

Round Hill Primary School

Governing Body

Governors' Handbook

v3.9



Change History

Version Number	Date Changed	Changed by	Comments
1.0	04.01.2008	Nigel Hamshere	Original Version
2.0	01.04.2010	Katharina Meyer-Ohle	Updated after change of training coordinator to reflect latest changes
3.0	19.10.2010	Katharina Meyer-Ohle	Update before issue to new parent governors
3.1	26.01.2011	Katharina Meyer-Ohle	Minor changes after review by Richard Jones, insert latest decision planner
3.2	04.08.2011	Katharina Meyer-Ohle	Update list of governors
3.3	18.10.2011	Lihua Sun	Update list of governors, training co-ordinator
3.4	4.04.12	Adrian Nash & Richard Jones	Assorted updates
3.5	28.02.13	Lihua Sun	Update list of governors
3.6	10.09.14	Helen Williams & Olwen Kershaw	Assorted updates
3.7	06.12.14	Richard Jones	QA and assorted updates and amends
3.8	12.01.15	Olwen Kershaw & Adrian Nash	Assorted updates & amends including hyperlinks added to documents on the school website
3.9	21.11.16	Richard Jones	A range of updates to content, (not structure)

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Supporting documents

1. Governors' Code of Conduct
2. Membership List (updated and reissued termly at Full Governing Body)
3. Useful addresses and sources
4. Annual Overview (updated at least annually)
5. Visits report policy
6. Decision planner (updated annually)

The supporting documents are available from the Governors' pages of the website.

1. Introduction

Welcome to the governing body of Round Hill Primary School. You are joining a team of governors who are committed to making Round Hill an outstanding school and we want you to play an active role in supporting school improvement and bringing us closer to our vision. You may be new to governance, or highly experienced, but wherever you are on that continuum, you have lots to contribute and we hope this handbook supports you in your role. This Handbook is intended for all governors, whether newly appointed/elected, recently appointed/elected or long-standing. More detailed guidance and advice is being prepared to support with specific activities, e.g. governor recruitment; training & development; chairing. These will be included in new Sections 8 – 10 as they are finalised, for use on a 'just-in-time' basis for any governor interested in those areas.

As a governor, you have expressed:

- an interest in the education and wellbeing of our children
- a willingness to ask questions – don't be afraid to ask if you are unsure of anything

You have committed:

- the time to attend the termly meetings of the full governing body and to be a member of at least one committee
- to be part of a team which, by working together, can make a real difference to the school
- to work within the expectations set out in our Code of Conduct

The Department for Education (DfE) believes governors are strategic leaders of our schools and have a vital role to play in making sure every child gets the best possible education. The DfE has made clear that governing bodies should have a strong focus on three core strategic functions¹:

¹ Source: DfE Governance Handbook, available on www.gov.uk

- a. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- b. Holding the Head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- c. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

It is important to remember that governors do **not** manage the school. That is the job of the head teacher and the school's management team.

The White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*², published in autumn 2010, suggested the following 10 key questions governors should ask. We have apportioned these across the committees to form substantive agenda items for discussion and to ensure we monitor these areas, and retain a strategic, rather than an operational focus, to our work as governors:

1. What are the school's values? Are they reflected in our long-term development plans?
2. How are we going to raise standards for all children, including the most and least able, those with Special Educational Needs, boys and girls, and any who are currently underachieving?
3. Have we got the right staff and the right development and reward arrangements?
4. Do we have a sound financial strategy, get good value for money and have robust procurement and financial systems?
5. Do we keep our buildings and other assets in good condition and are they well used?
6. How well does the curriculum provide for and stretch all pupils?
7. How well do we keep parents informed and take account of their views?
8. Do we keep children safe and meet the statutory health and safety requirements?
9. How is pupil behaviour? Do we tackle the root causes of poor behaviour?
10. Do we offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities which engage all pupils?

