

Appendix 9 Link Governors' Information

What is a link governor?

Link governors are members of, and are appointed by, the governing body to oversee specific aspects of governors' responsibilities within the school.

There is no statutory requirement to appoint link governors, but many governing bodies find them a very effective way to help the governing body to understand, oversee, monitor and develop a particular area of responsibility within the school. The link governor should ultimately enrich the whole governing body's understanding of their particular area and contribute to informed decision making.

Link governors are also a useful way for the governing body to develop positive links with staff and to maintain a visible and professional profile within the school.

Governing bodies can link governors to curriculum or subject areas, year groups (more often in primary schools) or particular priorities in school. It is up to the governing body to determine how best to organise themselves.

The functions of a link governor could be performed by a working group or committee.

What does a link governor do?

- takes a special interest in their particular area of responsibility
- keeps abreast of developments locally and nationally
- attends appropriate training
- makes focussed visits to the school
- has regular contact with the person(s) within the school with responsibilities in their particular area
- discusses the implications of any policies adopted by the governing with the staff concerned
- monitors how well relevant policies adopted by the governing body are operating within the school and understands any barriers to their implementation
- reports back regularly to the governing body, making recommendations where appropriate, either via a governors' committee or to full governing body meetings.

Benefits to having link governors

- they constitute part of a strategy to monitor and evaluate regularly the progress of the school development plan

- they are a means to build up relationships, based on mutual trust and respect
- they provide OFSTED with concrete evidence about the involvement of the governors in the school
- they inform the school's self-evaluation process
- they allow governors to see first-hand the resources used in school, the fabric of the building etc, so that they can make informed decisions about future budget allocations.

The advice is universal and can be adapted for any different links; your school may choose to have different arrangements for link governors from those detailed in the supporting documents.

Supporting documents:

The role of the link governor for an improvement priority

The role of the curriculum area link governor

The role of the data link governor

The role of the link governor for safeguarding/child protection

The role of the link governor for looked after children

The role of the link governor for SEND

The role of the Pupil Premium link governor

The role of the PE link governor (primary schools)

The role of the attendance link governor

The role of the EYFS link governor

The role of the link governor for an improvement priority

Linking governors to priorities in the school improvement/development plan is good practice and provides a form of direct monitoring of key areas. The role will vary depending on the priority but many of the suggestions apply under “What does a link governor do?” above. It will be key for a governor linked to a priority to have a full understanding of the area involved, the actions planned by the school, what success will look like and what evidence will help a link governor evaluate success.

The role of the curriculum area link governor

Many governing bodies use link governors effectively as one way to help the governing body to understand, develop and monitor the curriculum on offer at the school. Governing bodies may wish to appoint link governors for the core curriculum areas of English and Maths as well as other subjects.

Link governors provide a link between the governing body, committees and school staff through regularly reports to the governing body or committees.

It is for each governing body to agree on the role that it expects the curriculum area link governor to undertake but it is helpful to promote a good working relationship between the relevant member of staff at the school and the link governor.

What does the curriculum area link governor do?

- takes a particular interest in their chosen subject by keeping up to date with national and local initiatives
- meets regularly with the relevant leader in school in order to become informed about current policies and practices in the school and know how the subject fits into the school development plan
- liaises with the relevant leader to obtain information on:
 - training undertaken/planned/needed
 - curriculum and timetable arrangements
 - special needs or most able pupil provision
 - planning, assessment and recording procedures
 - standards of achievement
 - how well policies are operating
- talks to the Headteacher about curriculum issues
- visits lessons in order to understand how the subject is taught and any particular difficulties
- encourages the relevant member of staff to give a presentation to the governing body or a committee
- reports back regularly to the governing body, making recommendations where appropriate, either via a committee or to full governing body meetings.

When visiting classrooms or other teaching situations, governors need to remember that they are not there to inspect lessons but to provide support and act as a critical friend to the school. Separate guidance is available from Governor Services on protocols for visiting classrooms; link governors should ensure they are fully aware of their school's practices and protocols.

Some questions to ask

- are the policies and initiatives that are in place making an impact on pupil achievement?
- how are pupils of different abilities catered for? How do we know that the curriculum meets the specialised needs of all our pupils? Is there sufficient lesson differentiation to provide for students of all abilities?
- could the curriculum be made more exciting/stand out more?
- has school asked the pupils what they want from the curriculum? What did they say?
- what continuing professional development is available for staff?
- are there sufficient resources in school to deliver the curriculum?
- what monitoring arrangements are in place?

