



Mere School
Governors
Induction
Pack

Mere School

Governor Induction Handbook 2008

Mere School,
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www.mereschool.com

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Type: Community School

Ages: 4-11

Absence:

% of Pupil sessions ($\frac{1}{2}$ days) missed through unauthorised absence: 0.01%
% of Pupil sessions ($\frac{1}{2}$ days) missed through total absence: 4.99%

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Introduction

Firstly may we thank you for deciding to become a Governor at Mere School. For us your decision to become a School Governor demonstrates your commitment and willingness to see the school improve and develop for the future.

If you have not been a Governor before you are probably feeling slightly unsure as to what you need to do and where you need to do it. That's why, as a school, we have developed this booklet to help you start to understand what the school is about and what being a School Governor means.

Thank you, once again for deciding to become a Governor at our school.

General Information

Confidentiality

As a Governor you will have access to information regarding students and staff. Obviously we all have a duty to keep this to ourselves. It is surprising what a small world we live in and who knows who!

Criminal Records Bureau

All Governor appointments are subject to satisfactory clearance by the Criminal Records Bureau who check for any record of criminal convictions.

Pecuniary/Business Interests

All Governors are required to fill out a business interests and pecuniary form, which is to ensure that there is no likelihood of a conflict of interest arising. The Clerk to Governors will discuss this with you when it is necessary for you to complete the form. This, Governors should inform the Clerk to the Governors of any of the following when completing the form:

- employment with a local or public authority,
- private practice of any profession, or
- engaging in trade or business.

Your role as a Governor

The main aim of a *Governing Body* is to maintain and improve the standards of education in the school and to the benefit of the pupils and the wider community.

The role of any *Governing Body* is to ensure the school conducts itself in a way that promotes high standards of educational achievement within the school. As part of the *Governing Body* you will form part of a wider team and will always act on behalf of that team and not as an individual. Individual *Governors* have no direct powers to act unless the whole *Governing Body* has agreed to delegate a particular decision making authority to the individual.

As a *Governor* you are not there to act as a sounding board for gripes or the day-to-day issues of parents or other persons who may wish to comment on the school. Your role is to ensure agreed policy and practice is followed and should monitor and comment on the school's ability to meet its policy objectives. No *Governor* should undertake any action on behalf of the *Governing body* without the permission of the whole *Governing Body*.

Day-to-day issues highlighted by pupils, parents or members of the public regarding the school, its management or activities should be raised directly with the school i.e. the Headteacher or staff.

The *Governing Body* is responsible for raising expectations, being a "critical friend" to the school and holding it to account.

In an innovative and entrepreneurial school such as *Mere*, the pace of change is quick, constant and involves a breadth of activities. Inevitably it is rare that a *Governor* will be involved in depth in any one area. However, if you have a particular interest or expertise it may be possible to link you to a specific area.

Governance and Accountability

Why is Governance and Accountability Important?

In the context of financial management, good leadership is about ensuring and demonstrating that resources are used efficiently and effectively. A school that is well managed financially will not only use its resources properly, but will make it apparent to others that it does so.

The school must be willing and able to show how it has used its resources and be able to respond honestly to questions about its financial probity. In other words, the school's financial management should be open, transparent and have integrity; these attributes are widely accepted to be the key underpinning principles of good corporate governance.

The Benefits of Demonstrating Good Financial Management

There are many benefits to be gained from demonstrating that a school is well managed financially. For example:

- External bodies, such as OFSTED, or the LEA's internal audit service, may recognise that the school presents a low risk and will give it a lighter touch in terms of inspection.
- External partners will be more willing to work with the school or make financial donations to it, because they will have more confidence that the funds will be used effectively.
- A well run school avoids financial waste and therefore has more to spend on pupils.
- A school with a good reputation may find staff and pupil recruitment easier.

All new Governors need to become familiar with the 'Scheme of Delegation' and the 'Terms of Reference'. The Clerk to the Governors will ensure you receive a copy of these documents.

How does the Governing Body Work?

Schools in England have a number of specific objectives set out by UK Parliament. In turn, various Education Acts have delegated a number of duties to Governing Bodies to monitor school activity in schools key performance areas. These delegated activities can include:

- promoting a high standard of educational achievement,
- managing the schools' finances,
- making sure the curriculum for the school meets national and school specific requirements,
- introducing forward plans to help the whole school develop, and
- maintaining a safe and healthy school environment.

Governing Bodies usually achieve these objectives through a sub-committee structure (i.e. smaller groups of Governors that focus on each specific objective or issue, and report back to the full Governing Body). At Mere School the sub-committees currently are as follows:

- Finance,
- Premises, and
- Curriculum.

As a Governor you may request to attend or become part of any sub-committee. However, before you do, it is recommended, if your time permits, that you attend each sub-committee meeting. This will give you an idea of which sub-committee you might best contribute to.