How we work together

There are some general principles which inform the work of governing bodies. These are incorporated formally into our Code of Conduct which is to be found [here](#). As a governor at Round Hill, you are expected to follow and be bound by this Code and by the general notion of collective accountability. We also subscribe to the following principles:

- supporting the aims and objectives of the school
- working co-operatively with other governors in the best interest of the school
- attending the meetings of the governing body and its committees
- promoting the interests of the school in the wider community

² Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-importance-of-teaching-the-schools-white-paper-2010>

- each having an equal right to participate and to state our views, whilst respecting the views of others
- being loyal to the decisions made by the governing body
- respecting the confidentiality of those items of business that have been designated as confidential. (We agree not to disclose what individuals have said or how they have voted)
- withdrawing from meetings where we have any direct personal interest in the business being discussed and declaring proactively any interest(s) - that are either relevant or may be reasonably considered to be relevant to your role as a governor
- considering seriously our individual and collective needs for training and development, and undertaking relevant training

2. Constitution of the Governing Body

Our Instrument of Government (adopted October 2014) establishes a governing body of 18 members from 5 categories, including the Head Teacher. The categories of governor are set out below, with the number in each category shown in brackets.

Most governors, except for the Head Teacher, are elected or appointed for a term of four years, although there is discretion for a different term to be offered at the time of election / appointment.

Co-opted (11)	The number of co-opted governors who are eligible to be elected or appointed as staff governors must not, when counted with the one staff governor and the head teacher, exceed one-third of the total membership of the governing body. Appointments are made by nomination, on a skills-basis, and they must be ratified by all governors at a full governing body meeting.
Parent (4)	Parent governors are elected by members of the parent community. You must have legal parental responsibility for a child registered as a pupil at the school. If insufficient parents stand for election, the governing body can appoint parent governors. You are disqualified from standing as a parent governor if you are employed to work at the school for more than 500 hours in a school year (at the time of election) or if you are an elected member of the Local Authority (LA).
Staff (1)	The staff governor is elected by all staff, and may be a member of the teaching or support staff.
Head Teacher (1)	The head teacher is a member of the governing body by virtue of his/her office but does not count as a member of the staff category.
Local authority (1)	The Local Authority (LA) governor is appointed by Nottinghamshire LA, through their Governor Services team. You are disqualified from being a governor in this category if you are eligible to be a staff governor at this school.
Associate	Associate members are appointed by the governing body to serve on one or more committee(s) and attend full governing body meetings. The governing body decides if associate members have voting rights in committees but they do not have voting rights in full governing body meetings. Associate members are not governors.

A list of governors can be found [here](#) and on the [overview document](#). A membership list is also provided by the LA as part of the paperwork for each full governing body meeting

3. Rules and regulations

As a governing body, we are subject to legislation and/or guidance set by the government through the Department for Education (DfE). Details can be found in "[The Governance Handbook](#)". This is updated occasionally and the most updated version can be accessed through a search on <http://www.gov.uk>

A list of additional useful addresses and sources of further information and help is set out [here](#). We also 'buy back' Governor Support Services from Nottinghamshire LA and are members of the National Governors' Association (NGA). Within the limits of our buy-back agreement and membership, both the LA and NGA can offer advice and guidance to governors.

It is not our intention to repeat the DfE guidance and/or regulations, but what follows may offer some basic assistance, information and guidance to all governors, regardless of 'time-served'.

4. Governing body responsibilities and the committee structure

The full governing body meets (FGB) once per term. Dates are set out in advance and are published in the annual overview document (available on our website [here](#)). Additional 'special' meetings can be called if necessary. As it is not always possible to call meetings of FGB, to ensure decisions are taken in emergencies, the chair (or in the absence of the chair, the vice-chair) is given limited 'emergency powers' to act between meetings. If any such powers are exercised they must be reported to FGB at the earliest opportunity.

The work of the governing body is wide-ranging. It includes responsibility for constitutional matters and the continuous improvement of governance, as well as decisions linked to its range of strategic responsibilities related to the curriculum, school improvement, legislation, finance, human resource management and discipline.

It is not practical for all business to be undertaken through the FGB. There are, therefore, currently four committees which have specific areas of work delegated to them. These committees meet at intervals during the term (also set out in the [overview](#)) and report back to the FGB. The FGB approves the membership of each committee, which is usually reviewed at the autumn term meeting. Changes to membership can only be made at a meeting of the full governing body.