The role of the data link governor

Understanding the school's data is very important for all governors but some governing bodies are choosing to have one governor (or a committee of governors) who specialise in the data.

A data link governor needs to have attended training on data/RAISE online and understand the thresholds and expectations from the DfE.

Some questions to ask

- How does attainment and progress at my school compare to national averages and the government's floor target?
- Are we relatively stronger or weaker in reading or writing (or English in secondary schools) compared to mathematics?
- Do we have any under-performing groups of pupils or are there any gaps in attainment between some groups of pupils?
- How might the context of our school affect our performance?

The role of the link governor for safeguarding/child protection

The governing body is a key driver in child protection and safeguarding and must “have arrangements in place to ensure that they exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children” (Guide to the Law for School Governors DfE, 2009).

Safeguarding covers child protection issues and other wider safeguarding considerations including bullying, pupil health and safety, meeting medical needs, first aid, school security, drug and substance misuse and other safeguarding issues specific to a school's local area.

Schools should have a designated senior teacher with responsibility for child protection together with a link governor.

What does the safeguarding link governor do?

- acts as a “critical friend” to the school in order to ensure that the appropriate systems and procedures are in place to cover all aspects of the safeguarding agenda and all statutory governing body responsibilities are met
- ensures child protection policy and procedures are in place which are in accordance with guidance
- ensures the school has policies and procedures relating to wider safeguarding issues and that those procedures comply with relevant legislation and guidance and follow agreed Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and Local Authority procedures in the event of an allegation being made against the Headteacher or another member of staff
- ensures the school has a framework of policies and guidance to support pupils and staff and maintain safety (this includes issues such as complaints, behaviour, the use of reasonable force, promoting pupil wellbeing, risk assessments, school trips, staff conduct, attendance, exclusion and health and safety)
- monitors and reviews policies
- ensures there is a suitably qualified, trained and supported Designated Senior Person (DSP) who has responsibility for responding to and overseeing safeguarding issues
- ensures there is a suitably qualified, trained and supported Deputy Designated Person who has responsibility for responding to and overseeing safeguarding issues as agreed reasonable to be delegated by the DSP
- ensures that any staff undertaking safeguarding responsibilities are adequately supervised and supported
- ensures there is a robust system for regarding, storing and reviewing concerns

- liaises with the headteacher about general child protection and broader safeguarding issues and be able to report to the governing body on any issues
- ensures school staff training is up to date
- attends training and promotes training to other governors as appropriate (including Safer Recruitment training)
- ensures that staff and volunteer recruitment and selection follows safer recruitment procedures
- is aware of the single central record and ensures it is maintained in line with guidance
- has an understanding of how safe pupils feel in school
- ensures that safeguarding messages run throughout the curriculum
- ensures that the school works with agencies as appropriate
- works with the headteacher to provide an annual report to the governing body
- monitors progress against any outstanding issues from the annual report and audit tool
- ensures that the safeguarding agenda is embedded in the ethos of the school.

Some questions to ask

- does our school comply with the statutory requirements?
- do we receive an annual report on safeguarding?
- are all staff aware of their responsibilities?
- what measures do we take to help parents to understand the safeguarding agenda?
- how do we know our children feel safe?
- do we have all the appropriate policies in place?
- when were the policies last reviewed? (some should be done annually)
- are these kept in accessible place for all staff?
- do we have a single central record for our own employees and volunteers?
- whose responsibility is it to keep this up-to-date?
- are all new staff trained in child protection issues as part of their induction process?

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- do all our staff have access to training every 3 years?
- has the Headteacher and at least one governor completed the Safer Recruitment training?
- who maintains up to date records of this training?
- when did the designated staff member last attend safeguarding training?
- are any other organisations using the school premises, and have they appropriately vetted their staff?
- does the governing body know that the site is safe and secure?
- does the governing body scrutinise attendance data regularly?

The role of the link governor for looked after children

Local Authorities have a duty to promote the educational achievement of the children in their care. In order for them to implement this duty successfully, they need the active co-operation of schools. School governing bodies have a major responsibility for helping children to succeed: they can champion their needs, raise awareness and challenge negative stereotypes.

School governors can make a significant difference to how looked after children experience school. They can ensure that their needs are considered at the planning and policy level through to monitoring and evaluation. Governing bodies will need to examine a wide range of school data to see how looked after pupils are progressing and identify any barriers to their learning.