You do not need any special skills to be a School Governor just:

- enthusiasm,
- a desire to be actively involved in the life of the school,
- to find out about the school and its environment,
- be willing to work as a team,
- listen to the ideas of others, and
- contribute your own ideas and time to the benefit of the school.

As a new Governor, the current Chairperson and the Headteacher will make an appointment to meet you and introduce themselves and you to the role of the Governing Body and the school.

In the meantime and if you would like to find out more about School Governorship and you have access to the internet you can log on to www.governor.net.co.uk

Types of Governor

All School Governors are either elected, appointed or entitled to office. If you are unsure as to which type of Governor you are, you should check this with either the Clerk to the Governors or the Headteacher.

The Governing Body may comprise of some or all of the following types of Governor:

- Parent Governors - should normally be elected and should realise they are a representative parent not a parent representative,
- Teacher Governors - again would normally be elected and may serve the school as long as they are employed at the school,
- Staff Governors - are also elected but are from the non-teaching staff. Again both teacher and staff Governors should realise they are a representative of the teaching and non-teaching staff and not a teaching and non-teaching staff representative,
- LEA Governors - are appointed by the local authority, and
- Community Governors - are appointed by the Governing Body.

All of the above may serve a term of four years in office.

The final type of Governor is the Headteacher who will always have a choice, and may or may not decide to be part of the Governing Body.

Who can't be a Governor

You cannot become a School Governor if you are:

- a Governor of more than two schools,
- declared as bankrupt and have a current order served upon you,
- disqualified from being a Company Director,
- disqualified from becoming a Charity Trustee,
- a convicted criminal (there are specific limits affecting different convictions), or
- under the age of eighteen.

If you think any of these factors apply to you, you should declare this in writing to the Clerk to the Governors now. Failure to declare anything now, which comes to light at a later point, may result in formal action being taken against you.

The current Governing Body

You need to remember all the information supplied below is private and is supplied for your use as part of the Governing Body only.

Governor Name	Type of Governor	Contact Number	E-mail
Catriona Williamson	Headteacher	01747 820582	head@mere.wilts.sch.uk
Rachel Porter	Parent(Chair)	01747 861992	rachelporter@tiscali.co.uk
Nicky Whitmore	(Clerk)	01747 860639	nicky@whitmorehouse.fsnet.co.uk
Yvonne Bundy	Teacher	01258 840016	
Dawn Young	Staff	01747 860770	
Mark Cassidy	Parent	01747 860434	marksam@tesco.net
Rob Harrison	Parent	01747 860767	skipbob61@tiscali.co.uk
Clive Hazzard	Community	01747 860318	hazzardmob@tiscali.co.uk
Julia Cole	Community	01747 861811	juliacole@btconnect.com
Martin Marshall	Teacher	01747 854521	mmarshall100@hotmail.com
David Knapp	Parent	01747 861282	djk01@btinternet.com
Simon Ford	Parent	01747 863396	simonandlaura.ford@tiscali.co.uk
Alan Gristwood	Community	01747 861768	alan.gristwood@btopenworld.com
Paul Barnes	Community	01747 863313	paulnbarnes@hotmail.com

The Role of the Headteacher

Usually you expect the Governing Body and the Headteacher to have a strong supportive relationship and work in partnership with each other to meet the school's objectives - and at Mere School this is exactly how things works. As you may expect the Headteacher's role is to take responsibility for the internal management of the school and its operation - this is not the role of the Governing Body.

The Governing Body is in place to ensure the school is conducted in a way that promotes high educational and social standards. This is achieved by monitoring the activities of the school through the Headteacher reports and the sub-committee structure. Where concerns exist these should be raised at meetings and, as appropriate, discussed with the Headteacher so that she may consider and address the concerns raised.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure the high standards and agreed objectives are delivered through the management of school resources on a day to day basis.

Meetings

Generally as a School Governor there will be two types of meeting you may attend. These are full meetings of the Governing Body (held at least once every term) and sub-committee meetings (held as required to achieve the objectives of the Governing Body).

You will need to attend at least one meeting of the full Governing Body every six months. Failure to attend meetings may mean you could be disqualified and will not be entitled to stand as a Governor. Details of these meetings will be sent prior to each meeting. If you cannot attend you should contact the Clerk to the Governors with your apologies.

Sub-committee meetings will be notified to you as you become part of a group. But again you should endeavour to attend as many meetings as time permits and advise the meeting Chair or Clerk to the Governors of any non-attendance.

Meetings are part of being a Governor, as are the structure notes or minutes taken for each meeting. So be prepared to receive a weighty volume of paper / emails. As a Governor you will be sent information detailing the activities of the school (via the Headteacher) and various sub-committee and full Governing Body meetings (via the Clerk to the Governors).

