

**Governing Body Handbook**

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| **Applicable to:** | ✓ | Seaton Delaval First School |
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# **1 Introduction**

1.1 Seaton Delaval First School is ‘maintained’ by the local authority, which means that we receive our funding from central government via Northumberland County Council (NCC) and we are required to follow the National Curriculum and national School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (STPCD).

1.2 Seaton Delaval First School is a type of maintained school known as a ‘community school’ which means that NCC is the employer of our staff (although most employment decisions are delegated to the governing body) and we are required to follow NCC’s terms and conditions for support staff. The local authority also owns the land and buildings and is the admissions authority for pupils joining our school.

1.3 There are five First Schools, Two Middle Schools and One High School in the Seaton Valley Learning Partnership (which each have their own governing body):

* Seaton Delaval First School
* Holywell First School
* New Hartley First School
* Seaton Sluice First School
* Seghill First School
* Astley Community High School (ACHS)
* Seaton Sluice Middle School (SSMS)
* Whytrig Middle School (WMS).

1.4 The Partnership Heads meet monthly.

**2 Roles and responsibilities**

# The Governing Body

2.1 The governing body works to support the overall development of the pupils. All governors contribute to raising standards for all pupils. This involves providing a strategic view for the school, acting as a critical friend and ensuring accountability.

2.2 The role of the governing body is a strategic one. Its key functions are to:

* set the aims and objectives for the school
* set the policies for achieving those aims and objectives
* set the targets for achieving those aims and objectives
* monitor and evaluate the progress the school is making towards achievement of its aims and objectives
* be a source of challenge and support to the Headteacher

2.3 Therefore, governors will be involved in:

* planning the future direction of the school
* monitoring and evaluating the progress of the school against these plans
* supporting and challenging the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
* being accountable to parents and others about the schools’ performance
* ensuring all statutory duties are carried out

2.4 In order to carry out this work, governors:

* work closely with the SLT and other staff
* hold at least three, and up to six, full governing body meetings a year – a minimum of one in each term - with additional meetings for briefings/training; these can be carried out via video or teleconference
* work on committees to which the governing body has delegated key areas of responsibility - these meet on a regular basis, usually once or twice each term
* visit the schools
* attend training
* recognise that the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher are responsible for the implementation of policy, day-to-day management of the school and the implementation of the curriculum

2.5 The Headteacher, who is also a governor in his own right, is responsible for:

* the internal organisation, management and control of the school
* formulating aims, objectives and policies for the governing body to consider adopting
* advising on and implementing the governing body strategic framework
* giving governors the information they need to help the school raise standards
* reporting to governors three times a year via an Headteacher’s report
	1. Each individual governor has a responsibility, working alongside other members of the governing body, to the staff and pupils of the school, the wider communities, and where they are elected as a parent or staff governor, to those stakeholder groups. Parent and staff governors are however only representative members of these stakeholder groups; they are expected to take on the same collective responsibility as other governors for decisions made.
	2. Governing bodies **do**:
* set the overall budget for the school
* decide on the staffing structure
* decide on the level of pay for teachers
* help to decide the priorities for the school when the school development plan is being developed
* ensure the national curriculum is taught to all pupils
* monitor targets for pupil achievement
* publish national test and exam results
* compare the performance of their school to similar schools
* receive information about the quality of teaching in the school
* have a published strategy for dealing with parental complaints and concerns
* ensure health and safety, risk management and safeguarding issues are addressed
* set the times of school sessions
* work with the Headteacher when making decisions
* ask challenging questions
* help develop school policies and procedures
* consider the repair and maintenance of school buildings
* consider the use of school premises outside school hours
* appoint committees of governors to look at specific issues such as finance, staffing, curriculum

2.8 Governing bodies **do not**:

* inspect the school
* try to make a professional judgement about the quality of teaching
* share concerns about staff capability
* decide on how pupils are taught different subjects
* have the right to exclude a pupil
* write the school’s policies on their own
* authorise all expenditure
* ‘rubber stamp’ recommendations from the Headteacher

