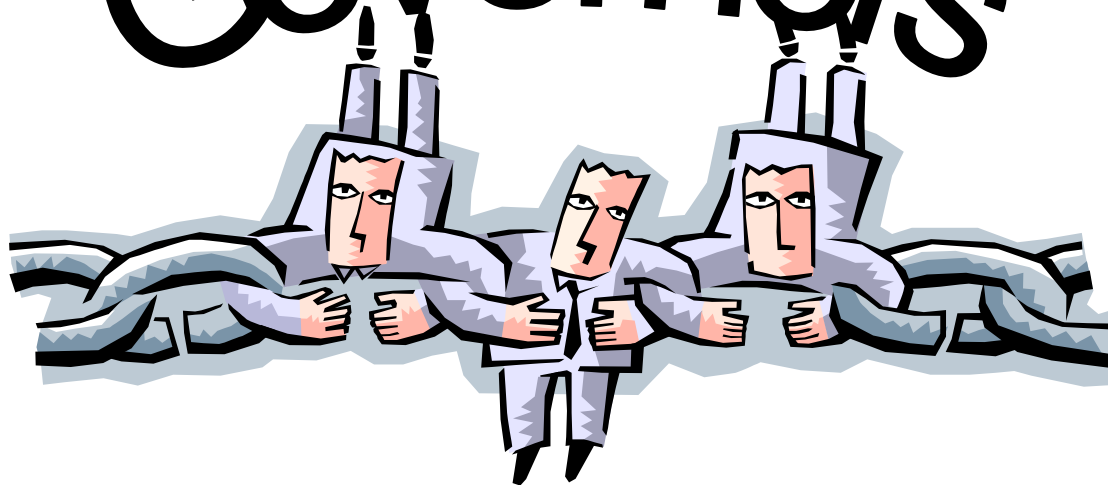
 Lewisham  
**Link**

# Governors



# Information Pack

This edition comprises details for:  
Curriculum;  
Child Protection;  
Extended Services;  
Health and Safety;  
Looked after Children;  
SEN; and  
Training link governors.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

<b>Page 3</b>	What is a link governor?
<b>Page 4</b>	Curriculum link governor
<b>Page 6</b>	Child Protection link governor
<b>Page 8</b>	Extended Services governor
<b>Page 9</b>	Health and Safety link Governor
<b>Page 11</b>	Looked after Children link governor
<b>Page 13</b>	SEN link governor
<b>Page 15</b>	Training link governor

April 2009

## **WHAT IS A LINK GOVERNOR?**

Link governors are members of, and are appointed by, the governing body to oversee specific aspects of governors' responsibilities within the school.

There is no legal requirement to appoint link governors, but most governing bodies find them a very effective way to help the governing body to understand, oversee, monitor and develop a particular area of responsibility within the school. The link governor should ultimately enrich the whole governing body's understanding of their particular area and contribute to informed decision making.

Link governors are also a useful way for the governing body to develop positive links with staff and to maintain a visible and professional profile within the school.

## **WHAT DOES A LINK GOVERNOR DO?**

### **A link governor:**

- takes a special interest in their particular area of responsibility;
- keeps abreast of developments locally and nationally;
- attends appropriate training;
- makes focussed visits to the school;
- has regular contact with the person(s) within the school with responsibilities in their particular area;
- discusses the implications of any policies adopted by the governing with the staff concerned;
- monitors how well relevant policies adopted by the governing body are operating within the school and understands any barriers to their implementation;
- reports back regularly to the governing body, making recommendations where appropriate, either via a governors' committee or to full governing body meetings.

## THE ROLE OF THE CURRICULUM LINK GOVERNOR

Although not a statutory requirement, most governing bodies use link governors effectively as one way to help the governing body to understand, develop and monitor the curriculum on offer at the school. Governing Bodies may wish to appoint link governors for the core curriculum areas of English, mathematics, science and ICT as well as the foundation subjects.

Link governors provide a link between the governing body, committees and school staff and regularly report to the governing body or committees.

It is for each governing body to agree on the role that it expects the 'specific subject' link governor to undertake but it is helpful to promote a good working relationship between the curriculum co-ordinator at the school and the curriculum link governor.

