



# Committee report

Committee

## **POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS**

Date

**23 MAY 2022**

Title

**ISLE OF WIGHT, SCHOOL GOVERNOR RECRUITMENT**

Report of

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### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is designed to provide an over-view on the governance roles and responsibilities in the range of different types of schools which serve the Isle of Wight community, and to provide information on the level of vacancies on the Island and the processes in place to support schools to recruit volunteers into the role.
- 1.2 School governance is a voluntary role. Governing boards (GBs) and trust boards are statutory corporate bodies, responsible for providing strategic direction and a vision for the future of their school. There are 3 main areas of responsibility<sup>1</sup>
  - Ensuring clarity of vision and strategic direction
  - Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff
  - Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent
- 1.3 Boards must be ambitious for all children and committed to continuous improvement of the school or academy to deliver the best possible educational experience. Once appointed, all governors must act with integrity, honesty, objectivity and in the best interests of the pupils of the school irrespective of the constituency which appointed or elected them.

### 2. RECRUITMENT

- 2.1 The Isle of Wight has a high level of governor vacancies, currently at 91 posts, which is approximately 21% and has reduced from 25% over recent months.

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<sup>1</sup> [Governance Handbook 2019 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- 2.2 In comparison, vacancies in Hampshire are around 18% and that figure is likely to be broadly indicative of the national figure.
- 2.3 In 2014, the move from a stakeholder model to a requirement for governing board membership to be skills/experienced based gave boards more autonomy in identifying and appointing governors. Schools are expected to be pro-active in seeking prospective applicants with an interest in education and supporting the community, a willingness to develop their own skills, and capacity to give time to the role.
- 2.4 The LA does not appoint governors but works to promote governance as a significant voluntary role and provides support, information and guidance to schools on governor recruitment. This includes monitoring vacancies, training on recruitment strategies and signposting to national governor recruitment organisations, where vacancies can be advertised. The aim is to empower governing boards to be effective in recruiting and retaining governors.
- 2.5 **IW Governor Services**, in partnership with **Hampshire Governor Services** have undertaken recruitment campaigns in recent years. The wider community tends to have limited, or no, awareness of the opportunity to serve as a governor when considering a voluntary role and the LA seeks to promote greater awareness.
- 2.6 Activities have included social media campaigns, radio, and bus shelter advertising, approaching local businesses and organisations, information flyers and leaflets for schools. Community information sessions have also been held to encourage people to volunteer.
- 2.7 More recently an 'Effective Governor Recruitment Workshop' took place on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022 and was followed up at the Chairs' Network meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 with feedback suggestions and advice. Advice is also provided to clerks to support GB activity.
- 2.8 It is the responsibility of the governing board to identify the skills, abilities and knowledge required for effective governance to support continuing improvement in their school, academy or federation. They should actively seek prospective candidates for appointment and specify criteria for informing the election of Parent and Staff Governors.
- 2.9 Elected members have an important role in maintained schools through nominating individuals for the LA post on the GB in maintained schools. They support schools with this in several ways. Firstly, by responding positively to an approach by a governing board, asking for a nomination for a suitable volunteer they have identified for the LA governor post, in accordance with the IW LA Governor Appointment Procedure. This is called a 'school's nomination'.
- 2.10 Secondly, Councillors are proactive, community-minded and well-connected people, and some are also governors. Councillors can, therefore, promote the governor role within their own networks and personal contacts, in order to encourage suitable people to volunteer. Word of mouth and a personal approach can be very powerful.
- 2.11 The main skills governors require are
- An interest in the performance of the school
  - A desire to contribute to the community

- The ability to look at issues objectively, ask questions and make informed judgements
- A willingness to listen and learn and make the most of development opportunities
- The ability to work as part of a team
- Most governance knowledge can be gained from our training programmes, so a background in education is not a pre-requisite.

### 3. TYPES OF SCHOOLS

3.1 The Isle of Wight community is served by a range of education providers.

3.2 **Maintained Schools** are accountable to and receive funding through the Local Authority. They include -

- COMMUNITY SCHOOLS (Including COMMUNITY SPECIAL SCHOOLS)
- VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS (Faith schools, also accountable to the Diocese)
- VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOLS (Faith schools, where foundation governors appointed by the Diocese are in the majority and the GB is the employer)
- FOUNDATION SCHOOLS (Schools with/or without a trust, where the trust or GB is the employer)
- MAINTAINED NURSERY SCHOOLS (Early Years provision at a school and must have a headteacher and governing board) – the IOW has only one.
- SPECIAL SCHOOLS: maintained (Education provision for children with specific Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND))
- PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS (Education provision for children who are unable to attend mainstream school)

3.3 Maintained schools may function as an individual school under one GB, but they can establish or join a federation of two or more schools. Groups of schools that are federated operate under one GB. They retain individual identities and budgets, although they may pool resources for the benefit of the federation. The governing board must focus on the strategic objectives for all schools in the federation.

