



Thongsley Fields Primary and Nursery School

Governor handbook and Code of Practice

Standing Orders for the Governing Body and Its Committees

Election and Removal of Chair and Vice Chair

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body (hereafter referred to as the "Chair and Vice-Chair") will be elected each year. They may choose to resign at any time, and an alternative Governor may then be elected.

The election of these offices will be supervised by the Clerk to the Governing Body (hereafter called "The Clerk"), and will be in the form of a secret ballot. Nominations (both oral and written) should be notified to the Clerk before the meeting at which the election will occur, but additional nominations can be received on the day. Nominations may be self-nominations or from colleagues, and there is no need for these nominations to be seconded. If only one candidate is nominated then the ballot should be to accept or decline that candidate. In the event of a tie, the decision will be based on the single toss of a coin.

Urgent Action

The Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Chair is absent or uncontactable) may take urgent action in circumstances where a delay may be seriously detrimental to the interest of:

- The school;
- Any pupil at the school (or their parent);
- Any person who works at the school.

However, an Emergency Meeting of the Full Governing Body may be convened in 7 days, so 'delay' should be interpreted as anything that cannot wait until such a meeting could be called. Emergency action should only be used in exceptional circumstances.

Appointment and removal of the Clerk

The Governing Body shall appoint a Clerk to the Governing Body, but this must not be a governor, an associate governor or the Headteacher of the school. In an emergency, a governor (other than the Headteacher), may Clerk for that meeting only.

The Clerk to the Governing Body shall be limited by their job description, which shall be no lesser than that required by the LA, Camclerk or EPM. Where the Clerk is not sourced externally, they shall be employed by the school via the school's preferred Personnel Management Service.

The Governing Body may remove a Clerk from office by resolution, subject to the advice received from the school's personnel provider.

Meetings and Proceedings of the Governing Body

The following persons have a right to attend all meetings of the Governing Body:

- The Headteacher;
- All governors (unless suspended);

- Associate governors (unless the Governing Body requires them to leave for items relating to an individual member of staff or pupil); and
- In certain circumstances the LA may also have a right to attend.

Other persons may be invited to attend at the discretion of the Chair. Members of the public so invited shall be asked to leave prior to the discussion of confidential matters.

There must be at least three meetings of the Full Governing Body each school year, which must be convened by the Clerk. Items for the agenda shall be notified to the Clerk two weeks prior to the meeting, to enable the agenda and attached papers to be circulated at least 7 calendar days before the meeting.

All Governors shall endeavour to attend all meetings of the Full Governing Body and the committees on which they sit. Their unavailability to attend should be conveyed at the earliest possible moment to the Chair or the Clerk. Apologies received will be minuted, and the consent (or otherwise) of the Governing Body to these apologies shall be recorded. If no such apologies are received then the Governing Body is unable to consent to the absence.

Any Governor who fails to attend meetings of the Full Governing Body for a period of 6 months, without the express consent of the Governing Body, shall be disqualified from office.

Quorum

The quorum for Full Governor meetings shall be calculated as 50% of those Governors in post, rounded up to the nearest whole number. Associate Governors shall not be included in this calculation. Committees may have a different number which will be documented in the Terms of Reference

Voting

All matters are decided by a simple majority vote. In the event of a tie, the Chair (or his Deputy) has an additional casting vote. The results of all votes cast shall be recorded, but not the votes cast by individual members.

Minutes and Papers

Minutes shall be prepared by the Clerk, and, once ratified by the Chair, will be available for public inspection, but identified as being draft minutes until they have been ratified by the Full Governing Body. These draft minutes shall be available for inspection on the school website and from the school office.

The Governing Body reserves the right to exclude items they deem to be confidential from public scrutiny (including, but not limited to, items relating to a particular parent, pupil or member of staff).

Restrictions on Participation

The Clerk shall complete a register of pecuniary or other conflicting interests on an annual basis. Each Governor must declare at the start of any meeting if there is an item on the agenda which poses a potential conflict of interest, or where a fair hearing is required and his impartiality is in doubt. In such cases the Governor must vacate the room in which the discussion is taking place and may not vote. In the event of a dispute, the Governing Body decides whether the individual shall withdraw from the room.

A person who is paid to work at the school is not regarded as having a pecuniary interest if their interest is no greater than that of other persons paid to work at the school.

A Governor paid to work at the school, other than the Headteacher, must withdraw and cannot vote in relation to the pay or performance appraisal of any particular person working at the school. This does not affect open discussions about general policy. The Headteacher must withdraw and cannot vote in relation to their own pay or performance appraisal.

Suspension

The Governing Body may suspend a Governor for a limited number of reasons, as identified in the Code of Practice, for a period not exceeding six months.

Delegation to Committees and Individuals

At the first meeting of the Full Governing Body each academic year, the Governing body shall establish such committees required by current regulations and decide any delegation to these committees or individuals. This is not required for other working groups without delegated powers.

Code of Practice

General

- The main aim of Thongsley Fields Primary and Nursery School is to optimise the educational achievements of all its pupils, through provision of a stimulating, caring and safe environment in which each child is a valued part of the school.
- The Governing Body contributes most effectively to this aim by focusing on its three roles:
 - To provide a strategic view of the future destiny of the school;
 - To act as a critical friend; and
 - To hold it to account for the educational standards it achieves and the quality of education it provides.

