



## Thornhill Primary School. Chair of Governors Role Specification.

### Main responsibilities.

#### **General.**

- Work with the Head and Governing Body to promote and maintain high standards of educational attainment.
- Ensure that the Governing Body sets, in partnership with the Head and senior leadership team a clear vision, ethos and strategic direction for the school.
- With the Governing Body as a whole, hold the Head and SLT to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and for the performance management of staff.
- Ensure the oversight of the financial performance of the school, and the effective use of the school's resources.
- Be familiar with the DfE's 'Governance handbook and competency framework January 2017' documents, and 'The school governance regulations 2013' – be aware of the role of the chair, as set out in the guidance.

#### **Leading Effective Governance.**

- Have a strong commitment to the school and its pupils, working in a way that reflects the vision and ethos of the school.
- Lead the Governing Body and the SLT in ensuring operational decisions contribute to strategic priorities.
- Have a clear understanding of the chair's role and responsibilities – in particular, accountability – and the difference between strategic and operational decision-making.
- Ensure there is effective and regular communication within the Governing Body, and meetings are well organised so that everyone can contribute and be heard.
- Proactively maintain a good relationship between Governors, the Head and the SLT, and exemplify this effective relationship.
- Give the Governing Body a clear lead and direction.
- Ensure Governors work together as an effective team.
- Ensure Governors understand their accountability and responsibilities.
- Ensure Governors recognise the influence of the Governing Body on the strategic leadership of the school.
- Ensure Governors are committed to, and working towards, driving school improvement.
- Recognising that the Governing Body makes decisions rather than individuals.
- Recognise when the Governing Body, or an individual member, is not behaving as expected, and take appropriate action to address this.
- Ensure the Governing Body understands the scope of any issues in question and is clear about decisions they need to make.
- Lead discussions and decisions about what functions to delegate to specific Governors and committees.
- Ensure the Governing Body develops a Governor monitoring plan, including monitoring activities and objectives that have been allocated to specific Governors.
- Chair meetings effectively to keep objectives on track and to avoid Governors drifting into operational activity.



### **Building a Team.**

- Ensure the Governing Body attracts and retains Governors with the necessary skills to fill the different roles needed, competently and professionally – this will include effective succession planning.
- Ensure tasks are delegated across the Governing Body to share workload, and ensure that individual members contribute their skills, knowledge and experience.
- Clearly set out what is expected from Governors and ensure that Governors' skills are regularly audited to reflect this.
- Identify any gaps in knowledge, skills and experience, ensuring that these are filled through training and recruitment – encourage Governors to seek training where necessary / appropriate.
- Take into account the importance of promoting equality and diversity when recruiting, and consider the extent to which the Governing Body represents the community it serves.
- Ensure clear, open and honest communication between Governors at all times.
- Ensure the Governing Body undertakes periodic reviews of its effectiveness, measured against the Ofsted criteria for effective governance and the DfE's competency framework.
- Foster a culture of self-evaluation and review among the Governing Body.
- Make oneself approachable and available to other Governors, taking the issues they raise, and the ideas they have, seriously.
- Ensure an up-to-date and fully-functioning code of practice is in place, outlining the Governing Body's role.
- Develop the competence of the vice-chair to act as Chair, should the need arise.
- Listen to the Clerk and take direction from them on issues of compliance and other matters.
- Recognise and reward individual and group achievements, not just in relation to the Governing Body, but across the wider school.

### **Relationship with the Head Teacher.**

- Agree, from the outset, clear expectations and create a culture of open and honest dialogue, ensuring that this is welcomed both ways.
- Agree and set the expectations for key decisions, such as:  
Who chooses the person to support governors to conduct the Head's Appraisal?
- Familiarise with, and understand, the Head's role and responsibilities, obtaining explanation and detail. Also, familiarise with the national standards for Heads, to appreciate the challenges and expectations associated with the role.
- Support the Head in understanding the responsibilities of the Chair and the wider Governing Body, and discuss how to best work together to meet individual and collective accountabilities for the good of the school.
- If necessary, lead CPD sessions with the Head and/or the SLT to explain the roles and priorities of the Governing Body.
- Agree any arrangements for support that the Head may require – define the nature of support, and the terms and frequency of contact with them, timetabling this as necessary.
- Be consistent in approach and manner – act as a 'critical friend' to the Head; offering challenge, support, advice and encouragement, as required, whilst maintaining a professional relationship.



