# **Southwark Governor Services**

# **Chair Growth Pathway**

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### Message from Head of Governor Services

Dear Chair,

Being a Chair of Governors is a vital leadership role, central to the effectiveness and accountability of schools. According to the Department for Education, the Chair sets the tone for professional governance and fosters conditions for effective board discussions and decisions.

The quality of governance significantly influences how well a school is judged in terms of leadership and management. The Chair plays a pivotal role by leading the board and partnering with the headteacher, while also holding them to account.

This tool is designed to supports Chairs in evaluating skills, knowledge, and experience, and planning your personal development. It also offers prompts to deepen your understanding of the school and board, boosting confidence in the role. Even if some information is already known, the process helps identify useful actions and is seen as an investment in strong governance.

Regards Donna Muir

Head of Governor Services

Email: [Donna-Marie.Muir@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:Donna-Marie.Muir@southwark.gov.uk)

Tel: 07729601354

## Effective Chairing

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| **The first few weeks** | **Yes/No** | **Any Action Required (s*uggestions in italics)*** |
| Have you met with the headteacher? |  |  |
| Have you met with the clerk (governance professional) to discuss the arrangements for managing the business? |  |  |
| If possible, meet with the outgoing chair? |  |  |
| Has any chairs training been secured? |  | ***Southwark Training –***  *The Effective Chair*  *The Strategic Role of Governance*  *Chairs connect*  *NGA accreditation:* [*Leading Governance*](https://www.nga.org.uk/training/individuals/lg-chairs-development/)[*Development for Chairs*](https://www.nga.org.uk/training/individuals/lg-chairs-development/) |
| Have you considered using another chair as a mentor?  You can ask for support via the Governor hub Chairs network |  |  |
| As a new chair you bring a unique perspective, consider if the way the board conducts its business enables the focus to be clearly on the strategic direction of the school and improving its performance? |  |  |

## Leading and developing the team

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| **Leading and developing the team** | **Yes/No** | **Any Action Required (s*uggestions in italics)*** |
| Are you aware of the election/appointment process of the various roles of governors, trustees, local academy committee members and associate members? |  | *Advice/guidance can be found* [*here*](https://education.southwark.gov.uk/governance/governor-and-non-governor-categories) |
| Have all governors received induction? |  | *Induction information (including an induction checklist) for new governors can be found* [*here*](https://education.southwark.gov.uk/governance/welcome/induction-for-new-governors)*.* |
| Ensure a Code of Conduct is in place for governors to sign up too? |  | *A model code of conduct can be found* [*here.*](https://education.southwark.gov.uk/governance/model-policies) |
| Have you reminded the governing board members that, regardless of individual views during discussions, all decisions are made collectively and represent the board as a whole |  |  |
| Have you reminded board members of the need for confidentiality? |  |  |
| Ensured the board has the range of skills required to perform its statutory roles and responsibilities? |  | *Governor Hub Skills audit* |

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| **Leading and developing the team** | **Yes/No** | **Any Action Required (s*uggestions in italics)*** |
| Ensured that governors feel valued and encourage their development? |  | [*Southwark Governor Training*](https://education.southwark.gov.uk/governance/governor-training)  *Consider appointing a Training Link Governor* |
| Ensured the board conducts a self-review annually to identify any Areas where the governing body need to improve? |  | *Governor Hub Self effectiveness Tool*  *DfE advises every 3 years an External Review of Governance is undertaken* |
| Are roles and tasks delegated, ensuring all board members are involved? |  |  |
| Are all board members attending meetings and if not, has this been discussed/raised? Do you know what action to take if someone is not attending? |  |  |
| Do you have open and honest conversations with board members who are not seen as contributing or contributing positively to the team? |  | *Annual Conversation with governors, trustees, local academy members and associate members* |
| During a meeting, do members listen to each other, and where there are differences of opinion, are these dealt with openly and honestly? |  |  |
| Are the chairs of governors and chairs of committees elected each year? |  |  |
| Is there succession planning in place for the role of chair of governors, vice chairs and chairs of committees? |  | [*Finding your next Chair*](https://www.nga.org.uk/media/wzmhmx4u/nga-finding-next-chair-20220915.pdf) |

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| **Leading and developing the team** | **Yes/No** | **Any Action Required (s*uggestions in italics)*** |
| Do you allow others to take the lead according to the situation and others’ particular skills, or to develop strengths? |  |  |
| Evaluate your own leadership skills? |  | *Chair peer to peer review: Support from your mentor*  *Feedback via the Annual Conversation* |
| Do you conduct exit interviews for board members who leave before their term of office expires? |  |  |

