

# Castle Lower School Handbook for Governors

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Welcome to the Handbook for Governors of Castle Lower School. This handbook is the result of research into best practice in governance and discussion between Castle governors and our headteacher, Mick Marsh. It presents our collective view of the role of Castle governor and guidance on fulfilling that role responsibly and effectively. In short, the handbook is intended to summarise who we are and what we are expected to do.

Ofsted defines the role of school governor as being: a) a 'critical friend' to the school; b) contributing to strategic management of the school; and c) providing accountability for how the school is run. The role of school governor is challenging and also time-consuming. More than that, however, it is immensely rewarding. At Castle we are striving to develop the role of governor as well as the means by which we evaluate the effectiveness of our governing body in contributing to school improvement.

On that note, I would like to emphasise that this handbook is very much a working document. I aim for it to be updated annually to coincide with the start of each school year and I ask all governors to share their views on further advice and guidance that would benefit governance arrangements in our school.

Mags Kubicek  
Chair of Governors  
September 2007

**Parents**

- 1 Andrea Breitenbach
- 2 Bob Bunting
- 3 Fiona Grant
- 4 Ruth Janes
- 5 Sarah Mallalieu
- 6 Michael Ridley

**Local Authority Appointments**

- 1 Margaret Kubicek
- 2 John Mingay
- 3 Apu Bagchii
- 4 One outstanding position

**Staff**

- 1 Sandie Goduti (support staff)
- 2 Jo Kearney (teaching staff)
- 3 Sue Lloyd (support staff)
- 4 Mick Marsh (headteacher)

**Community**

- 1 Saul Keyworth
- 2 Simon White
- 3 Domenico Cerqua
- 4 One position outstanding

**Associate Governors**

- 1 Karen Davis (deputy headteacher)
- 2 Peter Richardson
- 3 Silke Vahar-Matiar

**Clerk: Anne Thomas**



### 3. Induction of New Governors: What you can expect

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The Governing Body and Headteacher of Castle Lower School are committed to ensuring new governors are given the necessary information and support to fulfil their role with confidence. The process of induction is seen as an investment and a means of bringing new governors up to speed as quickly as possible, leading to more effective governance and retention of governors.

#### **Induction of New Governors Policy**

##### **Purpose**

- To welcome new governors to the Governing Body and enable them to meet other members
- To encourage new governors to visit the school to experience its atmosphere and understand its ethos
- To meet the Headteacher, staff and children
- To explain the partnership between the Headteacher, school and Governing Body
- To explain the role and responsibilities of governors
- To give background material on the school and current issues
- To allow new governors to ask questions about their role and/or the school
- To explain how the Governing Body and its committees work
- To allow new governors to join the committee(s) of their choice

##### **New governors will:**

- Be welcomed to the Governing Body by the Chair
- Be invited by the Headteacher to visit the school
- Have the opportunity to tour the school and meet staff and children
- Receive an informal briefing on the school from the Headteacher
- Have the opportunity to meet informally with an existing governor who will then act as their mentor
- Be accompanied by their mentor to their first full Governing Body meeting (if required)
- Have the opportunity to review their first meeting with the mentor
- Be given information about LA training for governors and attend the 'Induction for New Governors' course

##### **New governors will receive:**

- The Department for Education and Skills' *A Guide to the Law for School Governors*
- The school's Handbook for Governors
- The school prospectus
- Details of relevant governor training
- Dates for future governors' meetings including committees
- Details of how to contact the other governors
- Details of how to contact the school including, the e-mail address
- A calendar of school events
- Recent school newsletters

##### **New governors are also recommended to read:**

- The School Development Plan
- The latest Ofsted report and action plan
- Minutes of the previous two Governing Body and committee meetings

**Areas that the Headteacher will cover include:**

- Background to the school
- Current issues facing the school
- Visiting the school
- The relationship between the Headteacher and Governing Body

**Areas that the mentor will cover include:**

- An overview of the governor's role, including visiting the school
- How the full Governing Body and committee meetings are conducted
- How to propose agenda items
- Governor training

**Further Information on School Governance**

Several *TES* booklets outlining the responsibilities of the different categories of governor (ie parent, staff, Local Authority, community) have been ordered and may be borrowed, from the clerk.