Governing bodies are consequently advised to have a nominated governor with responsibility for this aspect if your school has looked after children on roll.

What does the link governor for looked after children do?

- ascertains that the school has a designated teacher for looked after children and whether they have attended appropriate training
- liaises with the designated teacher and keep the governing body informed about issues affecting looked after children
- provides support for the designated teacher
- attends any briefing events on looked after children and keeps abreast of national and local issues
- ensures that there is an annual item on the appropriate agenda regarding
 - training undertaken by designated teacher, other staff and governors;
 - the progress and attendance (as a group) of looked after children
 - opportunities for looked after children to play a full part in the life of the school.
- ensures the school has an overview of the educational needs and progress of looked after children
- ensures the school sets challenging targets for looked after children
- checks that additional support is offered to meet the needs of looked after children who are at risk of underachieving
- checks that procedures are in place to ensure that all looked after children have

up-to-date Personal Education Plans

- ensures school policies are reviewed from the point of view of looked after children
- ensures that resources are allocated to match priorities for looked after children and that the school's special educational needs and inclusion policies acknowledge the needs of looked after children (there may be a separate LAC policy)
- checks that the home school agreement and home school policy take into account the home circumstances of looked after children
- ensures no looked after child is permanently excluded and that there are strategies in place to reduce the number and frequency of fixed term exclusions
- ensures looked after children who have missed schooling receive support where appropriate
- ensures looked after children participate in out of school activities where possible

Some questions to ask

- how does the school include raising the attainment of looked after children in the school improvement plan?
- is there suitable training for all staff in contact with vulnerable children?
- how does the school organise its liaison with agencies, services, children's homes and carers?
- what are the arrangements for welcoming new (looked after) children especially mid term?
- who reviews and updates the child's Personal Education Plan?
- have the needs of looked after children been considered in the school's curriculum planning?
- are extra curricular activities promoted with carers and looked after children?
- does the school consider the barriers to learning for looked after children?
- what strategies are deployed to avoid exclusion of looked after children?
- does the PSHCE curriculum take full account of different family situations and experiences?

The role of the link governor for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

The governing body has a duty to ensure pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can access the curriculum, achieve and participate fully in the life of the school. Governing bodies should, with the Headteacher, decide the school's general policy and approach to meeting pupils' special educational needs for those with and without statements.

As an SEN governor you are the link between the governing body and the school in relation to pupils with SEN. It's your role to help raise awareness of SEN issues at governing body meetings and give up-to-date information on SEN provision within the school. You also help review the school's policy on provision for pupils with SEN and ensure that parents have confidence in this provision.

Your role is to ensure that pupils with SEN get the help they need to access the curriculum and to participate fully in the life of the school.

Governing bodies **must** ensure that there is a qualified teacher designated as SENCO for the school.

What should the SEN link governor know?

- current numbers (but not names) of pupils on the SEN Register at SEN support (previously School Action and School Action +), those with High Needs top up funding , statements or EHC plans)
- identification procedures for pupils with SEN
- staffing arrangements for pupils with SEN
- plans for staff training
- how resources are deployed
- ways that pupils with SEN are ensured access to the curriculum
- provision being made for individuals
- progress on any parts of the School Improvement Plan relating to SEN
- progress with the implementation of the SEN Policy
- whether statutory reporting requirements are being met
- whether the requirements of the new code of practice (September 2014) have been implemented
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- how the school liaises with external agencies and support services
- what links the school has with special/mainstream schools
- how school communicates with parents including where to find the SEN information report on the school website.

Good practice checklist

- arrange class visits with the Head/SENCO to gain an understanding of how the school delivers SEN provision
- set up regular meetings with the SENCO
- take a central role at governing body meetings in discussions about SEN
- visit the school as often as you need to, to be able to stay informed
- attend LA training for SEN governors
- find out what links your school has with other local schools, SEN support services and parents

Questions to ask the SENCO

- how many pupils are on the SEN list?
- how does the school identify pupils with SEN and what happens once a pupil has been identified?
- what links does the school have with other local schools, SEN support services and parents?
- what is the academic attainment for pupils with SEN and the progress made over time?
- what is the range of needs?
- how does the school provide equal access to both the premises and the curriculum for pupils with SEN or disabilities?
- how is the school's work in SEN monitored?
- does the SENCO have enough time and resources to carry out their responsibilities?
- what training has been undertaken?
- what resources are available for SEN and how they are deployed including how SEN funding from the LA is allocated and spent?

