

Chair's Personal Plan

Dear Chair

Being a chair of governors is a key leadership role and governing boards are central to the effectiveness and accountability of schools. To quote the governance guides, published by the Department for Education, '*The chair sets expectations for professional standards of governance, creating the right conditions to support the governing body's discussions and decision making*'.

The quality of governance is a significant part of the overall judgement about how effectively and efficiently a school is led and managed. The role of the chair in leading the board and working in partnership with the headteacher, while holding him/her to account, is pivotal to the leadership of the school.

This tool is designed to help you assess your current skills, knowledge, and experience, as well as plan the next steps in your personal development. It also includes questions and suggestions aimed at deepening your understanding of your school and board, enhancing your confidence in your role as chair.

You may already possess some or all this information. If so, it may assist in identifying any actions you may wish or need to take. We see this process as an investment in contributing to delivering effective governance.

Effective Chairing

The first few weeks	Yes/No	Any Action Required (<i>suggestions in italics</i>)
Have you met with the headteacher?		
Have you met with the clerk (governance professional) to discuss the arrangements for managing the business?		
If possible, meet with the outgoing chair?		
Has any chairs training been secured?		<i>LAs provision of National Governance Association (NGA), Learning Link e-learning for school governors and trustees NGA accreditation: Leading Governance Development for Chairs</i>
Have you considered using another chair from within your cluster as a mentor?		
As a new chair you bring a different perspective, consider if the way the board conducts its business enables the focus to be clearly on the strategic direction of the school and improving its performance?		

Leading and developing the team

Leading and developing the team	Yes/No	Any Action Required (<i>suggestions in italics</i>)
Are you aware of the election/appointment process of the various roles of governors, trustees, local academy committee members and associate members?		<i>Advice/guidance can be found in the Westmorland and Furness (WFC) Clerks' (Governance Professional) Handbook Articles of Association for the Trust or school</i>
Have all governors received induction?		<i>Model Welcome/Induction Letter/Pack can be found in the WFC, Clerks' (Governance Professional) Handbook</i>
Ensure a Code of Conduct is in place for governors to sign up too?		<i>NGA, Code of conduct in schools Additional addendum re advice/guidance of how to address inappropriate governor behaviours is available, contact the Governor Support Assistant Seven Principles of Public Life, see page 9</i>
Have you reminded the governing board members of the corporate nature of the governance, whatever the discussion, the decision is a corporate decision made by the entire board?		
Have you reminded board members of the need for confidentiality?		
Ensured the board has the range of skills required to perform its statutory roles and responsibilities?		<i>NGA, Skills Audit NGA LL, Interactive Skills Audit</i>

Leading and developing the team	Yes/No	Any Action Required (<i>suggestions in italics</i>)
Ensured that governors feel valued and encourage their development?		WFC, Training and Development <i>Consider appointing a Training Link Governor</i>
Ensured the board conducts a self-review annually to identify any Areas where the governing body need to improve?		WFC, Governing Board Health Check <i>DfE advise every 3 years an External Review of Governance is undertaken</i>
Are roles and tasks delegated, ensuring all board members are involved?		
Are all board members attending meetings and if not, has this been discussed/raised?		
Do you have open and honest conversations with board members who are not seen as contributing or contributing positively to the team?		<i>Annual Conversation with governors, trustees, local academy members and associate members</i>
During a meeting, do members listen to each other, and where there are differences of opinion, are these dealt with openly and honestly?		
Is the chair of governors and chairs of committees elected each year?		<i>Model procedure for the election of chair and vice chair, see WFC, Clerks' (Governance Professional) Handbook</i>
Is there succession planning in place for the role of chair of governors, vice chairs and chairs of committees?		Succession Breads Success

Leading and developing the team	Yes/No	Any Action Required (<i>suggestions in italics</i>)
Do you allow others to take the lead according to the situation and others' particular, or to develop, strengths?		
Evaluate your own leadership?		<i>Chair peer to peer review: Support from your cluster</i> <i>Feedback via the Annual Conversation</i>
Do you conduct exit interviews for board members who leave before their term of office expires?		

Building the relationship with the headteacher and ensuring accountability

Building the relationship with the headteacher and ensuring accountability	Yes/No	Any Action Required (<i>suggestions in italics</i>)
Are you clear about the role of the headteacher in relation to the day to day management of the school and the board's role in the strategic leadership of the school?		
Have you had a conversation with the headteacher as to what they expect from you and what you expect from them?		<u>NGA, What governing boards and school leaders should expect from each other</u>
Do you work in partnership with the headteacher, developing a professional relationship by providing regular contact, appropriate support, encouragement and challenge?		<u>NGA podcast, Building great relationships for boards and leaders, January 23</u>
Meet the headteacher regularly to discuss issues and prioritise board business, does the arrangement for keeping in touch suit both parties?		
Is there a policy in place for performance appraisal of the headteacher?		
If you are governing in a federation, are the lines of accountability for each school's performance clear?		

