

Merton Junior School



'Be wise, together we succeed'

The role of a governor at Merton

The Department for Education's expectations

The Maintained Schools Governance Guide prepared by the DfE states that

In all types of schools, governing bodies should have strong focus on three core strategic functions:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent

What do governors do?

Governors are members of a corporate body known as the Governing Body, (sometimes full governing body, or FGB). The Governing Body has a number of important statutory duties to carry out and is responsible for agreeing the school's aims and values, for monitoring how it operates and ensuring that it is run in accordance with these aims and values. More specifically, the governing body

- ensures that the school complies with its statutory duties and responsibilities
- agrees the school's strategic direction, ethos and values, policies and objectives – usually written in the school improvement plan (SIP) or strategic plan
- approves the school's budget
- monitors the school's progress in achieving objectives in the SDP and the budget
- appoints, supports and challenges the Headteacher

Governors are **not** responsible for the operational running of the school. This is delegated to the Headteacher, who is also a governor. Governors' responsibilities are to provide:

- strong links between the school and community it serves
- experience of the world outside education
- an independent view
- a visible form of accountability for the Headteacher and staff
- a team focusing on long term development and improvement
- accountability to the community for the use of resources and the standards of teaching and learning in the school
- support for the Headteacher and staff
- "...a general zeal for education...breadth of view, business habits...administrative ability and the power of working harmoniously with others...tact, interest in schoolwork, a sympathy for the teachers and the scholars...residence in reasonable proximity to the school."

From 'School Manager' Royal Commission 1888 – true then; true now!

Individual governors contribute their experience, skill and knowledge through meetings of the full Governing Body, any delegated sub-committees, statutory committees and other committees that might be set up from time to time.

Decision-making

Although the operational leadership and management of the school is the responsibility of the Headteacher, the governing body is responsible for a wide range of decisions that affect the management of the school. Some of these decisions may be delegated to the Headteacher or to sub-committees of the governing body. Others must be taken by the governing body as a whole, and the governing body as a whole remains responsible for any decisions that it delegates to others.

Principles of working as a governor and as a Governing Body

Governors share responsibilities through the corporate Governing Body, work as a team and are not legally liable as individuals. Once appointed they are holders of public office, should conform to the Nolan Principles and work to the same principles as paid officials. Governors at Merton Junior School are expected to

- attend meetings regularly
- work as a member of a team and not as individuals, in the best interests of the school and its pupils
- show an interest in school activities
- become well-informed about education in general and Merton Junior School in particular
- become familiar with the rules and protocols of school governance
- attend any necessary training courses to help them fulfil their roles effectively

In addition, governors may be involved in the following activities

- interviewing and appointing staff
- monitoring the financial management of the school
- matters relating to pupil discipline (though they should not take disciplinary action as individuals)
- making decisions on the curriculum and its development
- liaison with parents and others as necessary
- community links

Conflicts of interest

Governors should be mindful of actual or potential conflicts of interest and to declare these if they happen. Each year, governors are asked to sign a register of pecuniary interest to ensure that the governing body is aware of any potential conflicts. If you find yourself at a meeting where the outcome will affect you financially or in other ways, you should tell the Chair, and leave the meeting during discussion of that item if necessary.

Other conflicts of interest may arise if governors find themselves in a position where their (or their child's) actions or feelings conflict with those of the Headteacher or governing body. The golden rule is not to seek to take advantage of your position as a governor to obtain special treatment for yourself or your child or to undermine the work of the governing body as a whole. If you feel you need to withdraw from a meeting or discussion (or are asked to do so) you can, without prejudice to your position as a governor. That said, strong feelings, expressed clearly during debate before a decision, are welcomed and help promote good governance!

Confidentiality

The outcomes of FGB and sub-committee meetings are minuted and once approved, become public. Until then, they are confidential and some of the information you will hear as a governor will remain confidential or sensitive even when minutes are approved. Please keep information in confidence when you are asked to, or when it is clearly sensitive. Confidential documents, for example job applications that you may be given when interviewing, and any notes you may make, should be returned to the school for its records or for shredding.

The governing body at Merton Junior School

What is the constitution of the governing body at the school?