The following is a list (by no means exhaustive!) of further sources of information governors may find helpful:

- GovernorLine 08000 722181 [www.governorline.info](http://www.governorline.info) (Free, confidential advice and information for governors)
- [www.schools.bedfordshire.gov.uk/governors](http://www.schools.bedfordshire.gov.uk/governors) (Bedfordshire's website for governors)
- [www.governornet.co.uk](http://www.governornet.co.uk) (DFES website for governors)
- [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org) (National Governors Association) Castle's membership is funded by Unilever. Our username is 'unilevergovernors' and password is 'unigovs'
- [www.ofsted.gov.uk/ofsteddirect](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/ofsteddirect) (online newsletter from Ofsted)
- *Governors Newsletter* (published by DFES, circulated direct to governors via clerk). Also available on [www.governornet.co.uk](http://www.governornet.co.uk)
- *School Governors Newsletter* (published by Bedfordshire County Council, circulated direct to governors via clerk)

#### 4. Governing Body Vision and Self Evaluation

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As a governing body we are committed to evaluating our own effectiveness on an annual basis and we are timetabling this activity to take place in the summer term. The results of this evaluation feed into the school's Self Evaluation Form (SEF), the framework used by Ofsted to judge schools, and Castle's own School Development Plan (SDP). We have also identified the need to discuss and agree our own sense of vision for our governing body in support of the school's overall vision and objectives.

#### **Key Objectives for 2007/08**

<b><u>Objective</u></b>	<b><u>Key Actions</u></b>
1. Improving the effectiveness of meetings (Lead : Chair and Head Teacher)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Implementation of the annual planner, maybe supported by an "aide-memoire"</b></li><li>• <b>Alternate "business" and "discussion" meetings for full governing body meetings</b></li><li>• <b>Greater contribution from all members of the GB, supported by greater clarity of expectations</b></li><li>• <b>Alternation of the Chair's role</b></li></ul>
2. More effective engagement of all staff in the work of the Governing Body (Lead : Staff Governors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Greater time at staff meetings to discuss Governing Body issues and feedback recent discussions</b></li><li>• <b>Consultation with staff before GB meetings, supported by circulation of agendas and key papers a week before, and feedback afterwards</b></li><li>• <b>Review possibility of alternating early / late start times for cttee meetings</b></li></ul>
3. Review timing issues (Lead : Chairs of Cttees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Targeted recruitment of new community governors (or others in an associate role), including to make the GB more representative</b></li><li>• <b>Clarification of the remit of community governors</b></li><li>• <b>Use of LA Governors with direct involvement in the Council to strengthen links and influence with the Council / LA</b></li></ul>
4. Strengthen links with the LA and the Community (Lead : Chair)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Communicate role of the parent governor, and what we do (targets); attend parents events</b></li><li>• <b>Seek opportunities to engage parents in new ways (e.g. focus groups)</b></li></ul>
5. Greater clarity for parents on the role of parent governors (Lead : Parent Governors)	

5. Governors' Roles and List of Committees

**Governing Body of Castle Lower School**

Chair – Mags Kubicek

Vice-Chair – Michael Ridley

**MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES 2006/07**

<b>Standards and Children Committee</b>	Mick Marsh Fiona Grant Sarah Mallalieu – Chair Mags Kubicek Bob Bunting Saul Keyworth Karen Davis Jo Kearney Andrea Breitenbach Silke Vahar-Matiar
<b>Buildings, Finance and Personnel</b>	Mick Marsh Simon White - Chair Sue Lloyd John Mingay Judith Carswell Ruth Janes Michael Ridley Karen Davis Sandie Goduti Peter Richardson
<b>Headteacher's Performance Management Committee</b>	Mags Kubicek Sarah Mallalieu Michael Ridley
<b>Pupil Discipline Committee</b>	Any three of the following governors:  Bob Bunting Fiona Grant Ruth Janes Saul Keyworth Simon White Ann Caborn
<b>Hearings Committee</b>	Fiona Grant Sarah Mallalieu Simon White