Round Hill School has the following committee structure:

Committee	Remit
Finance and General Purposes	To formulate and oversee the school budget, Best Value statement and all other financial matters, including arrangements for accounting and auditing; to oversee asset and property management; to determine the staff complement
Pupils and Personnel	To oversee the school's human resource management strategy with exception of work undertaken in Pay committee. To deal with matters relating to pupils in school where these may require governing body involvement, such as attendance and admissions
Curriculum & Strategic Development	To oversee and monitor curriculum policy and development and ensure that it meets legislative requirements, such as those relating to race equality, disability and inclusion; to oversee the school's strategic development as expressed through the School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Pay	To oversee and monitor the appraisal process for all teaching staff in line with the school's Appraisal Policy. To receive recommendations for staff's yearly pay review and any exceptional pay decisions, consider these in line with the school's Pay Policy and agree and document any appropriate changes to pay.
Discipline	To oversee matters relating to pupil exclusions NB – this is not a 'standing committee, rather it is convened on 'as needed' basis

Further detailed information regarding functions and responsibilities can be found in the Round Hill Primary School Governors' Decision Planner. This is reviewed and updated annually and the current version is [here](#).

Finance and General Purposes, Pupils and Personnel and Curriculum and Strategic Development committees meet at least once per term. Discipline Committee will meet as and when required. Pay Committee meets in the Summer and Autumn Terms.

New governors are encouraged to get to know the work of the different committees by attending meetings of each committee, before deciding which committee to join. Governors with a skill or background related to the work of a committee are particularly encouraged to join the most relevant committee to their background.

5. Individual governors' role and responsibilities

Governors take on specific individual responsibilities as well as participating in the full governing body and as committee members. This can include being:

- a link governor, for either a curriculum area or an area of work identified in the school improvement plan
- chair or vice-chair of a committee
- chair or vice-chair of the governing body

The monitoring role of the governor body is undertaken through the work of link or named governors. The roles of these governors align to the school's current improvement priorities and other important aspects of the school's work. Link or named governors work with school staff; visit school and report back to a committee or FGB on progress.

Link governors are shown on the annual overview.

All school improvement link governors meet with lead teaching staff once per term. A guide to the process for link governor visits is on the website, [here](#).

6. Positions and procedures

Clerk to governors

It is a legal requirement that all governing bodies employ a clerk to governors. Amongst a range of responsibilities designed to ensure the effective function of governance, the clerk is responsible for calling all meetings of FGB and ensuring that agendas and papers are circulated to all members in good time for the meeting. The clerk may offer legal advice, guidance and assistance to governing bodies – both at and (usually via the chair) between meetings - to ensure that legislation is complied with. Round Hill buys its clerking service from Nottinghamshire LA.

Chair of governors

It is a requirement that the governing body should elect a chair and vice-chair. At Round Hill, we have decided that the position of chair of governors will be for a period of 2 years. Elections for chair and vice-chair are usually held at the autumn term meeting of the full governing body.

The chair of governors is an ex-officio member of all committees.

Vice-chair of governors

The vice-chair acts as chair in the absence of the chair of governors and is also an ex-officio member of all committees. The term of office has also been determined as a period of 2 years.

Quorum

The quorum for a full governing body meeting is 50% of governors in post. The quorum for committees is three governors who are members of the committee (or more if so determined by the committee). Vacancies are not included in the calculation.

Meetings

Members of the governing body will receive the agenda and any supporting minutes and papers at least seven days before the date of each meeting. (We are increasingly attempting to manage pre-meeting administration through the website, from where copies of agendas and supporting papers can be accessed/downloaded).

If a governor wishes to place an item on any meeting agenda, this should be brought to the attention of the chair of governors (or for a committee meeting, the appropriate committee chair) or head teacher at least three weeks before the date of the meeting. The person(s) making the request should provide a reason for the inclusion of the item; the outcome sought from the agenda item, and may submit a briefing paper in advance as part of pre-reading. This timescale allows the chair and/or head teacher sufficient time to arrange to include this item on the agenda and to provide any information/replies required. (We are increasingly ensuring that the chair of each meeting/committee proactively 'calls out' for agenda items for their meeting, to encourage active engagement with agenda setting).