### 1. What does the curriculum link governor do?

The curriculum link governor may wish to:-

- take a particular interest in their chosen subject by keeping up to date with national and local initiatives;
- meet regularly with the curriculum co-ordinator in order to become informed about current policies and practices in the school and know how the subject fits into the school development plan;
- liaise with the curriculum co-ordinator to obtain information on :-
  - training;
  - condition and availability of resources;
  - curriculum and timetable arrangements;
  - special needs provision;
  - planning, assessment and recording procedures;
  - standards of achievement;
  - how well policies are operating.
- talk to the Headteacher about curriculum issues;
- try to attend some of the in service training courses devoted to that subject;
- visit the school to observe lessons in order to understand how the subject is taught and any particular difficulties;
- talk to pupils about the curriculum area;

- support the development of parental involvement in the curriculum;
- encourage the curriculum co-ordinator to give a presentation to the governing body;
- report back regularly to the governing body, making recommendations where appropriate, either via a governors' committee or to full governing body meetings.

## **2. Hints for Curriculum Link Governors**

- You should always remember that you are not acting as an inspector, but as a source of support and a critical friend to the school. If you are observing a lesson, don't forget the possible apprehension that some teachers feel if someone watches their lesson.
- A governor's visit can give staff quite a lot of extra work. You should thank them at the time and you may like to follow up with a letter;
- Governors should report back to the Headteacher, before leaving the school. This gives them a chance to report on their impressions and to ask any questions arising from the visit.
- The link governor's visit should enrich the whole governing body's understanding of the school as well as the visiting governor's. The governing body should receive a report of the visit at the next meeting preferably a short written report, which should be discussed in advance with the Headteacher and Chair.
- Governors should keep in mind that the report should not name individual staff members or a criticism of a member of staff.

### **Some suggested questions to ask to get you started:-**

- Are the policies and initiatives that are in place making an impact on pupil achievement?
- How are pupils of different abilities catered for?
- What continuing professional development is available for staff?
- Are there sufficient resources in school to deliver the curriculum?
- What monitoring arrangements are in place?

## **THE ROLE OF THE NOMINATED GOVERNOR FOR CHILD PROTECTION**

Under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, governing bodies must ensure that they exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Essentially, this duty will require governing bodies to have appropriate child protection procedures in place.

Each school should have procedures for handling suspected cases of child abuse in accordance with local Children's Safeguarding Board's (LCSB) {formerly the Area Child Protection Committees (ACPC) }Procedures, including those to follow if a member of staff is accused. Schools should have a designated senior teacher with responsibility for child protection together with a nominated governor.

### **WHAT DOES THE NOMINATED GOVERNOR DO?**

#### **1. Main Responsibilities of the Nominated Governor**

##### **The nominated governor (NG)**

- has responsibility for liaison with the headteacher/designated teacher over child protection issues;
- also has responsibility for the oversight of procedures relating to allegations made against the headteacher;
- ensures that all governors and staff know the name of the nominated governor;
- ensures that the LA has been informed of the name of the nominated governor;
- ascertains who the designated teacher is and whether they have attended appropriate training;
- ensures that the LA has been notified of the name of the designated teacher;
- ensures that there is an annual item on the governing body agenda regarding:-
  - (i) changes to child protection policy and procedures (the policy should be reviewed annually)

- (ii) curriculum issues around child protection (such as safe environment, protective behaviours, personal safety, bullying, racial awareness, sex and drugs education)
  - (iii) training undertaken by designated teacher, other staff and governors;
  - (iv) number of incidents/cases.
- reports back regularly to the governing body, making recommendations where appropriate, either via a governors' committee or to full governing body meetings.

## **2. The Governing Body should ensure that :-**

- the school has a child protection policy and procedures in place that are in line with local Children's Safeguarding Board policy;
- that the school has a bullying and anti-racism policy in place;
- all staff and parents are familiar with the child protection policy and bullying and anti-racist policies;
- all staff working within the school should receive induction to child protection procedures and training appropriate to their role and responsibilities;
- the Headteacher and one governor have undertaken the NCSL Safer Recruitment training to help strengthen safeguards against employing unsuitable people in schools;
- that the school provides a safe school environment by having regard to school security and appropriate security checks on all staff and volunteers;
- all staff are aware of the indicators of possible abuse;
- all staff are familiar with the referral process;
- all staff know who the designated teacher is;
- all staff keep accurate records.

## The Role of the Link Governor for Extended Services

The introduction of extended services to schools has huge implications for the strategic leadership of schools. Governors are crucial in the development of extended services as they have ultimate responsibility for deciding whether the school should offer additional activities and services and what form these should take.

