

Deansbrook Infant School

Governing Body

Induction Pack

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DEANSBROOK INFANT SCHOOL

Information for New Governors

Welcome to your appointment as a governor of Deansbrook Infant School. Your time, efforts and talents will be greatly valued.

We appreciate that you will feel more involved and confident in your first Governors' meeting if your practical knowledge of the school and of the work of the Governing Body has already begun. In order to become familiar with our school, we invite you for an informal chat and a walk around the school at your earliest opportunity.

You can get to know us by visiting our school's website:

www.deansbrookinfants.co.uk.

In the `Community Section` of our school's website you can find out more about the other members of the Governing Body. We would be grateful if you could explore the idea of writing a few words about yourself to add to our website. When completed please send this to the headteacher.

Being a Governor in a school is challenging, but it is a very rewarding role when you think of the difference you can make in the life of young people. We take pride in sustaining a positive relationship within our Governing Body team and actively respond to opportunities to involve them in the school's activities.

We very much hope that the attached school information induction pack will speed up getting to know each other. This pack has four parts that provide you with information about:

Part A - The Governor Role

Part B - Basic Information about the School

Part C - The Governing Body

Part D - Routine Matters

The work of a school Governor is demanding and complex, but there will be continuing opportunities for you to learn, understand and develop the role to the best of your ability. We are keen to ensure that your experience as a Governor of our school is both enjoyable and rewarding.

Part A

The Governors' Role

The governors are vision setters and strategic decision makers for the school.

An effective Governor will be expected to be:

- Committed to maintaining and improving the school's standards of education
- Mindful of his/her responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the school. The Governors' actions within the school and the local community has to reflect this.
- Prepared to commit time and energy to the work of the Governing Body
- Prepared to occasionally visit the school during the working hours
- Able to have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses
- Effective at having a degree of accountability
- Prepared to challenge, but in a constructive, non-confrontational manner
- Acting in the best interest of all pupils of the school
- Behaving in a professional manner
- Regularly Attending meetings (full Governing Body meetings and committee meetings) and reading all the papers before the meeting
- An advocate of the school in the wider community
- Aware of the needs to keep up to date with developments in the world of education
- Keen to participate in briefing sessions
- Prepared to stand by collective decisions even when he/she has a different point of view

- Willing to share his/her knowledge, experience and skills for the benefit of the school as a whole.

The role of the school Governor is to:

- Give active support to the school and the professional team led by the Headteacher
- Be a source of challenge and support to the Headteacher and leadership team (act as a critical friend)
- Be familiar with the school's policies, oversee them and the use of its resources
- Set aims and objectives for the school
- Establish a positive supporting relationship with the school's staff
- Monitor and evaluate the progress the school is making towards achievement of its aims and objectives
- Attending relevant training in order to build the knowledge needed to fulfil the role of a critical friend

You should do these things as a Governing Body and not as an individual Governor. In all such matters you should work with knowledge and understanding of the school. A Governor is not an inspector so it will not assess the quality or method of teaching.

A governor **will not**:

- Write school policies
- Undertake audits of any sort
- Spend much time with pupils of the school
- Fundraise (this is the role of the Friends of Deansbrook)
- Undertake classroom observations

Time commitment

The average time commitment is five to eight hours per month, although it will vary depending on the needs of the school and the role. This includes meetings, background reading and school visits. As well as full Governing body meetings, our schools has various committees and link governor roles which you will be expected to contribute to.

Deansbrook Infant School has a term of office for its Governors for four years. Many people choose to serve multiple terms, however as a volunteer you can resign before your term is finished if your circumstances change.

Like magistrates or members of a jury, school Governors have a right to reasonable time off work for their public duties, although this may be unpaid. Your company's HR department will be able to tell you about its policy. Under *Section 50 of the Employment Right Act 1996*, if you are employed, then you are entitled to a "reasonable time off" to undertake public duties; this includes school governance. "Reasonable time off" is not defined by law and you will need to negotiate with your employer how much time will be allowed.

Governance is a voluntary role and therefore it is not paid. Some travel and other expenses may be paid, but this will vary.

Part B

Basic Information about the School

Number of pupils: There are currently 256 pupils (September 2020)

Organisation of pupils:

- Nursery and Reception – Early Years Foundation Stage
- Year 1 and Year 2 – Key Stage 1

Number of Staff: There are currently 57 members of staff (September 2021)

Organisation of staff: All staff work together as a team. The team is made up of teachers, nursery officers, teaching assistants (level 2 – level 4), admin staff, school business manager, site manager and facilities staff.

Communication with Parents: We pride ourselves with an `open door` policy to see parents. Our weekly newsletter is available on our website (and emailed to parents) and we have termly curriculum guidance, parent consultation evenings, year group meetings and curriculum workshops where parents and children work together.