# Chair of Governors

2.9 The Chair’s role is to:

* ensure the governing body functions effectively, giving clear leadership, direction and ensuring a focus on the core functions
* encourage the governing body to work as an effective team and contribute fully
* make sure, with the clerk, that the governing body's business is conducted in accordance with the law
* ensure that governors know and follow the rules and Code of Conduct for Governors and act democratically
* make it clear that all governors must accept collective responsibility for decisions taken at governors' meetings
* be available to make ‘emergency’ decisions under Chair’s Action and to report any urgent action taken on behalf of the governing body, making sure it is fully explained
* ensure meetings are run effectively, focusing on priorities and making the best use of time available, and to ensure that all members have an equal opportunity to participate in discussion and decision-making
* construct and agree the agenda for the full governing body meeting, together with the clerk, taking account of the recommendations of the Headteacher and requests from other governors, and keep good order in meetings
* approve draft minutes for publication taking account of confidential items
* use time effectively by planning the year’s cycle of meetings and a timetable for action
* ensure governors' participation in and between meetings
* help new governors become involved in the work of the governing body
* ensure all decisions are understood and that necessary action is taken
* ensure governors receive all relevant information and materials
* check that decisions taken by the governing body are enacted
* be proactive with regard to recruitment and retention on the governing body
* ensure succession planning within the governing body
* help the governing body understand its own strengths and weaknesses
* establish and foster an effective relationship with the Headteacher based on trust and mutual respect for each other’s roles
* ensure that the governing body acts as a sounding board to the Headteacher and provides strategic direction
* listen and be a critical friend to the Headteacher
* carry out any duties delegated by the governing body, be seen in school regularly, attend school functions or make sure another governor represents them, work with the local authority, be accessible to other governors, staff and parents, and meet governors from other schools
* report decisions of the governing body to parents, staff and others regularly
* co-ordinate the governing body role in Ofsted inspections and external reviews
* manage the complaints process
* attend local authority briefings where beneficial
* involve the Vice Chair so that they are in a position to act if the Chair is not available Vice Chair of Governors

2.10 The Vice Chair’s role is to:

* stay fully informed by liaising on a regular basis with the Chair and Headteacher
* take on responsibilities delegated to them by the Chair
* deputise for the Chair in their absence
* establish and foster an effective relationship with the Headteacher based on trust and mutual respect for each other’s roles
* be seen in school regularly, attend school functions or make sure another governor represents them, work with the local authority, be accessible to other governors, staff and parents, and meet governors from other schools
* use time effectively by planning the year’s cycle of meetings and a timetable for action in conjunction with the Chair
* ensure governors' participation in and between meetings
* listen and be a critical friend to the Headteacher
* attend local authority briefings or other events on the Chair’s behalf if necessary

# Chairs of Committees

2.11 Chairs of Committees should:

* ensure the committee functions effectively, giving clear leadership, direction and ensuring a focus on the core functions
* encourage the committee to work as an effective team and contribute fully
* make sure, with the clerk to the committee, that the governing body's business is conducted in accordance with the law
* ensure meetings are run effectively, focusing on priorities and making the best use of time available, and to ensure that all members have an equal opportunity to participate in discussion and decision-making
* construct and agree the agenda for the committee meeting, together with the clerk to the committee, taking account of the recommendations of the Headteacher and requests from other governors, and keep good order in meetings
* approve draft committee minutes for publication taking account of confidential items

## 3 Constitution

3.1 Seaton Delaval First School is constituted in line with the regulations that apply to schools. The governing body can decide the number and type of governors that it has within these regulations. Our aim is to ensure that the membership of the governing body is representative of the community we serve and that governors collectively have a range of skills to perform their roles effectively.

3.2 The constitution is set out in a legal document called the Instrument of Government.

3.3 The current membership of the governing body is 11 members, made up as follows:

* Local Authority Governors (1)
* Parent Governors (3)
* Headteacher (1)
* Staff Governor (1)
* Co-opted Governors (5)

## 4 Appointments and elections

4.1 The governing body appoints co-opted governors and Northumberland County Council appoints local authority governors.

4.2 The arrangements for the election of parent and staff governors are delegated to the Headteacher.

4.3 The Chair and Vice Chair are appointed for a one year term at the first full governing body meeting of the academic year. Ideally, interested governors should inform the Clerk of their interest at least 14 days prior to the meeting (governors can express an interest in both the Chair and the Vice Chair positions). Expressions of interest will be noted on the agenda. At the meeting, there will be a process of nomination and seconding of those who have expressed an interest then voting, if necessary. Expressions of interest and subsequent nominations will still be allowed at the meeting. Regardless of the number of nominations, the candidate(s) will be asked to leave the room during the decision making process.

## 5 Suspension of governors

5.1 The governing body may decide to suspend a governor from all or any meetings of the governing body or its committees for a fixed period of up to six months on one or more of the following grounds:

* The governor, being a person paid to work at the school, is the subject of disciplinary proceedings in relation to their employment.
* The governor is a subject of proceedings in any court or tribunal, the outcome of which may be that they are disqualified from continuing in office as a governor (under Section 6 of the Constitution Regulations).
* The governor has acted in a way that is inconsistent with the ethos of the school and has brought or is likely to bring the school or governing body into disrepute.
* The governor is in breach of their duty of confidentiality to the school or to any member of staff or pupil within the school.