Section 27 of the Education Act 2002 gives governing bodies of all maintained schools the power to provide, or enter into contracts or arrangements to provide, facilities and services that “further any charitable purpose for the benefits of pupils at the school, their families or people who live and work in the locality in which the school is situated”.

Governing bodies need to think strategically about the need for coherence between the extended schools and standards agendas in terms of the school development strategy, taking account of the local Children & Young People’s Plan. It is important that they have a clear strategic oversight of the school’s extended services offer and how it relates to the core teaching and learning function of the school and that this is reflected in the regular completion of the Self Evaluation Form (SEF).

Governing bodies should develop a vision for their provision of extended services that aligns with the school’s vision and helps them promote the intended outcomes and advantages to others.

The Link Governor could take responsibility for the following:

- Seek guidance on their role from ‘Extended Schools – a guide for Governors (March 2006) and Toolkit for Governors (May 2007) both documents available to download on [www. Teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.Teachernet.gov.uk)
- for ensuring extended service provision is linked strategically to school improvement planning and the standards agenda.
- take responsibility on behalf of the governing body to ensure that any childcare provision delivered on the school site is appropriately registered with Ofsted.
- attend the various extended services training and workshops delivered by the local authority extended services team and disseminate information to the governing body.
- link with the member of school staff with responsibility for extended service provision to ensure provision of services are as a result of consultation and identification of need.
- link with governors from other schools within the collaborative to promote joint working, effective use of joint resources and avoid duplication of services.



## THE ROLE OF THE LINK GOVERNOR FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and Safety in schools as in every other workplace is governed by the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and other statutory (criminal) legislation.

The H&S at Work Act places specific responsibilities on the employer who in a community school is the London Borough of Lewisham, but at voluntary aided schools is the Governing Body. One major requirement of the Act is for every employer to write and maintain a H&S policy. The Council's policy delegates responsibility for managing H&S to the Headteacher of each school.

**1. In community schools**, statutory health and safety responsibilities fall to the Council (as the employer) and on the Headteacher who has day to day responsibilities for managing health & safety. Other school employees have responsibilities as set out in legislation, in the Council's policy and in the school's policy .

**The role of the governing body** is to ensure that the school senior management has put in place a local policy and arrangements for managing health and safety in the school based on the Council's model and guidance and that this policy and arrangements are reviewed regularly.

**2. In voluntary aided schools**, statutory health and safety responsibilities fall to the governing body (as the employer) and the governing body must decide on the duties to be carried out by the Headteacher and other employees.

**The governing body**, as employer, has a duty:

- to write a health and safety policy and advise employees of it;
- to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees; the health and safety of pupils in school and on off-site visits; and the health and safety of visitors to schools, and volunteers involved in any school activity;
- to ensure that there is assessment of the risks of all activities, both in school and off-site, that measures are taken to manage those risks, and to tell employees about the measures;
- to ensure that staff are trained in their health and safety responsibilities;
- to take reasonable steps to make sure that the buildings, equipment and materials are safe and do not put the health of users and visitors at risk.

In practice, the governing body should delegate specific health and safety tasks to others at the school. However, the governing body retains the ultimate responsibility, no matter who carries out the tasks.

## WHAT DOES THE LINK GOVERNOR DO?

### Main Responsibilities of the link governor

#### The link governor:

- takes a particular interest in health and safety by keeping up to date with H&S legislation and Council policy;
- is a member of the governing body's committee which is managing safety on behalf of the governing body;
- undertakes training themselves and ensures that the whole of the governing body are aware of their H&S responsibilities;
- meets regularly with the member of the school's management team who is leading on H&S (this may be the Headteacher) in order to carry out their responsibilities;
- makes certain that the school has a suitable H&S policy and that this is annually reviewed;
- Makes certain that suitable risk assessments have been carried out by the school employees as set out in the policy, that these are reviewed annually and that they have led to suitable procedures being put in place to manage the risks;
- Makes visits to the school to take part in inspections and in reviewing safety procedures such as fire drills;
- ensures that regular reports are given by senior management to the governing body on safety matters including accident statistics;
- ensures that the Council's Annual Health & Safety Audit is completed accurately;
- is aware of the health and safety implications of matters under consideration by the governing body and ensures that these are understood before a decision is taken;
- reports back to the governing body on a regular basis, (either via the committee with health and safety responsibilities or at full governing body meetings) and makes recommendations where appropriate;
- **in a voluntary aided school**, to assist school management in ensuring that the school's safety performance is audited at least every 5 years and improvements made;
- **In a community school**, make certain that the Council's audit report is reviewed by the governing body and that the required action plan is seen.

