

A school governor is an individual appointed or elected to serve on a governing body, which is responsible for overseeing the strategic direction, policies, and overall performance of a school. Governors come from various backgrounds and bring a range of skills and perspectives to the role. They demonstrate a keen interest in the school, modern education, and the local community.

According to Ofsted's 'School inspection handbook', Ofsted inspectors make a judgement as to whether "leaders and those responsible for governance all understand their respective roles and perform these in a way that enhances the effectiveness of the school".

The responsibilities of a school governing body

School governors have a wide range of responsibilities, and while specific duties may vary depending on the school, there are several core areas in which they are typically involved.

1) Strategic planning

Governors work closely with the headteacher to develop and review the school's strategic vision. Governors agree on the school development plan, and they contribute to the creation of policies, oversee their implementation, and ensure they align with the school's ethos and values. By actively participating in strategic planning, governors help shape the direction of the school and help to ensure its long-term success.

2) Performance management

Governors monitor the school's performance, including outcomes, attendance rates, and the progress of pupils. They analyse data, ask challenging questions, and hold leaders to account for meeting targets and delivering high-quality education. Governors help identify areas for improvement and celebrate successes.

3) Financial oversight

Governors are responsible for overseeing the school's budget. They review the budget over the year, ensure effective financial management, and decide resource allocation to support the school's strategic objectives. By actively engaging in financial oversight, governors contribute to the responsible use of resources including using a 'best value' approach, ensuring that the school operates within its budget and can provide the best possible education.

4) School improvement

Governors support and challenge leaders to continuously improve. They provide guidance on issues such as curriculum development, pupil and staff wellbeing, and staff recruitment and retention. They may also participate in inspections and contribute to actions arising from them. Ideally, governors should be involved in setting the school's priorities, such as

pupil outcomes, attendance, closing the disadvantaged gap, and so on. By actively engaging in school improvement, governors help create an environment where students can thrive and reach their full potential.

5) Stakeholder engagement

Governors act as a link between the school and its stakeholders, including parents, staff, pupils, and the wider community. They respond to concerns and ensure that the voice of different stakeholders is heard. By actively engaging with stakeholders, governors foster a sense of community and collaboration, building positive relationships that benefit the school and its pupils.

Governors may also act as link governors on specific areas, conduct the Headteacher's performance review, and appoint the Headteacher and other senior leaders when required.