Any Other Business is **not** recommended on any agenda, because members of the senior leadership team or governing body should be allowed the opportunity to prepare for any questions/queries being raised.

Decision-making

All members of the governing body have a right to be involved in the decision making at meetings, unless they have a personal gain or financial advantage in the outcome of the decision. Decisions to be taken by vote must be determined by majority-voting of those present and voting. If there is a "tied vote" the chair has a casting vote.

Please remember that once a decision has been made, it is final and binding. We operate as one body and accept the decisions made by the majority, regardless of our personal views/opinions. All decisions made are corporate decisions.

Confidentiality

Whilst we subscribe to the importance and value of transparency in our dealings as a governing body, it is also important that all governors understand and uphold the principle of confidentiality. There may be one or more confidential items discussed at governing body meetings and individual governors may be involved in confidential meetings. If an item is deemed to be confidential, it must not be discussed with anyone outside the meeting. Some items may be regarded as 'sensitive' but not necessarily confidential, which require some considered handling. Meeting agendas should have an item towards the end of the meeting where those in attendance can discuss where confidentiality or sensitivity is required.

Policies and procedures

The work of the school and the governing body is guided by a set of policies and procedures. These are reviewed regularly and, once approved, are made available on the school web site. Copies are also held in the school office for reference when required.

7. Understanding your role, the governing body and the school

Training and qualifications

There are no formal educational qualifications required to become a governor. However, no-one is expected to undertake this most valuable voluntary job without support and training. Initial training needs should be identified by the completion of the Skills Audit ([available from the Training & Development page](#)) and / or in discussion with the Chair / or the new governor's mentor.

The LA has a governor services section, providing support and training for governors, which Round Hill buys into. The governing body has also since December 2014 been a member of the National Governors Association (<http://www.nga.org.uk>).

Shortly after becoming a governor, you should receive a package of information from the LA including electronic copies of the Governor Training and Development prospectus and the Nottinghamshire Governor.

Induction sessions are designed specifically for new governors and cover the whole range of issues you will meet as a governor. If new to school governance **you are expected to attend an induction course**, as it provides you with valuable information, a chance to meet other new governors and an opportunity to exchange ideas and views.

To reserve a place on any LA governor training event, please telephone the number provided in the Governor Training and Development prospectus. Alternatively, contact the governing body's training co-ordinator³. We are not limited to the number of representatives who may attend. If you wish to go with governor colleagues, please do so.

Online Training

Governor E-Learning (GEL) is an online learning experience providing governors with a flexible way to access information and training. GEL supplies learning modules, supporting documents and hot topics.

To register please follow this link <http://www.gelregistration.co.uk/>

When you undertake training, either online or in person, please either let the training co-ordinator know, or let the school office know (in person or by email) so we can keep our training records as up-to-date as possible.

Mentoring

There are currently several experienced members of the governing body who can provide mentoring to new governors. We feel that a mentor should take on a maximum of two governors at any one time. We will provide mentoring for as long as you feel you require, or are benefiting from it. The mentoring can take the form of an initial meeting with your mentor and then you will be able to approach him/her for whatever guidance/explanations/assistance you require. We feel that this should be as informal as possible and should not aim to take over from the governor training provided by the LA. It is an additional source of information/clarification.

Visits to school

The best way a governor can get to know the school is to visit. Governors are very welcome and encouraged to visit the school. There are many events during the school year to which governors are invited. When you

³ The current training co-ordinator will be named on the Overview document.

first take up your role, you should also arrange a “getting to know the school” visit. Speak to the head teacher in the first instance to discuss this visit.

Please remember that governors are not visiting the school in any quasi-inspectorial guise/role.

8. Governor recruitment

To follow – notes about recruitment strategy; skills-based recruitment; skills audit; needs analysis before recruitment campaigns; where to advertise; sources of potential governors; selection procedures; appointment procedure

9. Governor training & development

To follow

10. Chairing and preparing to become a chair

To follow