## **THE ROLE OF THE LINK GOVERNOR FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (also called CHILDREN IN PUBLIC CARE)**

Under section 52 of the Children Act 2004, local authorities have a duty to promote the educational achievement of the children in their care. In order for them to implement this duty successfully, they will need the active co-operation of schools. School governing bodies have a major responsibility for helping children to succeed: they can champion their needs, raise awareness and challenge negative stereotypes.

Some young people in care may need to be given more help, encouragement and support to access education, to turn up to school and to stay on into the sixth form and beyond. There are many reasons why children may be looked after by a local authority. In some cases it will be as a result of family breakdown, in others because of neglect and abuse. These experiences – together with being separated from friends and family and adapting to changing neighbourhoods – can make it much harder to learn. Although some do well, many looked after children underachieve. The Government is committed to giving all looked after children the same life chances as any other child – to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being.

School governors can make a significant difference to how looked after children experience school. They can ensure that their needs are considered at the planning and policy level through to monitoring and evaluation. Governing bodies will need to examine a wide range of school data to see how looked after pupils are progressing and identify any barriers to their learning.

Governing bodies are consequently asked to have a nominated governor with responsibility for this aspect of the school.

### **1. The nominated governor would be expected to:-**

- ascertain that the school has a designated teacher for looked after children and whether they have attended appropriate training;
- liaise with the designated teacher and keep the governing body informed about issues affecting looked after children;
- provide support for the designated teacher;
- attend specific training events on the education of looked after children and to keep abreast of national and local issues;
- ensure that there is an annual item on the governing body agenda regarding:-
  - (i) training undertaken by designated teacher, other staff and governors;
  - (ii) the progress and attendance (as a group) of the children in public care

(iii) opportunities for children in public care to play a particular part in the life of the school.

## **2. The Governing Body should ensure that:-**

- the LA has been informed of the name of the nominated governor
- the school has an overview of the educational needs and progress of looked after children
- school policies are reviewed from the point of view of looked after children
- resources are allocated to match priorities for looked after children
- the designated teacher for looked after children has the opportunity to attend training and is resourced to carry out the role effectively
- over-subscription criteria meets statutory requirements, i.e. that looked after children are at the head of over-subscription criteria
- the protocol for 'In Year Fair Access' provides for looked after children, and that the school admits without delay, any child they are asked to under the protocol
- procedures are in place to ensure that all looked after children have up-to-date Personal Education Plans
- the home school agreement and home school policy take into account the home circumstances of looked after children
- the school sets challenging targets for looked after children
- additional support is offered to meet the needs of looked after children that are at risk of underachieving
- no looked after child is permanently excluded
- looked after children participate in out of school activities where possible
- the school's SEN policy acknowledges the needs of looked after children
- looked after children who have missed schooling receive support where appropriate

## **THE ROLE OF THE LINK GOVERNOR FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

All governing bodies have important statutory duties towards pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Governing bodies should, with the Headteacher, decide the school's general policy and approach to meeting pupils' special educational needs for those with and without statements.

Under the provisions of the Education Act, 1996, governors and LAs have a duty to do their best to ensure that the necessary provision is made for pupils with SEN and must have regard to the SEN Code of Practice.

Every school must have a 'responsible person' who makes sure that all those who are likely to teach a pupil with SEN are told about the statement. The person is generally the Headteacher.

The governing body should designate a person to be the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) for the school.

The governing body must

- ensure that the SENCO is a qualified teacher;
- determine the leadership and management role of the SENCO;
- determine and monitor the key responsibilities of the SENCO (see the Education (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators)(England) Regulations 2008.

Most governing bodies appoint a link governor to have specific oversight of the school's arrangements and provision for meeting SEN. The governor is the link between the governing body and the school in relation to pupils with SEN.