## Building the relationship with the headteacher and ensuring accountability

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| **Building the relationship with the headteacher and ensuring accountability** | **Yes/No** | **Any Action Required (s*uggestions in italics)*** |
| Are you clear about the role of the headteacher in relation to the day-to-day management of the school and the board’s role in the strategic leadership of the school? |  |  |
| Have you had a conversation with the headteacher as to what they expect from you and what you expect from them? |  | [*What governing boards and school leaders should expect from each other*](https://www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/Structure,-roles-responsibilities/Roles-and-responsibilities/What-governing-boards-and-school-leaders-should-expect-from-each-other.aspx)*.* |
| Do you work in partnership with the headteacher, developing a professional relationship by providing regular contact, appropriate support, encouragement and challenge? |  |  |
| Meet the headteacher regularly to discuss issues and prioritise board business, does the arrangement for keeping in touch suit both parties? |  |  |
| Is there a policy in place for performance appraisal of the headteacher? |  |  |
| If you are governing in a federation, are the lines of accountability for each school’s performance clear? |  |  |
| Are you aware of your role in relation to Headteacher wellbeing and how are you supporting this? |  |  |

## Leading the business of the governing body

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| **Leading the business of the governing body** | **Yes/No** | **Any Action Required (s*uggestions in italics)*** |
| Ensure that at least 3 full governing body meetings are held per year? |  | *Best practice: meetings should last no longer than 2 hours.* |
| Do you plan with the headteacher and the clerk (governance professional) a timetable of meetings for the year ready for the board to consider and agree; include committee meetings in the cycle, timed so that their minutes can be circulated for the next full board meeting and is in line with the school’s development cycle? |  |  |
| Ensure you have regard to the work life balance of board members and school leaders when setting the timing of meetings? |  |  |
| Do you set the meeting agenda with the headteacher and clerk (governance professional) at least 2 weeks in advance? |  |  |
| Ensure the agenda is focused on school improvement/development issues and priorities? |  |  |
| Are items which are for information only, discussion/decision or any items that may be deemed confidential clearly identified? |  |  |
| Ensure the agenda and papers are circulated at least 7 days in advance of meetings; allowing board members time to prepare for meetings? |  |  |
| Ensure you read and are familiar with the agenda and papers before a meeting? |  |  |
| Do you start meetings on time? |  |  |

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| **Leading the business of the governing body** | **Yes/No** | **Any Action Required (s*uggestions in italics)*** |
| Ensure good time management at meetings? |  | *Possible times against items on agenda:* |
| Follow the agenda, try to keep board members on track and avoid distractions? |  | *Useful phrases:*   * *Can we get back to the agenda?* * *We seem to be losing sight of the main point, recap…* * *Can we now go on to …?* * *If no one else has anything new to add, can we move onto point 2 on the agenda?* |
| Ensure that discussions do not get heated and that everyone has a voice, but no one is allowed to dominate discussions? |  | *Useful phrases:*   * *Thank you for your contribution but we must move on.* * *Thank you for your comment’s others may want to respond.* * *You have raised some interesting points would anyone like to respond* * *To sum up …?* |
| Is work delegated effectively to committees and individuals? |  |  |
| Be firm with **‘Any other business’** which may or may not be included, as a heading on your agenda. As chair you can decide whether an item is discussed whilst taking any board comments into consideration. |  |  |
| Ensure draft minutes reflect all discussion points, decisions and subsequent actions? |  |  |

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| **Leading the business of the governing body** | **Yes/No** | **Any Action Required (s*uggestions in italics)*** |
| Ensure that procedures are established for reporting to the full board? |  | *Best practice to have in place.*  *School Visits Policy including a report template for completion following a visit to the school* |
| Ensure decision making and processes are transparent in the minutes? |  |  |
| Agree the draft minutes of full board meetings with the headteacher and clerk (governance professional), so that they can be circulated to all board members as draft minutes for approval at the next meeting? |  |  |
| Exercise decision making only in cases of emergency (Chairs Action) i.e., only if a delay in exercising a decision would likely to be seriously detrimental to the school, pupil or their parent or any member of staff, ensuring these decisions are reported back to the board? |  |  |
| Does the vice chair share some of the chair’s business? |  | *Succession planning, developing the vice chair Allow link governors in specific areas to lead agenda items i.e., safeguarding* |

## Working with the clerk (governance professional)

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| **Working with the clerk (governance professional)** | **Yes/No** | **Any Action Required (s*uggestions in italics)*** |
| Has your clerk (governance professional) attended any training? |  |  |
| Does your clerk (governance professional) know where to get support? |  |  |
| If your Governance professional is not supplied by Governor Services, how are they performance managed? |  | *Appraisal* |
| Do you seek procedural advice on governance matters from the clerk (governance professional) if needed? |  |  |

## Personal Growth Plan

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| **Action** | **Where to look, who to ask?** |
| *Sources of support, list of links to various websites with useful information, documentation etc.* | [*SELA Website*](https://education.southwark.gov.uk/governance/governor-training) |
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## The Seven Principles of Public Life

**Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

**Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

**Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

**Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

**Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

**Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

**Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.