5.2 If the governing body is considering this action it may wish to seek advice to ensure its actions are lawful.

## 6 Associate members

6.1 The attendance of individuals other than governors at full governing body meetings and committee meetings may be appropriate to support the work of the governing

body. The invitation for associates to attend is a full governing body decision. Those associates who do attend are bound by the same rules of confidentiality as the governing body.

6.2 Associate members have voting rights in committee meetings only. The governing body reserves the right to exclude an associate member from any part of their meetings as deemed necessary.

## 7 Support for new governors and associate members

7.1 To help new governors learn about their role and quickly contribute to the work of the governing body, there will be an initial meeting with the Chair and the Headteacher. Visits to all three schools will be arranged, and there will be a welcome and full introductions at the first full governing body meeting.

7.2 New governors will be provided with copies of the following documents:

* Governing Body Handbook
* Minutes from the last Full Governing Body meeting
* School Development Plans
* Latest Ofsted reports
* Any self-evaluation materials
	1. All new governors are encouraged to take up the training opportunities offered by the local authority and to register for access to on-line training modules. The Key for School Governors is an invaluable source of information, and all governors should register [here](https://schoolgovernors.thekeysupport.com/).
	2. A mentor (a named and experienced governor) will be appointed and will:
* meet with the new governor before the meetings for the first year to answer questions, explain the agenda etc.
* sit with the new governor at meetings to answer questions
* make regular contact to answer questions

## 8 Documentation

8.1 The following documents are received and approved by the full governing body:

* **Code of Conduct for Governors** - all governors are expected to sign annually, to ensure expectations are clear
* **Governors’ Allowances Policy** - agreement on the expenses that governors can claim
* **Register of Interests** - all governors must declare any personal or pecuniary interests in commercial organisations, membership of other governing bodies etc. and this information is published on the school’s website so it is in the public domain; governors will also be asked at each meeting to declare any interest in agenda items, to aid transparency of decision-making
* **Delegation Planner** - although governing bodies are accountable in law for all major decisions about our school and its future, many of the tasks can and should be delegated to individuals and committees; however it is essential that the decision to delegate a task/responsibility to an individual is made by the full governing body and recorded to enable the individual/committee to act
* **Governing Body Membership** - a list of current governors and their terms of office

## 9 Communication

9.1 Due to the sensitive and confidential nature of the information involved all governors must ensure the security of all communications.

## 10 Committees

10.1 There are currently five sub-committees:

* Strategic Policy and Direction Committee
* Pupil Progress Committee
* Resource Management Committee
* Pay Review Committee (Autumn Term only)
* Headteacher’s Appraisal Committee (Autumn Term only)
	1. Other ad hoc committees are convened as and when e.g. exclusion appeal panels or hearing bodies for staff disciplinary cases.
	2. The terms of reference for the full governing body and sub-committees are agreed annually at the first full governing body meeting and individual committee meetings thereafter.
	3. A list of committee members and a meeting schedule is published at the start of each school year, and this is reviewed and updated regularly.

## 11 Attendance and apologies

11.1 Good attendance at meetings, both full governing body and committees, is important so that all governors develop a good overall understanding of school business and are involved in making corporate decisions.

11.2 All formal meetings of the governing body have to be quorate in order to make decisions.

11.3 The quorum for any governing body meeting and vote is 50% (rounded up to a whole number) of the membership of the governing body. The membership of the governing body does not include vacant positions on the governing body.

11.4 The quorum for any committee meeting and vote is three governors who are members of that committee.

11.5 Attendance at meetings is monitored by the Clerk to the Governing Body. Governors who are unable to attend a meeting should notify the Clerk in advance; the governing body decides whether or not to accept apologies. If a governor’s apologies are not accepted and the governor does not come to meetings for a period of more than six months from the date of the first full governing body meeting missed, then

they will be disqualified from the governing body. Where governors fail to send their apologies in advance of a meeting their apologies may not be accepted or approved after the meeting.

11.6 Schools are required to publish governors’ attendance at meetings on their website.

## 12 Meeting agendas

12.1 A broad agenda plan for the full governing body and each committee is set at the start of the academic year to ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

12.2 Additional agenda items will be added to ensure there is a focus on monitoring the school improvement priorities as set out in the three School Development Plans.