3.4 **Academies** are charitable companies, founded by members who enter into a funding agreement with the Department for Education (DfE), based on their Memorandum of Understanding and Articles of Association which cover the responsibilities and powers, structure and membership arrangements for the

- Board of Members
- Board of Trustees
- Committees

3.5 Academies may operate individually, as a Single Academy Trust (SAT), or within a group under a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). In either case, the Trust remains the accountable board and is directly accountable to the DfE. The trust for a MAT may set up a Local Governing Board (LGB) to manage some delegated responsibilities to oversee individual academies within the group.

3.6 **Non-Maintained Special School** (Education provision for children with specific SEND)

4. CATEGORIES OF GOVERNOR<sup>2</sup>

4.1 **Maintained Schools** are constituted under an Instrument of Government, in accordance with the [School Governance Constitution Regulations](#), or the [Schools Governance Federation Regulations](#).

4.2 Categories of governors are -

- **Headteacher** - responsible for day-to-day management of the school (ex-officio by virtue of their appointment)
- **Parent Governors** – at least two in individual schools, but **no more than** two in federations (elected by parents or may be appointed by GB, if not enough parents are nominated for election)
- **Staff Governor** – **no more than** one (elected by staff)
- **LA Governor** – **no more than** one (nominated by Councillor/s for the ward/s in which the school/s stand/s, appointed by the governing board)
- **Co-opted Governors** – as many as the GB decide and specify in the Instrument of Government (appointed by the GB). Members of staff may be co-opted governors, as long as the number of staff (including the headteacher) does not exceed 1/3 of the total GB.
- **Foundation Governors**
  - VC schools, at least two, but **no more than** 25% (appointed by Diocese)
  - VA schools, must outnumber all other governors by two (appointed by Diocese)
  - Foundation schools, must outnumber all other governors by two (appointed by Trust)

The Federation Regulations include further requirements for the number of foundation governors, depending on the types of schools that are federated.
- **Partnership Governors** (foundation school without a trust) – at least two, but **no more than** 25% (nominated by parents, community and Diocese (where appropriate) – appointed by GB)
- **Associate Members** – may be appointed by the GB and assigned to a committee. They are not governors.

4.3 All governors are appointed or elected for a four-year term of office, unless otherwise specified in the Instrument of Government. Associate Members may be appointed for one to four years. They may resign at any time by notifying the clerk to governors.

4.4 Regulations require the total membership of the GB to be no fewer than 7. Most GBs have a constitution of between 10 and 15. There is no upper number, but GBs should be no bigger than is necessary for the effective governance of the school/s. The minimum for a VA school would be 12.

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<sup>2</sup> [Maintained school governance - structures and role descriptors \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

## 5. MAINTAINED SCHOOL GB STRUCTURE

5.1 Maintained Schools may choose to make all decisions as a corporate board, but often delegate some governance responsibilities to committees or individuals if they choose to do so. Responsibilities that are delegated to committees or individuals should be clearly defined in a Scheme of Delegation. The board remains the overall accountable body.

- **Committees** can monitor areas, such as Finance and Resources or Curriculum and Standards. Committees must include at least 3 governors, have Terms of Reference and voting rights, must appoint a chair and have a designated clerk
- **Individual governors** may be assigned to carry out monitoring roles or to oversee an ongoing project or focus as link governors to specific areas of work.

## 6. ACADEMY ROLES AND STRUCTURES<sup>3</sup>

6.1 Academy Trusts are constituted in accordance with their Articles of Association

- **Members** – there must be at least three, although the DfE recommends at least five (agrees Articles, appoints Trustees and Auditors, ensures charitable objectives are met)
- **Trustees** – (appointed by Members or Trust). Must have at least two Parent Trustees (unless there are parents serving at LGB level), who are elected by parents or may be appointed by the Trust, if not enough parents are nominated for election. This is the strategic accountable board for ensuring compliance with regulations and statutory requirements; also appoints Chief Executive or Principal.

- If a Church Trust, trustees are also accountable for upholding any religious character and requirements of the Diocese.

- **Committees** – must have at least three trustees on each committee. There must be a risk and audit committee and a finance committee. The Trust may also choose to delegate other responsibilities to committees (or LGBs).
- **Local Governing (advisory) Boards** – MATs may delegate some governance responsibilities in relation to particular areas or individual academies within the Trust to LGBs. Most have parent representation at school level (elected by parents or may be appointed by Trust, if not enough parents are nominated for election). Accountability remains with the trust board.
- **Executive Leaders** – In a MAT this is the Chief Executive with overall responsibility for management of schools in the Trust. In a Stand Alone Academy (SAT), the Principal may be the main school leader and fulfil the functions of a CEO.