<b>Appeal Committee</b>	Any three of the following governors: Michael Ridley Bob Bunting Judith Carswell
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**Curriculum/Aspects/Class Links  
September 2008**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Governor</b>	<b>Class</b>
	Whole School Issues incl. Attendance, Values and Gifted and Talented	Mick Marsh	Mags Kubicek	
	LAC/SG children	Mick Marsh	Michael Ridley	
	Library	Mrs Melrose	Michael Ridley	Mercury
Literacy	Foundation Stage	Loren Colver	Sarah Mallalieu	Ladybirds
Science		Mick Marsh	Fiona Grant	
Numeracy		Karen Davis	Saul Keyworth	Tigers
	Care Club	Mick Marsh/ Di Pomphrey	Saul Keyworth	
Health & Well Being/PSHE	SENCo	Duncan Goldthorpe		Mercury
	EAL	Jane Price		
ICT		Angie Wallis	Bob Bunting	Zebra
	Buildings	Mick Marsh	Simon White	
	Health & Safety	Sue Lloyd	Simon White	
Design and Technology		Sheila Stamp		Penguins
Physical Education		Louise Douglas	Silke Mahar-Vatlar	Bumble Bees
Religious Education		Rosie Pomphrey	Ruth Janes	Dragonflies
History		Carole Pryn	Bob Bunting	
Geography		Clare Cook	John Mingay	Oak
Art		Jo Kearney	Andrea Breitenbach	Puffins
Music		Sarah Dyer/ Ruth Rawes	Dom Cerqua	Zebras

## 6. Staffing Structure of the School

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### Castle Lower School - Staff List (September 2008)

Mick Marsh	Headteacher/Key Stage 2 Co-ordinator/Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator
Karen Davis	Deputy Headteacher/Key Stage 1 Co-ordinator/Numeracy Co-ordinator
Loren Colver	TLR/Head of Foundation Stage/ Literacy Co-ordinator
Duncan Goldthorpe	TLR/SENCO/PSCHE and SEAL Co-ordinator
Jane Price	Part time teacher/EAL Co-ordinator
Jacque Melrose	Part time teacher/Library Co-ordinator
Carole Pryn	Part time teacher/History Co-ordinator
Sarah Dyer	Part time teacher/Music Co-ordinator
Jo Kearney	Teacher/Art Co-ordinator
Rosie Pomphrey	Teacher/RE Co-ordinator
Louise Douglas	Teacher/PE Co-ordinator
Sheila Stamp	Teacher/D and T Co-ordinator
Clare Cook	Part time Teacher/Geography Co-ordinator
Ruth Rawes	Part time Music Teacher
Angela Wallis	Part time teacher/ICT Co-ordinator
Anna Lawrence	Class teacher/MfL Co-ordinator
Nicola Mason	Class teacher/Shadowing PE
Lucia Vassell	Class teacher/Shadowing Science
Sue Kumar	Head of Nursery (.8)
Sue McWalter	Head of Nursery (.2)
Lucy Fensome	Nursery Nurse

Ruby Choudhury	Nursery Nurse
Sue Lloyd	HLTA/Learning Mentor
Gail Holbourn	HLTA
Helma Chrystal	HLTA
Marian Boud	Teaching and learning Support
Sharon Baker	Teaching and learning Support
Lynn Dickens	Teaching and Learning Support
Pauline Giles	Teaching and learning Support
Jane Holyoake	Teaching and learning Support
Rachael Mellor	Teaching and learning Support
Bernie Palmer	Teaching and learning Support
Claire Ross	Teaching and Learning Support/Learning Mentor
Janet Snell	Teaching and learning Support
Nicola Woodward	Teaching and learning Support
Sandie Goduti	Office Manager
Julia Smith	Office Assistant
Richard Heathfield	Site Agent
Carmella Reveglia	Senior Midday Supervisor
Di Pomphrey	Care Club Leader

## **Classes and Class Organisation - September 2008**

**Nursery** Sue Kumar/SueMcWalters/Lucy Fensome/Ruby Choudhury

### **Reception Classes**

Ladybirds Loren Colver

Dragon flies Rosie Pomphrey

Bumble bees Louise Douglas

### **Year 1**

Penguin Sheila Stamp

Puffins Jo Kearney

### **Year 2**

Tigers Karen Davis/Carole Pryn

Zebras Nicola Mason

Leopards Jane Price/Angie Wallis

### **Year 3**

Willow Anna Lawrence

Oak Clare Cook/ Sarah Dyer

### **Year 4**

Mercury Duncan Goldthorpe/ Jacquie Melrose

Jupiter Lucia Vassell

Policies are the method by which the Governing Body communicates its aims and objectives to staff (and parents and pupils). All areas and levels of the conduct of the school are covered by one policy or another.

