory policies are delegated.
- Monitor admissions, admission appeals & pupil number trends
- Monitor the Equality Policy to ensure that it is compliant with current legislation and fully implemented within the school.

The Governing Body also has responsibilities towards its own members:

- Provide induction for new governors
- Ensure provision of CPD to governors by organising support and training
- Facilitate governors' visits to school
- Undertake an annual Governance Self Evaluation
- Advertise parent governor vacancies to parents & staff governor vacancies to staff
- Appoint Community Governors as vacancies arise.

Top Tips for Governors in the First 12 Months

- Try to refrain from bringing up issues about your own children at governing body level
- Consider the best interests of the school
- Remember you are equal to all governors
- Remember decision-making is corporate; bring your view, but abide by the corporate decision
- You have no power, responsibility or liability as an individual
- Get to know your school, speak to the Headteacher, the Chair and the clerk
- Ask for a mentor governor as a first point of contact
- Your volunteer status means getting summaries - don't allow governance to become a full-time job
- Remember the governing body steers, the Headteacher manages the rowing and the vessel

- If you are a member of a committee be familiar with its terms of reference
- Find out about confidentiality
- Don't be part of decision-making where a personal interest or occupation allows you to become biased - declare the interest and withdraw
- If you don't feel you have enough information to decide then say so - remember you can abstain
- Prepare well for all meetings
- Attend training where possible, ask about options including distance learning or online training from your Local Authority

### Dealing with Parental Complaints

Handling complaints is not easy. Quite often it is a governor who parents turn to, in the first instance, when they have a particular concern about their child or a complaint about a member of staff in the school.

It is important to remember the following:

- Be familiar with your school's complaints policy
- Don't agree to solve the problem
- If parents approach you with clearly personal worries, then direct them through the proper channel - the Headteacher
- If you receive a lot of complaints or comments on one particular issue, discuss this with the Chair and Headteacher first
- The governing body meeting is not the place to bring up petty grumbles - you need to exercise good judgement
- Never bypass the Head Teacher in any action you feel should be taken in response to a complaint
- Remain impartial, do not offer an opinion
- A serious concern may be dealt with by the Complaints Committee if the Headteacher cannot resolve the difficulty
- Remember to pass on the nice things people say too!!

### Undertaking

As a governor at Seaton Sluice First School, I confirm I have read and understood the Governing Body Terms of Reference.

Signed.....Printed

Name.....Date.....