We keep in touch with our parents and carers via *Teachers 2 Parents* application for smart devices (or website <https://eduspot.co.uk> for payments) where we also can send personal texts, for example, when a child has a minor head injury. In this way the parents are informed as soon as possible. All letters and other correspondence with parents are sent via email.

Strengths of the school: Our team work with high standards of teaching and learning. We pride ourselves in acquiring staff that are passionate about education. Our school premises are well maintained and our resources are attractive, creating a stimulating environment in which the children feel safe and eager to learn.

We celebrate events with our community such as special festivals, International food days, World Book Day, traditional dressing up, music workshops, Phonics and Maths workshops and many others, generally creating lots of opportunities for parents to get involved in the school life of their children.

Financial management: The school's finances are determined by its delegated budget, which is monitored termly by the Finance and Premises Committee. The school's Financial Management Policy is available from the Headteacher.

Extra-curricular activities: We have Breakfast Club and a daily After School Club (Busy Bees). We take children on regular visits outside the school premises and have visitors that perform and engage their young minds in creative activities, depending on the topic for the half term. After School Clubs run by our staff (computing, skipping, dance, gym, speed stacks etc) are very popular as well as Chess Club, Yoga and Barnet Football Club.

Community / other school links: Friends of Deansbrook, Summer Fair, charity events, Junior transfer programme, Reception Transfer meetings, Tapestry meetings and curriculum meetings.

Documentation useful to the new governors can be accessed online, on the school's website:

- School Prospectus
- School Development Plan
- Latest Ofsted report.

Part C

Basic Information about the Governing Body

Number of governors: There are currently 13 school governors

Organisation of the Governing Body:

- **Full Governors**

Once a term there will be a full Governing Body meeting that usually starts from 6.30pm until around 8.30pm. You will be emailed an agenda and the Headteacher's Report before the meeting and any other information that we will cover. It is important that you read the document sent to you prior to the meeting as we have to work through them relatively quickly to get through everything. The Full Governor's meeting is where we report back on any relevant committee meetings decisions, we discuss whole Governing Body issues and have the opportunity to ask questions or make suggestions.

- **Committee Meetings**

Each Governor is asked to join a committee and it's best to choose one that suits your interests and experience.

At Deansbrook Infant School we have 3 committees:

- Finance and Premises Committee
- Curriculum, Attainment and Standards Committee
- Pupils, Parents and Community Committee

During our committees meetings (also held once a term, but these might be scheduled during the day) we delve into more detail and get to grips with what is going on at the school. These are virtual meetings, held via Zoom.

We ask more questions and make suggestions to fill our 'critical friend' role and to ensure that our committees area are managed effectively. When deciding which

committee to be part of, it is best to join it based on skills and interests. The Chair of Governors will discuss the options available and the roles that need to be filled.

- **Becoming a Link Governor**

Being a link governor is another important and great way to support the school. A link governor acts as the link between the Governing Body and a specific subject, curriculum area or aspect of the work of the school. The development of a good working relationship based on mutual trust with all staff is essential if the link Governor is to be effective in this role.

Each of our Governors comes from a different background and has different skills to offer. When you become a link Governor you choose an area that you have knowledge or interest in and spend time discussing and learning about that area. You will have a meeting with the staff linked to your area once a year which in Deansbrook Infant School is usually scheduled with one hour before a full Governing Body Meeting. That is the time when you look through the evidence that has been gathered and discuss completed and outstanding actions on the development plan. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about your specific subject.

When the Ofsted inspectors come to visit our school, they might ask to meet a specific link Governor so in this case you should be prepared to talk about your role and what you have learned about your area.

Link Governors must understand that their role is as a source of support to the school and a source of information for the Governing Body.

- **Governors Drop-In Days**

The Governors are expected to visit Deansbrook Infants once or twice a year, to see the school at work and to observe (not intervene) teaching and learning. These visits are allowing the Governors to see in action what is being discussed in meetings. This helps build a better understanding of the school so that the Governors can successfully fulfil their role.

The visit is not about inspection, making judgements about the professional expertise of the teachers, checking on your own children, pursuing a personal agenda or arriving with inflexible pre-conceived ideas. At the signing in, the Governor receives a Guidance on procedure at the time of the school visit.

Number and timing of meetings: One termly Full Governing Body meeting (which usually starts at 6.30pm) and termly meetings for each committee (times will vary)

The Conduct of Meetings:

The Clerk of the Governing Body will pass on the list of names, telephone numbers and email addresses of all Governors, together with the Annual Meeting schedule.

Governing Body Safeguarding Role

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 and the Education Regulations 2014 requires Governing Bodies of all schools and colleges to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

It is recommended that all Governors attend Safeguarding Training.

Safeguarding Induction is required in the role of Governor.

As part of the Governing Body you must ensure that you comply with your duties under all legislation and ensure that the school's policies, procedures and training are effective and compliant.