**Making a School Policy – A School Policy should include:**

- A Statement of Intent
- Aims and objectives
- Steps to be taken: Strategies to be employed
- Resources needed
- Responsibilities for implementation throughout the school
- Responsibilities and strategies for monitoring and evaluation
- Arrangements for regular review of the policy

<b>Subject (* = Statutory requirement)</b>	<b>Date Drawn Up</b>	<b>Date of Last Review</b>	<b>Due for Review</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
<b>Full Governors</b>				
Freedom of Information Publication Scheme*				
RE & Collective Worship*				
Complaints Procedure*				
Complaints against the Curriculum*				
Governors' Visits				
Volunteers in School				
Attendance				
Governors' Allowances				
<b>Standards &amp; Children</b>				
(Teaching and Learning)*				
Assessment				

Equal opportunities and Inclusion				
Child protection*				
Looked After Children				
Special Educational Needs*				
Sex education*				
Pupil Discipline/Behaviour*				
Nutritional Standards*				
Citizenship Education				
Disaster Management (ICT)				
Educational Visits				
Monitoring and Evaluation				
Homework				
Pastoral Care				
Subjects				
Target Setting				
Marking and Presentation				
Display				
Parent Liaison				
Gifted & Talented and More Able				
Anti-Bullying				
Library				
<b>Finance, Buildings &amp; Staffing</b>				
Charging and remissions*				
Lettings*				
Staff Conduct*				
Staff Salary/Pay				
Staff development				
Staff Leave of Absence				
Staff Redundancy				
Staff Recruitment/Retention				
Stress Management				
Staff Induction & Development				
Performance Management*				
Financial Management & Delegation				

Best Value				
Health & Safety*				
Emergency Plan				
School Security				

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## 8. A Code of Conduct for Governors

This code of conduct is designed to explain the basic principles of good governor conduct. It will be reviewed and ratified annually.

### **Code of Conduct for Governors**

1. Governors should actively participate in discussions and decisions of the Governing Body.
2. School governors do not have any individual authority or power by being a member of the Governing Body, unless it has specifically been delegated; only the Governing Body as a whole can take actions or decisions, unless it has been agreed otherwise and formally minuted.
3. No Governor should use his or her position to gain advantage in any other relationships with the school or community (e.g. as an employee, parent or councillor).
4. The members of the governing body recognise that they administer a public body funded by local and national taxation. They therefore recognise that their proceedings should be open to public scrutiny, while recognising the need to retain confidentiality where individual students, staff and others are under discussion. Draft minutes of the most recent governing body and committee meetings will be displayed in a public part of the school, and published on the school's website once it is online, as soon after the meeting as possible. Requests to observe meetings will be considered with regard to the importance of the accountability of the governing body to the local community
5. All governors, however appointed or elected, recognise that they first and foremost have the good of the school at heart. They must always act and vote for the good of the school. Nevertheless, governors will sometimes have a duty to consider the significance of decisions for the source of their appointment during discussion on any item. Elected governors may need to consult with some or all of their elective bodies, and to initiate methods of gathering views on matters likely to be brought before the governors, where these are of a general nature or interest connected with the welfare of the school. This should be done only with the agreement of the full governing body, in accordance with governing body standing orders established for the purpose, and with regard to any conditions of confidentiality. When consulting, governors should ensure that they are gathering and reflecting views representative of the entire elective body, not just a small sub-section.
6. No governor may be mandated by his or her elective or appointing body under any circumstances, i.e. no governor can be instructed how to vote, to hold an opinion or to do anything by the body that elected or appointed him or her.
7. All governors are of equal standing; no governor will be excluded from any proceedings except where it is required by the statutory regulations.
8. Most governors have other relationships with the school, such as employee or parent. They should be particularly careful to ensure that these relationships are conducted in a proper and ethical manner, and that their standing as a governor is not compromised or open to misinterpretation.