Leading the business of the governing body

Leading the business of the governing body	Yes/No	Any Action Required (<i>suggestions in italics</i>)
Ensure that at least 3 full governing body meetings are held per year?		<i>Best practice: meetings should last no longer than 2½ hours.</i>
Do you plan with the headteacher and the clerk (governance professional) a timetable of meetings for the year ready for the board to consider and agree; include committee meetings in the cycle, timed so that their minutes can be circulated for the next full board meeting and is in line with the school's development cycle?		
Ensure you have regard to the work life balance of board members and school leaders when setting the timing of meetings?		
Do you set the meeting agenda with the headteacher and clerk (governance professional) at least 2 weeks in advance?		
Ensure the agenda is focussed on school improvement/development issues and priorities?		
Are items which are for information only, discussion/decision or any items that may be deemed as confidential clearly identified?		
Ensure agenda and papers are circulated at least 7 days in advance of meetings; allowing board members time to prepare for meetings?		
Ensure you read and are familiar with the agenda and papers before a meeting?		
Do you start meetings on time?		

Leading the business of the governing body	Yes/No	Any Action Required (<i>suggestions in italics</i>)
Ensure good time management at meetings?		<i>Possible times against items on agenda:</i>
Follow the agenda, try to keep board members on track and avoid distractions?		<i>Useful phrases:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can we get back to the agenda?</i> • <i>We seem to be losing sight of the main point, recap...</i> • <i>Can we now go on to ...?</i> • <i>If no one else has anything new to add can we move onto point 2 on the agenda?</i>
Ensure that discussions do not get heated and that everyone has a voice, but no one is allowed to dominate discussions?		<i>Useful phrases:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Thank you for your contribution but we must move on.</i> • <i>Thank you for your comment's others may want to respond.</i> • <i>You have raised some interesting points would anyone like to respond</i> • <i>To sum up ...?</i>
Exercise a second (or casting) vote on any matter where the voting is equally divided, except in the vote for election of chair when the clerk (governance professional) will chair the item, as a non voting chair.		
Is work delegated effectively to committees and individuals?		
Be firm with ' Any other business ' which may or may not be included, as a heading on your agenda. As chair you can decide whether an item is discussed whilst taking any board comments into consideration.		
Ensure draft minutes reflect all discussion points, decisions and subsequent actions?		

Leading the business of the governing body	Yes/No	Any Action Required (<i>suggestions in italics</i>)
Ensure that procedures are established for reporting to full board?		<i>Best practice to have in place; School Visits Policy including a report template for completion following a visit to the school, see WFC, Clerks' (Governance Professional) Handbook</i>
Ensure decision making and processes are transparent in the minutes?		<i>Model procedure for the election of chair and vice chair, see WFC, Clerks' (Governance Professional) Handbook</i>
Agree the draft minutes of full board meetings with the headteacher and clerk (governance professional), so that they can be circulated to all board members as draft minutes for approval at the next meeting?		
Exercise decision making only in cases of emergency (Chairs Action) ie only if a delay in exercising a decision would likely to be seriously detrimental to the school, pupil or their parent or any member of staff, ensuring these decisions are reported back to the board?		
Does the vice chair share some of the chair's business?		<i>Succession planning, developing the vice chair Allow link governors in specific areas to lead agenda items ie safeguarding</i>

Working with the clerk (governance professional)

Working with the clerk (governance professional)	Yes/No	Any Action Required (<i>suggestions in italics</i>)
Has your clerk (governance professional) attended any training?		<i>LAs provision of NGA, Learning Link e-learning for school governors and trustees NGA accreditation: Leading Governance Development for Clerks</i>
Does your clerk (governance professional) know where to get support?		<i>WFC, Governor Support Team contacts:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 01228 226925 • GST.Mailbox.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk <i>WFC, Resources for governor chairs and clerks Maintained Schools Governance Guide Academy Trust Governance Guide</i>
How is your clerk's (governance professionals) performance managed?		<i>Appraisal</i>
Do you seek procedural advice on governance matters from the clerk (governance professional) if needed?		

Personal Action Plan

Action	Where to look, who to ask?
<i>Sources of support, list of links to various websites with useful information, documentation etc.</i>	WFC, <u>Support for school governors</u>

The Seven Principles of Public Life

(originally published by the Nolan Committee: The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established by the then Prime Minister in October 1994, under the Chairmanship of Lord Nolan, to consider standards of conduct in various areas of public life, and to make recommendations).

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.