Part D

Routine Matters

Taking the role of a Governor might seem daunting at the beginning. You might worry about some aspects of the job that you are not completely sure with or maybe you just need to come to the meetings with the right frame of mind in order to get the best out of these sessions. Here are some questions that might worth finding answers for or just reflecting on the valuable aspect of being part of a Governing Body.

How will I know about the meetings?

Agendas for the main termly meeting are electronically sent by the Governing Body Clerk to all the Governors. Every Governing Body has a Clerk that helps with administration. The clerk is not a Governor, but is employed by the Governing Body.

The dates of committee meetings are usually agreed at the previous meeting and an agenda is emailed a few days before the meeting.

Please make sure that the email address that you provide is secure, accessible and regularly checked. Also make sure that if you change your telephone number this is updated as soon as possible in the school's database. You will also be allocated a school lgfl email address. This will be used to send any confidential documents such as finance papers.

Which meetings can I attend?

Most Governing Bodies delegate work to committees/ working parties. There is a degree of freedom when choosing the committees, depending on the vacancies. Most Governing Bodies agree the principle that all committee meetings are open to

any Governor who would like to attend, the exception is where the committee is dealing with a matter that could lead to an appeal. In such instances, it is essential that some Governors have no involvement in making the decision, leaving them free and impartial, able to be part of an appeal committee, e.g. pupil discipline or staff grievance.

How can I prepare myself for the first meeting?

Set aside some time to go through the background papers for the meeting and maybe try preparing some questions or comments if you feel you might need clarification on some aspects or maybe you would just like to contribute.

What information can I expect?

For each meeting of the Full Governing Body you will need

- The agenda
- The minutes of the previous meeting
- The Headteacher's Report

At every Full Governing Body refreshments are provided by the school.

Will I be expected to say something?

Contributing to a discussion is voluntary, but remember that you are a full member of the Governing Body from the start. Sometimes the Chair of Governors invites individuals to comment. You will be expected to update the Governing Body on any tasks you have carried out in your role of Governor since the previous meeting. If the task will not be achieved in time, then there will be carried out onto the next Governing Body's Agenda until it is resolved.

What if I want to talk about something that is not on the Agenda?

The section 'Any Other Business' is not meant to be as generous as it sounds. If an item is raised here, the Chair should already have agreed to include it because it is too urgent to be left for a later meeting.

If you feel strongly that something needs to be discussed please suggest it to the Chair of Governors well in advance so it can be formally placed on the Agenda. That way the other Governors will have a chance to think about it beforehand and do the necessary research. This will lead to an informed discussion and a more considered outcome.

Can I talk about it when I get home?

Once approved as correct, the meeting papers (including the reports) become public documents. This means that parents, staff and other members of the public have the right to access them. The minutes are recording the decisions and not the details of the debate. Any talking that you do about the meeting should follow that principle. Who said what or which way people voted should not matter once a decision has been reached. When the meeting ends you should be sure that you are clear that anything that has been decided is confidential. The Governing Body as a whole decides which matters are confidential.

If there is a PART 2 AGENDA at the meeting, it must not be discussed with anyone outside the Governing Body as it will be confidential.

What happens if I cannot attend?

If you cannot attend a meeting of the Governing Body then you should send you apologies to the Chair, the Headteacher or the Clerk. This simply has to state that

you will not be present at the meeting – full Governing Body or committee. It is wise to find out quickly when the next meeting will take place in order to avoid missing it. You will be automatically disqualified as a Governor if you miss all the meeting of the Governing Body for six months without prior approval. An annual schedule of all Full Governing Body and all Committee meetings is sent to Governors in September each year.

How can I get time off work?

As we have previously mentioned, this is a public duty and you are entitled to a reasonable time off although not necessarily paid. As a conscientious Governor, you will need to attend all the meetings of the full Governing Body, plus Committee Meetings, visit the school while it is open, go to specific Governor training, be involved in staff selection and occasionally serve on appeal panels.

What do I do about complaints and grumbles?

It could happen that the parents with a problem might approach a governor first, saying that they are afraid to go to the teacher. No individual Governor has the power to sort out problems. Their duty is to ensure that complaints and grumbles are heard and addressed.

A Governor will only speak or act on behalf of the Governing Body when he/she has been specifically authorised to do so. Parents should be guided to discuss their problems with the class teacher first and if the problem persists then the Headteacher is the next point of contact. Only when this has been tried and failed to work from the parents' perspective, then the parent would write to the Chair of the Governing Body. It is the job of the Headteacher and the Governing Body to

examine the issues and put things right if necessary. All Governors should ensure that the school's complaints procedures are up-to-date, widely known and understood.

As a Governor, always be mindful of the responsibility in maintaining and developing the ethos and reputation of the school that you represent.

Thank you for committing to this important role in our school.

Useful websites:

<http://www.deansbrookinfants.co.uk/>

<https://www.moderngovernor.com/>

The National Governors Association www.nga.org.uk

<https://www.nga.org.uk/Be-a-Governor/Be-a-Governor.aspx>