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- how do you gather the views of pupils with SEN and their parents/carers?
- does the school prospectus/school website include information on SEN?

Changes in light of SEN reforms:

- How is the SEN funding, previously allocated by the LA but now part of the school's direct budget, allocated and spent?
- Does the school website describe the school provision for SEN (as part of the wider LA Local Offer)?
- How recently has SEN provision been reviewed and does provision reflect the changes in the law?
- How has the school responded to the replacement of School Action and School Action plus by the single "SEN support" category?

The role of the Pupil Premium link governor

Some schools have recently asked one of their governors to lead on Pupil Premium and become the link governor for this important area. The link governor would focus on the allocation of resources and narrowing the attainment gap between disadvantaged and other pupils.

What does the Pupil Premium link governor do?

- understands relevant school pupil performance data that shows progress of different groups over time
- becomes familiar with the concept of the pupil premium; what it is, why it has been set in place, how it is allocated, how it is calculated and which groups of pupils attract the premium
- becomes familiar with the school's pupil premium policy, if it has one
- knows basic pupil premium facts for the school; how many pupils attract the premium, how this figure compares with other local and similar schools, how the money is spent
- understands relevant school pupil performance data that shows progress of different groups over time
- monitors spending of the pupil premium, ensuring the money is spent in identifiable ways to support target groups of pupils
- monitors the impact of pupil premium spending on target groups
- meets occasionally with the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and/or other staff responsible for performance data to discuss issues around underperforming groups including those eligible for the pupil premium
- monitors the attainment of different groups of pupils over time to provide evidence of how pupil premium pupils are progressing compared with others
- challenges the allocation of the pupil premium grant if there is no clear audit trail evidencing appropriate use of the resources
- takes an active part in any governing body or committee discussions when the allocation and monitoring of the pupil premium is discussed and decided
- reports back to the governing body on the school's use of the pupil premium
- visits the school to find out about pupil premium expenditure and its impact

Some questions to ask

- how effective is the school in supporting the target groups?

- how confident are you that the pupil premium grant is spent appropriately on the intended target groups?
- is the pupil premium funding kept separate from general school resources so it can be specifically and identifiably used as intended?
- how is the allocation of the pupil premium decided?
- what is the pupil premium used for?
- how is the progress of different groups of pupils monitored so that the school can identify any under performing groups?
- are there groups of pupils whose attainment falls behind others?
- how does the attainment of pupil premium pupils as a group compare with others?
- what would you say are the main challenges in the use of the pupil premium, and how is the school working to overcome them?
- what benefits can you see from the allocation of the pupil premium?
- is there anything that the governing body should be aware of that could help the school gain the maximum advantage from the pupil premium?

The role of the PE link governor (primary schools)

There is a requirement for governors to understand the way the Primary PE and School Sports Funding has been spent in school and the impact.

A link governor should meet with the PE co-ordinator in school and discuss the following:

- how much money has been received by the school
- the plans to spend the money
- the school's vision for PE and school sport
- how the skills of staff are being developed
- the sustainability of any initiatives
- what the long lasting difference will be to the school and its pupils
- what has been the impact of the funding on pupils and staff
- what has been the impact on the health of pupils

The role of the attendance link governor

Attendance is a key issue for many schools and Ofsted take a keen interest in a school's attendance data and the strategies being employed by a school to improve attendance and punctuality. Good attendance is key to a child's success at school and can also be a safeguarding issue if children are absent.

A governor linked to attendance may:

- visit school to talk to the member of staff responsible for attendance
- look at the information available to parents and pupils to encourage good attendance
- look at the letters sent home to families where attendance is an issue
- scrutinise the attendance data on behalf of the governing body

Some questions to ask

- What is your school's agreed attendance target?
- What is the overall level of attendance?
- Does the school have an Attendance Policy and when was it updated?
- What is the level of persistent absence (children with attendance of 85% and below)?
- How many persistently absent (PA) pupils are there?
- Who are the PA pupils? (for instance pupils with special needs, Looked After Children, children with behavioural needs, boys, girls)?
- What resources are in place to support them and how frequently are they monitored?
- What strategies/interventions does your school use to improve attendance?
- How is the impact of these interventions measured and how often are they reviewed?
- Are all staff aware of their responsibilities regarding attendance in school and does a senior member of staff have an overview?
- Is good attendance celebrated?