If you have not attended a meeting before do not worry. All Governor meetings are arranged to discuss specific issues, or a range of issues around a specific subject - they are not there to embarrass anyone and will be run in a way that allows everyone to contribute and comment on the subject.

Each meeting will be structured with a Chairperson and with the Clerk (or some other nominated person) taking notes. As a member of the meeting all you need to do is read any literature supplied before hand, ask questions and comment as you see appropriate around the discussion points.

During a meeting particular objectives may be discussed and you may agree to complete additional objectives in support of the overall objective. You must remember that there is no obligation for you to do any specific activities and your role, as a Governor, is in a monitoring capacity and is to ensure that the school is maintaining and improving the standards of education.

Meetings are not an opportunity for attendees to show how knowledgeable they are about a subject. Furthermore, they are not a competition to see who can talk the loudest and are not an opportunity to be rude about other people and their ideas.

Meetings are a vehicle where a group of people, with a clear objective, can get together, listen to each other's views and ideas, and agree clearly on what actions to take to achieve that objective.

The important thing for any meeting is to be clear on what you are trying to achieve when you go in, and to be clear on who is to do what and by when, when you come out.

The role of the Chair at any meeting is as follows:

- to ensure that all participants are clear on what the objectives are and why they are at the meeting,
- what will be discussed (the Agenda),
- ensure someone will take notes and,
- to keep the discussion flowing with the aim to achieve the targeted conclusions within the time limits set for the meeting.

Health and Safety at the School

Most school related activity, including Governor meetings are held within the school. Therefore, you need to be aware of the School Safety policy briefly outlined below; the full policy is available from the School Office.

General Policy Statement

It shall be the policy of Mere School to establish and maintain, so far as reasonably practicable:

- a. a safe working environment throughout all school sectors, in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and other relevant legislation,
- b. safe working procedures among staff, pupils and other users of the school,
- c. effective training in first aid and other safety procedures,
- d. effective procedures for use in case of fire, accidental injury or other emergencies,
- e. methods of evaluating regularly the effectiveness of the School Safety Policy,
- f. techniques for promoting health and safety as a general principle whenever possible,
- g. procedures for reporting accidents and monitoring records in order to reduce the number of accidents,
- h. safety consciousness and responsible attitudes towards safety throughout the school,
- i. equipment and systems of work that are safe,
- j. arrangements for protection against risk to health and safety of the general public,
- k. sufficient information, instruction, training and supervision to enable all staff and pupils to carry out their work in a safe manner,

- l. procedures to identify hazards and risks and the means of controlling such risks,
- m. procedures to ensure relevant health and safety issues are embedded within course syllabi at all levels where appropriate.

Overall the objective is to identify all the hazards associated with the function of the school, its activities, facilities or location, eliminating or reducing the risks associated with known hazards to prevent injury or ill effect.

Should you experience anything that you feel represents a risk to health and safety and/ or which is not currently adequately controlled, you must report to the Headteacher immediately so that the appropriate action may be considered and taken as necessary.

Likewise, should you personally experience any ill effects or risks to your own health and safety whilst undertaking activity on behalf of the school, you should stop immediately and report the issue as detailed above,

Nothing is more important than the health and safety of all users of Mere School and its facilities.

Pupils

Of course one of the primary reasons you probably want to become a Governor is to improve the standards within the school to benefit the pupils.

The pupils are split across seven years.

Mandatory Policies

All policies in place at Mere School are available through the school office upon request.

Frequently Asked Questions

- What should I expect to receive from the Clerk to the Governing Body as a new Governor?

When you are appointed as a new Governor you should expect to receive the following from the Clerk to the Governors:

- a. minutes from the last full Governing Body meeting,
- b. the Headteacher's most recent report,
- c. timetable of the year's Governing Body meetings,
- d. any recent OFSTED inspection report,
- e. a guidance to the Law for School Governors,
- f. a copy of the Scheme of Delegation,
- g. a copy of the Terms of Reference.

- How can I arrange a visit to the school?

If you would like to arrange a visit to the school please contact the School Office, who can arrange for you to spend time in school. You can contact the Office direct on 01747 860515.

- Will I get training?

The Clerk to the Governors will advise you of any internal and external training available. Experience is the best form of training and this takes time.

- How can I contact the Clerk to the Governors?

By contact through the school on 01747 860515 or via email nicky@whitmorehouse.fsnet.co.uk.

Useful Websites

The following websites provide information you might find useful whilst serving as a governor. The websites provide detailed information about policies and give guidance on procedures and the way in which governing bodies operate.

www.governornet.co.uk

www.teachernet.gov.uk

www.nga.org.uk

www.governorline.info/index.cfm?m=1