9. Governors will attend meetings punctually and well prepared as far as possible, having read supporting material and considered the contributions they may make on agenda items.
10. Governors will be careful not to take part in Governing Body discussions where conflicts may arise with their interests outside membership of the Governing Body.
11. Governors will not use any material learned at meetings for other purposes, and no item designated as confidential will be discussed outside the Governing Body.
12. Governors accept collective responsibility for the decisions of the Governing Body.
13. Governors will consider what individual skills, personal qualities and knowledge they possess, and put them to use for the good for the school.

The Meetings Charter will be reviewed and ratified annually. It is designed to aid the governing body in fostering a culture of frank and open discussion that is both supportive and appropriately challenging. The Charter aims to remind Governors of good meeting behaviour.

<b>I expect:</b>	<b>Others can expect me:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a clear agenda and relevant documents and these to reach me before the meeting;</li> <li>• an adequate room and appropriate seating;</li> <li>• a clear understanding of the purpose(s) of the meeting;</li> <li>• people to be punctual;</li> <li>• a chair who is sympathetic, keeps to the agenda, paces the meeting so that time is given to each matter in proportion to its importance, draws on all members for contributions, keeps discussion to the point;</li> <li>• people to tolerate a variety of views and opinions;</li> <li>• my contribution to be heard and others to contribute to the discussion;</li> <li>• a clear decision-making process</li> <li>• members to work together and to want discussions to be fruitful;</li> <li>• members to learn from one another and not be stubbornly partisan;</li> <li>• members to be ready to take collective responsibility for the minuted record of views expressed and decisions reached.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to have read the agenda, minutes and other papers, and noted the items I want to say something about;</li> <li>• to have the papers and my notes at the meeting;</li> <li>• to be punctual;</li> <li>• to make relevant contributions;</li> <li>• to listen to and consider what others say;</li> <li>• to accept my share of the collective responsibility.</li> </ul>

## 10. Job Description and Person Specification - Castle Governor

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Governing is a job – it just isn't paid! It is perhaps even more important for voluntary jobs than for paid ones to be clear about the parameters, expectations and limitations. It is important that the job description allows Governors varying types of commitment – there are many different ways of being a successful Governor.

The job description should be used with the person specification as a recruitment tool and they should be reviewed and ratified annually. The person specification outlines the qualities and values expected of Castle governors, time and commitment being foremost among them.

**Governors should be prepared to put a minimum of 10 hours per month in to their role (for reading paperwork, attending meetings, making visits to school, etc).**

### **Governing Body Tasks**

The principal tasks of a Governing Body are:

- **planning:** setting aims, objectives, principles and targets for the school; devising and overseeing policies and procedures;
- **monitoring:** using the headteacher's report, visits, committees, attachment to departments/areas of the school, questionnaires to ensure that the school is doing what the Governing Body planned it should do;
- **evaluating:** using performance indicators, success criteria to ensure that the school and its pupils are achieving what the Governing Body planned they should achieve;
- **executive functions:** recruiting and selecting staff, and other employment functions; managing the budget; managing the premises; enabling inspection;
- **accounting/representing/communicating:** liaising with the Local Authority, consulting and communicating with, and reporting to, parents.

***Job Description***

**School Governor, Castle Lower School**

Responsible to: Chair of Governors

- Attend meetings regularly, having read supporting paperwork and be prepared to make an active contribution
- Visit the school and write reports of formal visits
- Serve on a committee
- Be linked to at least one area of the school's work and a class
- Participate in executive decisions of the Governing Body
- Undertake training and development and share learning with fellow governors
- Work within an agreed code of conduct
- Represent the school within the local community
- Represent the local community on the Governing Body
- Maintain confidentiality as required

***Person Specification:***

- Caring
- Believes in state education
- Committed to the values of the school
- Prepared to give time, including during the day
- Willingness to undergo training and development
- Prepared to work as a member of a team
- Willing to contribute to school development and improvement
- Reliable
- Honest

## 11. Job Descriptions – Chair & Vice Chair of Governors

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The job descriptions for Chair and Vice-Chair are not exhaustive lists of duties and responsibilities but are intended to highlight the main responsibilities of these two posts, which should take a shared, open approach to leadership of the Governing Body.