The role of the Early Years Foundation Stage link governor

It is important that governors have full knowledge of their Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): the strengths and areas for development, the progress of the children and how the setting is managed. From September 2014, Ofsted will be giving EYFS a separate judgement.

The EYFS link governor should:

- Be familiar with the statutory EYFS guidance
- Understand how the data is collected
- Understand how the EYFS framework should be delivered
- Provide the link between the governing body and the EYFS lead
- Monitor the progress of the children and be aware of any gaps and how they are being addressed

This can be done by:

- Visiting the setting and watching the practice
- Attending training (including in school)
- Discussion with the EYFS lead and other staff
- Reporting to the governing body

Questions for EYFS link governors to ask

- Does our EYFS policy reflect the legal requirements of the Revised EYFS Statutory Framework?
- Does the EYFS policy reflect the vision and ethos of the school?
- Are staff and governors aware of the proposed changes (September 2014) to the way Ofsted will inspect early years settings?
- Is there an action plan for EYFS and how is it monitored/reviewed?

What principles guide the teaching and curriculum in the EYFS?

- What are the characteristics of effective learning in EYFS?
- How are play, exploratory learning and working independently made part of the curriculum?
- What opportunities are there for children to explore learning in different ways, using different resources – both indoors and outdoors?
- How is the interaction between learning at home and school managed?
- When does specific adult-led teaching happen?
- Are adults supporting play?
- How do we respond to and use the profile data?

How is progress monitored, recorded and reported in the Early Years?

- How are the profiles used?
- How are photographs used?
- Is there an electronic system for collecting observations?
- How are comments from EYFS staff incorporated into profile?

- How are observations incorporated into profile?
- How is the voice of the child captured?
- Do the learning journals show progress over time?
- Are the next steps for individual children clearly identified?
- Is there evidence of early learning goals being used to direct activities?
- Is there evidence of assessment of needs being used to direct activities?
- How are parents' comments captured?
- How can parents see the profiles?
- How do we respond to and use data for individual children/groups of children?
- Does the GB incorporate Early Years targets in discussions on progress?
- How are the judgements moderated? Do we use links with other/cluster schools?

How is transition from the home or nursery environment dealt with?

- How is change managed for children and families?
- Do we have individualised transitions?
- Do we have good relationships with feeder settings?
- Do staff make home visits? Are they helpful?
- If a nursery setting, how is the week organised?
- Are parents welcome to stay for any sessions?

How is the transition to Key Stage 1 managed?

- Do we have meet the teacher sessions?
- How are reception children acclimatised to the main school environment?
- How is the data and information on standards/progress transferred to KS1 teachers?
- Do we have meetings to discuss the EYFS profile scores and the Characteristics of Learning for each child (a discussion should consider strengths and weaknesses under the best fit parameter)?
- What is the environment like in KS1? Are there opportunities to learn through play?

How are members of staff in the EYFS deployed? What is the ratio of adults to children in the classroom?

- How many staff work in EYFS?
- How are teaching assistants/nursery nurses deployed?
- What are the ratios for EYFS?
- How are staff deployed out of doors to ensure free flow?
- Are all staff qualifications "fit and relevant" for the revised EYFS?

How is your classroom and outdoor space organised to ensure the best and most regular opportunities for learning?

- What equipment is available inside and outside?
- Is the planning for the environment as a whole?
- Is the learning space developmentally appropriate and does it reflect the children's current interests?
- What areas are set up?
- Are the areas planned to support key priorities?
- Is the Foundation Stage adequately resourced?

How do staff in the EYFS work with other colleagues across the school?

Early Years practitioners can often feel separate from the rest of the staff body; not only is their practice different, they also work to different assessment systems and organise the children and the school day differently. But Early Years staff have a huge amount to offer other staff in a primary setting – especially in developing and sustaining links between home and school; in exploration and learning through play; and in working with other adults and space in different ways to maximise learning opportunities and progress.

EYFS staff are also experts in being able to observe and notice progress that might not be assessable or recordable quantitatively. This information could be very useful to other teaching staff.

In addition, EYFS staff tend to design environments for learning which are nurturing of the whole child, and this can be useful to other members of staff.

What continuing professional development is available for EYFS staff and how might this be disseminated to other staff across the school?

- Are training opportunities linked to priorities?
- What courses have staff been on recently and what has been the impact?
- Have the courses been useful/had impact?