School Governance

Good governance is of immense importance in enabling schools to provide high quality education. Strengthening school governance is a priority for Education within the Corporate Plan, Education Development Plan and Estyn Action Plan. Some of the main areas of work being progressed include the recruitment and selection of governors:

1) **Improving the selection process for LA governors to ensure quality appointments are made**

   The governor application form has been revised and focuses on the skills candidates can bring to the Governing Body. A pack of information has been produced for prospective governors containing contact details for further information, including experienced governors. Selection criteria has also been published with the application form on the Council’s website: [www.cardiff.gov.uk/schoolgovernors](http://www.cardiff.gov.uk/schoolgovernors)

   A new Local Authority Governor Appointment Panel was constituted earlier this year and held its first meeting in September 2015. At this meeting, the panel approved selection criteria and a recruitment process. The panel also recommended 17 new governor appointments and 8 re-appointments.

   The panel met again in October to address both deferred and new applications. The panel recommended a further 12 new governor appointments and 2 re-appointments.

   The panel is scheduled to meet termly and its next meeting will be held in January 2016.

2) **Reducing the number of governing body vacancies, in particular Local Authority Governor vacancies**

   Cardiff currently has 390 Local Authority governor positions across 125 schools. Local Authority governor vacancies have decreased over the last three years despite the usual churn:

   - September 2013 – 10.15%
   - September 2014 – 9.79%
   - October 2015 – 5.90%

   In the last twelve months, 107 new governor appointments were made. This is due to strengthened partnership working and the implementation of the governor recruitment campaign.

   **Governor Recruitment Campaign**

   The following actions have been taken:

   - Internal Staff Recruitment Campaign during August generated over 90 enquiries from staff and resulted in 11 completed applications. Seven of these have recently been appointed to schools identified in greatest need of improvement. Enquiries are still being received and followed up;
• Links with academic organisations – 2 governors from Cardiff Metropolitan University have recently been appointed to schools across the City;
• Officer recruitment - one Education Officer has talked about school governors at her local church and this has resulted in 7 completed application forms. Four of these have recently been appointed to schools identified in greatest need of improvement;
• ‘Education is Everyone’s Business’ – governance is a feature of this campaign and over 10 enquiries have been received through the website. This has resulted in 2 completed application forms and these have recently been appointed to schools across the City.

3) Developing approaches to broker opportunities for positions on governing bodies, for leading businesses, sports and cultural organisations in conjunction with Economic Development.

• Partnership working has been strengthened with leading businesses, sports and cultural organisations and work is underway with Ken Poole (Operational Manager, Economic Development) and Frank Holmes (Cardiff Business Council) for the next round of governor recruitment from local businesses. At least 17 appointments from leading businesses, sports and cultural organisations have been made to schools, the majority of which are schools in need of greatest improvement.
Cardiff has 1,882 governor positions across 124 schools and these consist of the following stakeholders:

- Local Authority (LA) governors - the Council is responsible for appointing to these positions;
- Community Governors - are selected and appointed by the governing body;
- Foundation Governors – selected and appointed by the Diocese or Trust responsible for the school;
- Parent Governors - elected by and from parents of registered pupils at the school;
- Staff Governors - elected by teaching and support staff at the school.

The membership of each governing body will vary according to the type of school.

Governors are appointed for a four year term of office. There are vacancies for all categories of governors across Cardiff schools and we are currently recruiting potential governors who will be appointed to schools using a selection process that matches skills to the needs and challenges of the individual school.

We have a target of 120 vacancies to fill and these consist of Local Authority, Community and Foundation Governor positions. Applications from potential candidates will be considered by the Local Authority in the first instance and then forwarded to the individual Governing Body or Diocesan Director where candidates’ skills match the needs of individual schools.

## Cardiff’s schools

There are currently 124 schools in Cardiff, consisting of:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Secondary Schools (including one Federation of two schools)</td>
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<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Special Schools</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Nursery Schools</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Integrated Children’s Centre</td>
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The Governing Body’s role

Governing bodies play a key role in improving standards and in enabling schools to provide a high quality education. The governing body’s main function is to raise standards of achievement and to make sure the school provides a high quality education for all its pupils.

The day to day management of the school is the responsibility of the Headteacher and staff. Governors are there to help shape the school’s future direction and focus.

Governors work as a team. Individual governors have no power or responsibility. It is only the full governing that has legal duties and powers and all governors share in that corporate responsibility.

The governing body is at the heart of how a school operates and the decisions they take affects the interests of pupils, staff and the community. They are not there to rubber stamp decisions. Governors are responsible for how the school is performing. They have to be prepared to support and challenge their Headteacher by seeking clarification, asking challenging questions and requesting information to arrive at the best decisions for the pupils and the school as a whole.

The three main roles of the governing body are:

- The strategic role
- The critical friend
- The accountable role

These roles contribute to raising the standards achieved by both the school and its learners.

The Strategic Role

Governors carry out their strategic role by providing a framework for what they decide the school should achieve. The governing body works with the Headteacher to:

- Set the aims and objectives for the school;
- Agree policies, targets and priorities for achieving these objectives; and
- Monitor and evaluate the aims and objectives and whether the policies, targets and priorities are being met.

Other key duties include:
- Monitoring performance and promoting high standards of educational achievement, attainment and behaviour, including the rigorous review of performance data;
- Managing the school budget;
- The appointing and dismissing of staff;
- Making decisions around pupil exclusions;
- Forming policy on the school’s curriculum;
• Making sure the school buildings are safe and welcoming.