### ***Job Description***

#### **Chair of Governors, Castle Lower School**

Responsible for: School Governors

- Construct and agree the agenda for meetings, together with the headteacher and clerk
- Plan and keep good order in meetings
- Ensure Governors' participation in and between meetings
- Ensure that committees and working parties are working effectively and to their terms of reference
- 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
- Ensure that Governors know and follow the rules and code of conduct that keep Governing Bodies democratic
- Listen and be a critical friend to the headteacher; meet regularly (eg weekly) to stay abreast of developments in school
- Ensure critical decisions of the Governing Body are communicated to parents, staff and others as appropriate
- Coordinate the Governing Body role in OFSTED and LA inspection
- Monitor the work of the Governing Body
- Represent the school publicly
- Investigate and respond to formal complaints

### ***Job Description***

#### **Vice-Chair of Governors, Castle Lower School**

Responsible for: School Governors

- Support the chair in the conduct of meetings and other business of the Governing Body (as outlined above)
- Stand in for the chair when necessary
- Listen and be a critical friend to the chair

The job descriptions for Chairs of our two main committees highlight the main duties of these posts.

***Job Description***

**Chair of Standards and Children Committee and Chair of Finance, Buildings and Personnel Committee, Castle Lower School**

Responsible for: Standards and Children Committee

- Construct and agree the agenda for meetings, having met with the headteacher beforehand to discuss
- Circulate agenda and minutes to committee members, and minutes to the Clerk to Governors
- Plan and keep good order in meetings, encouraging participation by all members
- Ensure committee is working effectively and to its terms of reference (using the Annual Planner/Cycle of Work as an aid from September 07)
- Ensure all decisions are understood and that necessary action is taken
- Ensure Governors receive all relevant information and materials
- Check that actions agreed by the committee are enacted
- Occasional participation in working parties

### 13. Job Description – Clerk to Governors

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The Clerk to Governors is appointed by and accountable to the governing body, working with the chair, headteacher and other governors to achieve continuity of governing body business. This job description highlights the main duties of the post.

***Job Description***

**Clerk to Governors, Castle Lower School**

Responsible to: Governing Body

- Convene and minute full Governing Body meetings, reflecting discussion between governors and the actions agreed
- Prepare and send out papers for full Governing Body meetings
- Maintain a record of governors' attendance at full Governing Body meetings
- Advise governors on where to obtain governance advice and information so as to keep up to date

## 14. Protocol for Visiting School

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Schools are busy workplaces and nobody should expect to just turn up, be shown around or wander around on one's own – however informal your relationship with the staff. Governors have no automatic right to visit the school. They only do so on invitation or by governing body decision (for example, within the terms of a visiting policy). The visit must fit in with the needs of the school and its pupils. The primary purpose of a governor visiting a school must be to explore the impact and effectiveness of the school's policies and procedures. This is to enable you as governor to do your job better.

**There is also, of course, a safety factor – schools are vulnerable to unauthorised intruders. So:**

School visits by governors are

- arranged in advance
- for an agreed length of time
- for an explicit and agreed purpose, which the people you are visiting know in advance
- well prepared beforehand
- have an agreed outcome
- contribute to the monitoring role of the governing body (not of the individual governor)
- to show teachers, parents and children that we are interested in what the school is doing

### **Protocol for Castle Governors Visits to School**

Governors at Castle Lower are linked to a particular class as well as subjects, and visits while school is in session are essential to governor effectiveness. Through visits, governors gain an understanding of the way schools work and insights into the life and culture of Castle Lower. Visits also contribute to the monitoring role of the governing body (nb: not of individual governors). The main reasons for governors to make visits are:

- to build awareness of the experience of children in school
- to enable the governing body to fulfil its accountability role (eg subject link visits) through gaining a strategic understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school
- to build relationships with staff and exchange information

All visits must be agreed with the class teacher and advised to the headteacher in advance. Governors are expected to write a report of their visit which must be agreed with the class teacher involved and advised to the headteacher. In addition, teachers are encouraged to invite their respective link governors to attend and/or help with particular activities/events; this latter, informal involvement does not require a formal report to be written but should be noted verbally at the next full governors meeting.