At Merton Junior School, the governing body is made up of 13 governors, in the following categories:

One Headteacher governor	the Headteacher is required to be a governor under requirements made by the DfE in 2015
One Local Authority governor	people appointed to the FGB by the Local Authority
Two elected parent governors	parents of pupils at the school and elected by parents to the FGB
One elected staff governor	staff at the school and elected by staff at the school
Eight co-opted governors	people from the local community; recommended to the FGB and appointed by it; they can also be parents of pupils at the school

Appointments are made based on applications and the skills needs of the governing body. Each governor's term of office is 4 years; governors can be re-appointed or re-elected at the end of each term, if they are willing to continue and there are vacancies for them to fill.

How is the governing body at Merton Junior School organised?

The Governing Body at the school operates as a 'flat' structure and does not delegate any of its roles and responsibilities to sub-committees. It meets at least six times each year – i.e. twice each school term. These meetings focus on curriculum and standards or resources

and personnel. An additional meeting is held in September each year to elect a Chair and Vice Chair and agree arrangements for carrying out the Governing Body's functions.

Statutory panels

The Governing Body is required to have a number of statutory panels that meet infrequently, but as necessary. Membership of these committees is generally drawn from a pool of governors on the FGB. Merton Junior School's statutory panels are as follows

- Pay – meets regularly to determine pay progression for teaching staff
- Pupil discipline – hears sanctions (particularly exclusions) for individual pupils
- Staff discipline – hears disciplinary matters associated with staffing
- Staff dismissal – hears matters associated with the dismissal of staff
- Appeals – hears appeals once other avenues for the resolution of disputes or complaints have been followed

Governors with special responsibility (Link Governors)

A number of governors have special responsibilities in the school. These responsibilities include:

- Pupils with special educational needs
- Safeguarding and child protection
- Governor training (Development and Training Governor, or DTG)
- Health and safety
- Finance link

Governors with a particular responsibility are expected to become familiar with the school's policies, procedures and actions in relation to the topic and to report to governors on the implementation of these policies and procedures. Guidance on what is expected of these roles is given in the Link Governors' Guidance.

How do governors get to know what's going on in the school?

As a governor at Merton Junior School, you should (and will!) feel welcome to visit the school, by agreement, to see what is going on, to meet staff, or to take part in special events. However, you'll appreciate that it is important not to disrupt the work of the school during these visits, so if there is something that you wish to visit or see, you must contact the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher first, to check that it is convenient. Governors with particular responsibilities, such as the safeguarding governor, have clear themes that they will wish to follow during their visits. Other visits should be linked to a theme in the school improvement plan.

Whenever you visit the school, you should always sign in and wear your governors' badge. Please also observe the protocols outlined in the Governor Visits Protocol. If you have carried out a formal visit to the school, please write a report of your visit (see Governor Visits Form) for sharing with other governors.

What training is available for governors?

Induction training for new governors is essential, is currently free of charge, and is available through Hampshire County Council's Governor Services. You should also complete

Safeguarding and Prevent Training. These courses are usually available online and can be completed when and where you want, but should be done as soon as possible. The DTG will provide you with details. A wide range of other training is also provided by Hampshire Governor Services. The FGB also organises annual whole governing body training on topics specific to the school, and other occasional training events, as required.

Where can governors find out more information on their role and responsibilities?

More information on governors' duties and responsibilities can be found in the Department for Education's Governance Handbook and on the website at

www.dfe.gov.uk

or on Hampshire County Council's Governor Services website

<https://hampshireservicesforschools.hants.gov.uk>

Governors at Merton Junior School use *Governor Hub* to store and exchange information. Once you are appointed or elected as a governor, you will be given information on how to register to use this online tool.

Safeguarding

Finally, and of particular importance, Merton Junior School takes its safeguarding role very seriously. Governors are in a privileged position at the school and the FGB has a responsibility for ensuring that governors who are appointed or elected to the FGB are suitable for roles associated with children and young people. If appointed or elected, you will be asked to provide evidence of your identity, complete a request for a check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), and participate in safeguarding training and safer recruitment training, as necessary. The Chair of Governors will follow up any disclosures arising from DBS checks; please note that a disclosure does not necessarily mean that individuals are unsuitable to work as governors.