- Ensure that there is a rigorous and robust Appraisal of the Head, including setting relevant targets that contribute towards school improvement.
- Ensure that the Head's Appraisal is carried out, including the review and objective setting.
- Ensure that all Governors know, and have some links with, the Head and any relevant member of the SLT they may be working with.
- Consider the proposals and views of the Head in the Governing Body's strategic decision making.
- Where possible, attend CPD events, briefings or conferences with the Head, demonstrating collaborative commitment and leadership.

### **Improving the School.**

- Ensure school improvement is the focus of all policy and strategy.
- As the individual ultimately responsible for driving school improvement, think strategically about the future direction of the school and identify the steps needed to achieve any goals that are set.
- Provide effective leadership of organisational change, particularly in difficult periods.
- Be proactive in seeking and maximising opportunities to form partnerships where these are conducive to achieving the agreed strategic goals.
- Be proactive in sharing good practice, CPD and lessons learned, where these can benefit others and the school.
- Ensure the Governing Body holds Head to account for financial and business management, as much as educational outcomes.
- Share with the Governing Body and the SLT, the importance of all Governor roles in contributing to school, local and, where appropriate, national educational improvement priorities.
- Ensure the Governing Body receives appropriate training or development, where required, on issues of compliance.
- Actively invite feedback on performance as Chair, making necessary adjustments to benefit the school.
- Set challenging development goals for the school and work effectively with the Governing Body to meet them.
- Lead the performance review of the Governing Body and its committees, and contribute to leadership appraisal and pay awards.
- Have a thorough understanding and knowledge of the school, its context, the characteristics of the local area it serves, and the pupils and families who make up the school's intake.
- Alongside the Governing Body, ensure that the school has a positive culture and effective processes in relation to self-evaluation.
- Ensure that, across the Governing Body, there is a good understanding of data and other sources of evidence that are available – developing the ability to interpret, analyse and act upon them.

### **Leading the Organisation.**

- Ensure that the Governing Body and the school fulfil their statutory obligations and responsibilities.
- Ensure the Governing Body guides the school in utilising resources responsibly and effectively.



- Ensure that there is an effective strategy for the use of school resources and funding in an efficient way that provides value for money, working in line with the DfE's Schools financial value statement.
- Lead the review of the Governing Body's committee structure annually, to ensure the school's needs are being met.
- Set a clear formal agenda for meetings.
- Prepare in advance of meetings, ensuring the agenda is focussed on the school's key priorities, and that the data and information provided enables the Governing Body to carry out its core functions of holding the Head and the SLT to account.
- Have a close relationship with the Clerk to Governors – timetable meetings to ensure important areas of governance are addressed effectively.
- Facilitate decision-making, even in difficult areas, and manage the expectations of executive leaders when doing so.
- Ensure the Governing Body seeks guidance from the Head or others in the SLT, and from the Clerk before the Governing Body commits to significant or controversial courses of action.
- Communicate and build a rapport with external stakeholders, authorities, organisations and other schools – acting as a reliable ambassador and valued point of contact.
- Lead the Governing Body, and challenge leaders appropriately, in setting risk appetite and tolerance – and know when the school needs external expert advice on risk management.
- Work with the Clerk to ensure the right data is provided by the Head, and promote the importance of data interrogation to hold the Head to account.
- Identify when specialist skills and experience in audit, fraud or human resources is required to undertake a specific task.
- Ensure the Governing Body is aware of, and prepared for, formal external scrutiny, and provide strategic leadership to the Governing Body during periods of scrutiny.
- Ensure the school is engaged with parents and the wider community, and represents its interests.