## **Protocol for Classroom Visits**

### **For Governors**

- Ensure each visit has a clear focus and agenda that has been agreed by all concerned and arrive on the day well prepared
- Negotiate a mutually convenient time with class teacher for the visit and discussion afterwards, recognising that teachers' and governors' time is valuable; advise headteacher when the visit is scheduled to take place.
- Always wear a Governor/Name badge
- Avoid attempting to take on a teaching role, or discussing irrelevant issues with staff and pupils during the lesson
- Be sensitive to the fact teachers can feel uncomfortable being observed, so take care not to give the impression of being an 'inspector.' Do not take notes in the classroom and maintain positive body language.
- Respect the normal conventions of governor confidentiality, in particular issues surrounding named staff or pupils.
- Recognise that sometimes it might be appropriate to leave the classroom should a sensitive situation arise, e.g. a behaviour outburst
- 
- Prepare report; discuss and agree with teacher, who will then pass it to the headteacher

### **For Teachers**

- Prepare pupils for the visit of the governor and welcome the governor when they arrive in class; have a seat ready
- 
- Make an effort to involve the governor and explain what it would be helpful for them to do
- 
- Don't leave governor alone with the class, even if they are willing
- 
- Avoid discussing unrelated issues during the lesson
- Discuss and agree the governor's written report, which you will then pass to the headteacher

Parents have not always been welcomed into schools, so there are some historical barriers to be broken down. Also, many parents have less than pleasant memories of their own schooldays. These circumstances mean that, even in the most welcoming schools, there are obstacles to free communication between parents and teachers.

All governors (but perhaps especially parent governors) should act as a channel of communication, interpreting the school to its parent community and the parent community to the school.

Some parents hark back to unsatisfactory school experiences of their own and expect schools to blame them when things go wrong. Some schools claim that when parents don't turn up to parents' meetings and other events, it's because they are *completely* satisfied with the school, or because they are 'apathetic'. It is probable that the answer lies more in the obstacles created by schools in the past. Blaming parents is unlikely to help the school to work more closely with them. The following points are worth remembering:

- Parents are the first teachers of their children
- Children spend less than 15% of their year in school
- Children's first loyalty is always to their parents
- It is very difficult for a school to make a difference to a child's life chances without the support of the parents
- When parents have different expectations of their children from the school's, they are not necessarily 'wrong'!
- Parents' principal relationship with a school is through their own child – their interest in how the school organises itself will always be secondary to that.
- Schools and parents need to work together for the good of the child – schools know a lot about teaching and learning, but parents are the experts in their own children.

If you are approached by parents about an issue in school:

- Always refer them first to their child's teacher if it is regarding the pupil's progress or a particular incident. If, after discussing with the teacher, they are not satisfied, they should take the issue to the Key Stage co-ordinator for their child's year group. If they remain unsatisfied, they should then discuss the issue with the headteacher, the final recourse being to submit a formal written complaint to the chair of governors, though this should be a last resort.
- If the parent has a 'whole school' issue, refer them to the headteacher – (s)he is responsible for all organisational matters and for personnel
- If they are reluctant to speak to their child's teacher, Key Stage co-ordinator or the headteacher, offer encouragement and support. You can say with confidence that our headteacher believes in the need to work in partnership with all members of the school community, including parents. Remember there will always be another side to the story
- Whether or not you believe the complaint or problem is not important, all issues need to be addressed – the parent is almost certainly expressing his or her concern in the

only way they know how (although the real problem is sometimes hidden under other stuff).

- When people shout, it's probably because they don't think anyone is listening (and sometimes they're right!) But do not accept aggressive behaviour – always explain the complaints procedure and encourage them to make their views known through the appropriate channel, as outlined above.

**The School's official complaints procedure for parents is as follows:**

If there is any cause for you to be concerned about any aspect of the school or the education being offered to your child, the first route should be with your child's class teacher. The second stage, if it is felt necessary, is to speak to your child's Key Stage Co-ordinator. If you then feel the situation is still unresolved, the next stage is then to speak to the Headteacher. The Headteacher has an open door policy and will speak to any parent or guardian about all matters. If matters are still giving rise to concern, then complaints should be put in writing to the Chair of the Governing Body.