## 7. SPECIFIC ROLES

7.1 The following roles are required to support effective governance

- **Chair and Vice-Chair** – GBs and Trustees must elect a Chair and Vice-Chair from amongst their number. Elections usually takes place at the first meeting

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<sup>3</sup> [Academy trust governance - structures and role descriptors \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

of the academic year. Maintained School GBs may elect a Chair to serve for up to four years.

- **Link Governors/Trustees** Both GBs and Trusts are able to appoint link governors/trustees for specific areas of responsibility. It is up to the GB or Trust to decide where link governors/trustees are needed, to gain strategic oversight and deepen the board's knowledge of that area. Governors are required for Safeguarding, SEND and Careers, but may cover areas such as Finance, Pupil and Staff Welfare, English, Maths and ICT.
- **Clerk to Governors** – The GB or Trust must appoint a clerk to ensure the efficient functioning of the board. The clerk is a governance professional (may be the Company Secretary in an academy trust), who provides an administrative and advisory role. Regulations require the board to have regard to advice given by the clerk.

7.2 Committees must also be served by a clerk with the necessary skills but does not have to be the clerk to the board also.

7.3 The clerk is required to convene and attend meetings, take minutes, maintain board membership records, support governor recruitment, retention and training, facilitate strategic discussion and decision-making and provide advice and guidance to help boards understand their roles and responsibilities.

7.4 Guidance on the expectations of the role can be found in The Clerking Competency Framework<sup>4</sup>

## 8. MEETINGS

8.1 Effective governance requires boards to have a regular cycle of meetings.

8.2 GBs and Academy Trusts are required to meet at least three times a year. The same requirement applies to committees. In practice boards tend to hold more meetings, in order fulfil their statutory duties.

8.3 Where monitoring responsibilities are delegated to individuals, who report to the GB, the full GB may meet as often as once a month.

8.4 Academy Members are required to meet at least once a year (usually an AGM).

8.5 Effective meetings should last no longer than 1½ hours; they are generally held late afternoon or early evening, but timing is agreed by the board to encourage good attendance and take account of work/life balance for school staff and governors.

8.6 Regulations allow GBs and Trusts to make arrangements for holding virtual meetings and for governors to attend meetings remotely. Throughout the pandemic all meetings have continued to be held virtually and many boards are considering a gradual return to some face-to-face meetings, through a blended approach, dependent on latest government advice and guidance.

## 9. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

9.1 Although a voluntary role, governors and trustees are encouraged to take part in personal and professional development, which can benefit other areas in their

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<sup>4</sup> [Department for Education \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

work or lives. In the same way, skills and knowledge acquired through experience in other roles can contribute to effective governance.

- 9.2 Boards should plan for development of the board as a whole and to support individual governors in carrying out their delegated responsibilities. **IOW Governor Services** provides an information, advice, guidance and training service, in partnership with **Hampshire Governor Services**.
- 9.3 Schools and Academies can subscribe to a service level agreement, which includes
- Provision of a core training and development programme for all governors and clerks at no additional cost
  - Bespoke support and occasional attendance at governing body meetings to develop the effectiveness of the board – i.e., Self-Evaluation, Collaboration, Federation, Reconstitution
  - Provision of statutory information to governing boards in respect of school governance
  - Provision of information, advice, guidance and bespoke support to clerks and governors on procedural and constitutional issues
  - Access to the Hampshire Governor Services website, including - comprehensive information, guidance and support; e-learning modules on safeguarding, staffing matters, exclusions, complaints, pay appeals and governor roles; topic areas; model policies and example documents; termly newsletters for clerks and chairs; presentations from recent development events.
  - Access for clerks and governors to the GovernorHub system for managing governing board membership, training records and making course bookings
  - Access to specific information for the development of governors
  - Support and assistance to governing boards in relation to recruitment and succession planning
  - Induction training for clerks
  - Termly briefings for clerks and development governors
- 9.4 Being a governor is interesting and sometimes very challenging. It is a genuine opportunity to make a difference for children. It can also contribute to personal and professional development, gaining experience, skills and confidence that can be used in other roles or to support other job applications.
10. NEXT STEPS
- 10.1 IW Guidance for GBs on recruitment will be updated annually for inclusion in their planning meeting at the beginning of the academic year.
- 10.2 Chairs of Governors will be offered places to attend Hampshire Chairs' Development Workshops, elements of which cover governance structures, developing the team and coaching, to support governor recruitment and retention.
- 10.3 Chairs will be asked to share 'good news' stories and positive outcomes in relation to recruitment activities at the termly Chairs' Network Meetings.

- 10.4 Governor Services in IOW and Hampshire will work collaboratively in an upcoming social media campaign to raise awareness of governance and support recruitment.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

That Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services, Education and Skills note the information contained in this report.

#### BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Governance handbook and competency framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

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