**The Critical Friend**

Governors provide support and constructive advice to the Headteacher and act as a forum for discussing ideas and initiatives. Governors also seek clarification, ask challenging questions and request information in order to arrive at the best decisions for all concerned. Governors will get to know the school well and there will be clear lines of responsibility between the Governing Body, the Headteacher and the Governing Body’s various committees.

**The Accountable Role**

The Headteacher and professional staff are accountable to the governing body for the school's performance. The governing body must be prepared to explain its decisions and actions to anyone who has a legitimate interest. This may include staff, pupils and the press, as well as the Local Authority, the school’s Foundation or Welsh Government.

The Governing Body receives regular reports from the Headteacher on the school’s performance and progress. It will provide information to the Local Authority and parents by producing a number of documents, including:

- Annual Report to Parents
- School Prospectus
- Post-Inspection Action Plan

**Commitment Required**

As a governor you should:

- Be committed to school improvement and raising standards;
- Attend and participate in governor meetings on a regular basis (usually up to 6 governing body meetings plus committee meetings a year). Meetings mostly take place in the late afternoon/evening at the school but this can vary across schools;
- Attend mandatory training provided by the Local Authority;
- Attend other training sessions to further your knowledge and expertise;
- Spend time getting to know the school through link governor visits/learning walks;
- Participate in panel meetings such as appointments, staffing, pupil issues and complaints;
- Respect confidentiality at all times;
- Adhere to your Governing Body’s Code of Conduct/Governors’ Wales Principles of Conduct.
What support is available to help governors in their role?

- Induction training – to welcome and introduce you to the role of a governor;
- An ongoing programme of training for all governors, including mandatory data training, throughout the year;
- A regular governors’ newsletter/bulletin to keep you updated with developments;
- Local and national help lines and websites;
- Support and guidance from other members of your own team of governors.

How might it benefit me?

Being a school governor can bring great satisfaction through the opportunity to make a difference to the effective running of a school. You will gain an in depth understanding of the education system and acquire transferable skills and experience that can benefit you both personally and professionally. Governors work as a team in sharing knowledge and expertise and making collective decisions for the school. They contribute to the success of the school and its pupils and make a real difference for our children.

Below are some words from current governors about why they enjoy the role:

"For me, there's nothing more satisfying than knowing the skills and life experiences I bring to my governing body, significantly increase the life chances for so many children. It really is a case of the more you give, the more you get back. Hard work? Yes. Worthwhile? Absolutely!" – Ceri Veysey, Glyncoed Primary School

"My professional career gave me fantastic training, I have always been happy working and managing people, I have worked with children particularly in a sports background and becoming a Governor has enabled me to continue to fulfil all these enjoyable functions. It is unpaid but the respect and support you get back for using your life skills is inestimable. As ever it is what YOU make of it !!" – Roger Caddick, St David’s CW Primary School

“It has been enormously enjoyable being so closely involved with the school that did so much for our children. I have been involved in the appointment of a Head-teacher and other staff, the setting of the annual budget, the development of the buildings and grounds, Curriculum, Early Years, Thinking Skills and all sorts of collaborative programmes with other schools. I have been able to bring my own skills to bear for some of this and learned heaps of new "stuff” along the way. I have never been bored and would recommend the experience to parents and anyone out there with an urge to become involved and make a difference” – Paul Guise, Rhydypenau Primary School

“I initially volunteered to be a Parent Governor whilst my child was a pupil at the school, with an aspiration of becoming involved in influencing the overall direction of the school. My daughter has subsequently left, but I have found that I thoroughly enjoy the challenges of being a Governor, and am now a Community Governor, and Vice Chair. My motivation remains the same as when I originally volunteered: to make decisions that enable the school to deliver excellence in education. I didn't set out with the belief that this would be an overnight task, but I'm still here (four years later) because the reward is in seeing some of our decisions make a positive difference in the education of children” – Chris Browne, Radyr Comprehensive School
Governor training

Mandatory Training
All new governors are required to attend an induction training session and a school data training session within 12 months of appointment. The Local Authority provides this training and a range of dates and venues are available throughout the year. Details of this are provided on appointment and updates to the programme are e-mailed directly to governors. From September, governors will also be able to complete their mandatory training on-line.

Induction for New Governors Training – Key Elements

- To provide an understanding of the composition of governing bodies
- To demonstrate how Governing Bodies carry out their functions
- To explore some of the key roles of governors

Understanding School Data Training – Key Elements

- To explain how your Challenge informs governors about the school data profile, target setting, value added performance, teacher assessment, pupil progress
- To explain how self reflection and professional challenge within schools can be improved through the use of this data

Additional Training
The Local Authority offers a range of additional training sessions to support governors in carrying out their duties effectively. These include:

- Child Protection
- Looked After Children
- Additional Learning Needs
- Health and Safety
- Recruitment & Selection
- Staff Discipline, Grievance & Capability Procedures
- Pupil Discipline & Exclusions
- Performance Management
- Complaints
- Substance Misuse
- Redeployment and Redundancy
- School Improvement

Details of training sessions are provided on appointment and updates to the programme are e-mailed to governors throughout the year.
Further information and application process

If you would like further information about the role then please contact Ruth Lock, Governor Support who will be pleased to help. We also have a number of experienced governors who will be delighted to share their experiences with you and provide you with practical information and advice. Please contact Ruth Lock directly for details of these governors.

To apply for the role, candidates will be required to complete an application form and copies are available directly from Ruth Lock or on the Cardiff Website: www.cardiff.gov.uk/schoolgovernors

Contact us:
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