All issues raised will be investigated and support from the Local Authority will be sought if it is felt parents' concerns have not been addressed.

All parents and guardians have the right to see the official school documentation, e.g. minutes of Governing Body meetings, school policies etc, many of which will be on the school website ([www.castlelowerschool.com](http://www.castlelowerschool.com)). If documents you wish to see are not available on the website or you do not have access to the internet, then please request documentation through the school office and arrangements will then be made. A parent is also entitled to see their child's records but fifteen days notice should be given to allow every aspect of the child's work to be collected for viewing.

To help you discharge the responsibilities and duties of school Governors, you have certain rights:

1. **Time:** You have a right to see that your valuable time is being deployed well – that the Governing Body works efficiently and effectively; that you are supported in discharging your duties; that meetings are efficiently conducted. You have some rights to (unpaid) time off work.
2. **Information:** You have a right to certain documents and other information and should never hesitate to ask the headteacher or chair for any information you require.
3. **Resources:** There should be access to support for any jobs you are expected to do – paper, computer, correspondence, policies and so on.
4. **Visiting:** You need to know what the school's practice is – a visiting policy and code of practice
5. **Training:** The Governing Body should have its own training programme, alongside access to the LA's.
6. **A Job Description:** You are entitled to know what is expected of you.
7. **Self-evaluation:** You need, both individually and collectively, to know if you as a Governing Body are doing a good job.

## 17. Judgments on governance: School Inspection (England)

This section outlines the criteria Ofsted use to rate the effectiveness of school governing bodies.

<p><b>Very good (2)</b></p> <p>Creativity and dynamism in reflecting upon performance, promoting change, and capitalising on links with the local community suggest excellent (1) governance</p>	<p>The governing body makes a major contribution to the leadership of the school and its successes. It is fully involved in strategic planning and formulating policies, and supports staff in implementing them. Governors keep in close touch with the school's work across all stages, and this cements the partnership between the governing body and the school. The pattern of the governing body's work meshes well with the school's development cycle, so that both are very influential. Governors are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and deal with them openly and frankly, contributing fully to development planning. Performance management procedures are very effective and are monitored closely by the governing body.</p>
<p><b>Good (3)</b></p>	<p>The governing body influences the work of the school and its policies through challenge and support. It has a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has a significant strategic influence in leading the school's development, with a clear focus on raising standards and improving the quality of provision. The governing body is prepared to take difficult decisions where necessary. It is well organised and it improves its own performance through appropriate development activities or training.</p>
<p><b>Satisfactory (4)</b></p>	<p>The governing body ensures that the school meets its statutory responsibilities, and has clear aims and policies. Its performance management policy operates effectively. Corporately, it sets an overall direction for the school and formulates policies that reflect the individual character of the school. It reviews performance data to monitor the whole school's work and its recommendations for action are followed up. All governors understand their role and any specific responsibilities. There is a business-like relationship between governors and senior staff in leading the school.</p>
<p><b>Unsatisfactory (5)</b></p>	<p>The school fails to meet one or more statutory responsibilities and lacks some of the policies that are required. The governing body relies too heavily on the headteacher. Although they are supportive, governors play a slight part in leading the school and do little to hold the school to account. Their work lacks focus and influence. They have insufficient knowledge of one or more of the stages. There is little corporate agreement about the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body has a limited grasp of the performance of the school and only modest effect on its development.</p>
<p><b>Poor (6)</b></p> <p>High vacancies, poor</p>	<p>Important statutory responsibilities are not met. The governing body is remote from the school. Relationships between the members of the governing body or between it and the senior staff are at best indifferent and may be hostile or</p>

attendance, hostile relationships and almost total reliance on the headteacher are indications of very poor (7) governance.

acrimonious. Governors' business is badly organised and their conduct presents a barrier to school improvement. Governors are largely unaware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and, in particular, of the effectiveness or otherwise of its senior managers. They have a limited influence on the work of the school. The governing body presents no challenge. Standards and quality are not assured and it fails to set a clear direction or priorities for the school's work.