12.3 Any governor may ask for items to be included on the agenda of the full governing body by contacting the Chair and the Clerk at least two weeks before the meeting. The Chair decides whether to include the item. If three governors ask for an item to be included then this must appear on the agenda.

12.4 The agenda and supporting papers for all full governing body and committee meetings will be circulated to all members via email, not less than one week before the meeting

12.5 Any items of urgent business not already included on the agenda should be emailed to the Chair of Governors (or relevant committee) and the Clerk to the Governing Body no later than 24 hours prior to the meeting.

## 13 Monitoring

13.1 Monitoring is an essential part of the role of governors to support the school self-evaluation process, which helps to raise standards and bring about school improvement. Governors, working in partnership with the Headteacher and staff of the school, will develop a better understanding of how well their plans and policies are working in practice. They will then be able to use this information to better inform future strategic planning. The work of the governing body itself should also be monitored.

13.2 Governors are expected to have first-hand evidence of what is happening in schools, rather than rely solely on external data and reports from senior leaders.

13.3 The purpose of monitoring is to:

* check that agreed plans are being implemented
* identify what is going well and celebrate it
* identify what is not going well and the reasons for this
* modify plans, if appropriate
* hold school leaders to account and provide support and challenge
* be accountable as a governing body

13.4 Monitoring methods can include:

* **Headteacher’s Report:** The governing body can specify information that it would like the Headteacher to report on a termly basis.
* **Committees:** Each committee will identify its remit and the areas of the School

Development Plan it has responsibility for, monitor those aspects of the schools

for which it is responsible and report at least termly to the whole governing body through the minutes of meetings.

* **Link Governors:** Specific priorities, subjects or key stages may be assigned a link governor to bring a particular focus to that area of work. The list of current link governors is circulated at the first full governing body meeting of each year.
* **Monitoring Visits:** Governors may visit school individually or in groups, and this may involve meeting teachers and pupils, visiting classes, or reviewing progress with senior leaders; further information can be found below.
* **School Improvement Partner (SIP) Reports:** Notes of visits from the SIP appointed by the local authority will be shared with the full governing body, unless there are confidential items.

13.5 Aside from formal meetings, all governors are expected to visit at least once a year during the school day, for several reasons:

* to develop a working relationship with staff
* to be informed about daily school life to aid decision making
* to see decision making in action
* to fulfil their responsibility to monitor a specific priority or area
	1. A monitoring visit plan is created at the start of the academic year and shared with all governors and relevant staff to ensure visits are coordinated effectively. All visits should be planned in consultation with the Headteacher, with the focus agreed beforehand and the visit report ‘signed off’ afterwards. Monitoring procedures, report templates and any other relevant information will be issued to governors prior to their visit.
	2. Governors are also welcome to attend school events e.g. assemblies, performances, Christmas lunch etc. and are regularly updated via email of upcoming events.

## 14 School Development Plans

14.1 Governors are involved in the creation, monitoring and evaluation of the three School Development Plans. The Headteacher usually drafts the plans in the Autumn Term, in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, middle leaders and governors, and based on priorities which came out of the last Ofsted Report, results, meetings with the School Improvement Partner, and school based self-evaluation.

14.2 Governors monitor the plan through the committee structure (as priorities are linked to committees to spread the work) and by individual governors being linked to specific areas of the plans. Link governors report back to the full governing body on their monitoring.

14.3 The Headteacher reports progress to governors at full governing body meetings via the termly Headteacher’s report, and via reports or verbal updates to committees.

14.4 There are regular opportunities for governors and staff to evaluate the year’s plan and progress against objectives, through discussions at committee level which may also include ideas for the following year.

## 15 Decision making

15.1 It is important that anyone who approaches a governor with an issue is directed to the Headteacher in the first instance. They may then share this with the Chair or other governors. If the matter cannot be resolved, the individual may submit a formal complaint under the school’s Complaints Procedure, and governors may be involved in the latter stages of the process. A concern about the Headteacher should always be directed straight to the Chair of Governors.

15.2 The staffing structure is reviewed at the Resource Management Committee. Governors may be involved in appointment decisions but these are usually delegated to the Headteacher, other than for senior roles. Governors may be involved in dismissal decisions, particularly where the Heateacher has had prior involvement in the case. Governors will always hear appeals arising from staffing procedures.

15.3 To help keep meetings concise and make best use of the time available, governors will be asked to review and approve policies via email throughout the year. A policy tracker is provided periodically to governors to enable them to keep track of those policies which are due for review and highlight any new policies that are required by statute or recommended as good practice.

## 16 Useful resources

* TBC