### **WHAT DOES THE SEN LINK GOVERNOR DO?**

#### **1. The SEN link governor:**

- Is informed about SEN systems and practices in the school;
- Helps to raise awareness of SEN issues at governing body meetings;
- Ensures that the budget for SEN is allocated to support pupils with SEN;
- Ensures that all SEN pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- Gives up-to date information to the governing body on SEN provision within the school;
- Helps to review the policy on provision for pupils with SEN;
- Ensures that the school has regard to the SEN Code of Practice;

- Visits the school to see SEN provision;
- Builds a trusting and supportive relationship with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO);

## **2. How to get started:**

- Arrange to meet with the Headteacher and the SENCO to find out about SEN provision in the school;
- Ask for a copy of the school's SEN policy and the SEN Code of Practice;
- Make sure that you understand how the school identifies a pupil with SEN;
- Find out how the LA provides SEN resources and how the school decides how the money should be spent;
- Find out information on the school's links with external agencies such as health, social services and voluntary agencies;
- Attend governor training on SEN issues;
- Report back regularly to the governing body, making recommendations where appropriate, either via a governors' committee or to full governing body meetings.

## **3. Further Information that you will need:**

- Find out how many pupils in your school have SEN;
- Find out how many pupils are at School Action, School Action Plus or have statements of SEN;
- You should know how many staff have a particular role in SEN.

**DON'T FORGET TO OBTAIN YOUR COPY OF THE DCSF VIDEO AND BOOKLET 'MAKING A DIFFERENCE – A GUIDE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS GOVERNORS – available from Governors' Services**

## THE ROLE OF THE TRAINING LINK GOVERNOR

It is important for governing bodies to keep abreast of current governance issues and to consider their own development. This is one of the ways that they can make a contribution to the leadership of the school by improving their own performance through appropriate development activities or training.

Governing bodies find it useful to appoint individual members to keep the governing body fully informed on aspects of its work and it is recommended that a training link governor be appointed to aid this process.

The link governor is a governor who is willing to take on this role on behalf of their governing body. They act as a contact point for training matters and are invited to briefing sessions every term to receive an update on courses and training events.

To be a training link governor you will need a willingness to encourage governor colleagues to participate in appropriate training. You will help identify the individual and collective development needs and expertise within the governing body and pass on information about training opportunities.

### WHAT DOES THE TRAINING LINK GOVERNOR DO?

#### 1. **Helps the Governing Body to identify group and individual training needs**

- By talking to governors to find out their existing skills and expertise and the areas where they need to supplement their knowledge and to match them to the central training courses on offer;
- By encouraging governors to undertake central training on specific issues that may be of interest to them e.g. SEN link governor sessions, health and safety , finance, child protection etc.
- By considering issues likely to face the governing body in the next three years (taken from the school improvement plan or Self Evaluation Form (SEF)) and linking those to the need for governor training;
- By reporting back regularly to the governing body, making recommendations where appropriate, either via a governors' committee or to full governing body meetings.
- By alerting committees of the governing body to courses for their attention e.g. Health & Safety, Personnel or Finance Issues.

#### 2. Encouraging governors to attend training courses and to share what they have learnt with the rest of the governing body.

- By using the termly agenda item on training, to highlight centrally run courses where the governing body would benefit from a member attending;
- By arranging a brief feedback from governors on sessions attended and circulation of any relevant materials received;
- By ensuring that governors know how to book courses and keeping a record of courses attended and perhaps some evaluation as to its benefit.

### **3. Arranging a whole governing body training session at the school.**

- By prioritising with the governing body the key topics that would be useful to work together on, such as Preparing for Ofsted;
- By encouraging the whole governing body to consider its development and training needs;
- If training needs are identified, then to make the practical arrangements in liaison with Governors' Services.

### **4. Helping with the induction of new governors and introducing them to training opportunities**

- By introducing yourself to new governors and ensuring they have received a copy of the training programme and are booked on to the next available Induction training organised by governors' services;
- By explaining how to book training sessions and helping them to select appropriate courses to attend.

### **5. Contributing to the development of the Governor training programme through consultation and feedback**

- By attending the termly link governor meetings and reporting on governors' experiences of training and areas for improvement and development;
- By informing Governors' Services if the courses are not meeting the needs of your governors and recommending topics for inclusion in the programme;
- By giving feedback on the training provided, including the knowledge and presentation skills of the governor trainers.





If you have any questions / queries regarding anything contained in the Link  
Governors Pack please contact Governors' Services on:

Telephone: (020) 8314 8313

Fax: (020) 8314 3050

E-mail: [governors.services@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:governors.services@lewisham.gov.uk)

Governors' Services  
Directorate for Children and Young People  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Laurence House  
1 Catford Road  
London  
SE6 4RU



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