- Governors have responsibility for determining, monitoring and reviewing the policies, plans and procedures within which the school operates. The Headteacher is responsible for the implementation of policy, day-to-day management of the school and operation of the curriculum.
- All Governors have **equal** status. Although governors are appointed and elected by different stakeholder groups, their central concern is the welfare of the school as a whole.
- Governors have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice at all times.
- In so far as they have, or share, responsibility for the employment of staff, Governors should fulfil all reasonable expectations of a "good employer."
- Governors should consider carefully how their own decision might affect other schools.
- Governors should encourage open government and should be seen to do so,
- Governors do not act alone, but only ever as members of the Governing Body. Individual Governors may have power only when it is delegated to them specifically by the Governing Body.

Commitment

- Being a Governor involves significant amounts of time, energy and focus. Careful regards should be paid to this when agreeing to serve or to continue to serve on the Governing Body.
- All Governors should involve themselves actively in the work of the Governing Body and accept a fair share of the responsibilities, including service on committees.
- Regular attendance at meetings of the Full Governing Body and committees is **essential**.
- Governors should know the school well and take opportunities to visit and become involved in school activities.

Relationships

- Governors should operate as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- Governors should develop effective working relationships with the Headteacher, staff, parents, the Local Authority and the local community.

Confidentiality

- Governors must observe confidentiality when asked to do so by the Governing Body, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, pupils or parents.
- Although the decisions reached at meetings of the Governing Body are normally made public through the minutes or otherwise, the discussions on which these decisions are based should be regarded as confidential.

- Governors should exercise the highest degree of prudence when discussion of potentially contentious issues arises outside the Governing Body.

Conduct

- Governors should express their views openly within meetings but accept collective responsibility for all decisions.
- Governors should only speak or act on behalf of the Governing Body when they have been specifically authorised to do so.
- All visits to the school should be undertaken in pursuance of the Governor Visits to Schools policy.
- In responding to criticism or complaints relating to the school, Governors should refer to the Complaints Procedure for the correct system and advise the complainant accordingly.
- Governors have a responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the school and their actions within the school community should reflect this.
- All Governors must record any pecuniary interest that they may have in connection with the business of the Governing Body in the register of such as held by the Clerk to the Governing Body.

Meetings

Individual Governors do not have authority in a school: it is the decisions of the Governing Body that carry authority. If the Governing Body is to function well its meetings are crucial, and so all Governors are expected to subscribe to the following "Meetings Charter" to enable the Governing Body to operate effectively.

Meetings Charter

As a Governor, I expect:

- people to attend regularly and be punctual;
- an agenda and relevant documents to be sent to me at least seven calendar days before each meeting;
- an agenda that makes clear the purpose of each item;
- a Chair who keeps to the agenda, paces the meeting so that time is given to each matter in proportion to its importance, draws on all members for contributions and keeps discussions to the point;
- meetings to be time limited to a maximum duration of two hours, to optimise the opportunity for all involved to attain a suitable work/life balance;
- my contribution to be heard and respected, and others to contribute to the discussion;
- the decision-making process to be clear;
- Governors to work together and not to be stubbornly partisan;

- Governors to take collective responsibility for decisions; and
- minutes that summarise the views expressed succinctly, record decisions accurately and are available (in draft form) soon after each meeting.

Others can expect me to:

- attend regularly and be punctual. Where I am unable to attend I shall inform the Clerk at the earliest opportunity so that she may offer my apologies to the meeting;
- read the agenda, minutes and other papers before the meeting and note items I want to say something about;
- inform the Chair of the meeting of items of Any Other Business, at least 4 days prior to the meeting, so that they can be factored into the agenda and dealt with appropriately;
- bring my papers and diary to each meeting;
- make relevant and positive contributions;
- listen to and consider what others say; and
- accept my share of collective responsibility, even for those decisions that I do not agree with.

Training and Development

- All Governors should strive to optimise their effectiveness by utilising the Governor training and development opportunities available, as this will benefit the school, the individual and help develop effective teamworking.
- All applications for attendance at designated courses should pass through the designated Link Governor for Training, so that they can record Governor attendance as evidence for school self-evaluation of maintaining and improving Governing Body development.

Mentoring

- All new Governors will be advised of contact details for a currently standing Governor who will be able to act in the role of mentor, to provide support and a listening ear regarding all aspects of the work of the Governing Body.
- All experienced Governors will be expected to offer their services as a mentor for a new Governor if they are so requested.

Suspension

- The Governing Body reserves the right to suspend a Governor for a period not exceeding six months if it is felt that their conduct is unsatisfactory, including but not exhaustively;
 - Significant breach of confidentiality
 - Persistent or significant inappropriate contact with the media

- Publicly stating that their own opinion is that of the Governing Body when the two differ significantly
- Acting unfairly or in a prejudicial manner
- Acting in a manner that devalues the status of the Governing Body, Headteacher or other members of staff
- Persistent absence from meetings of the Full Governing Body and/or its committees for a period of six months, whether or not apologies have been accepted.

Any such actions shall be initially discussed by the Headteacher, Chair and Vice Chair and their recommendations shared with the rest of the Governing Body at the earliest opportunity.

Acceptance

- All Governors are asked to confirm in writing that they agree to abide by this Code of Practice on an annual basis. The Clerk will record this confirmation at the first meeting of the Full Governing Body each academic year.