

At Billingham Primary School there are a small but dedicated team of volunteer Governors. They are responsible for working with the school to ensure that it delivers a good quality education and life foundation for our community children. Together with the head teacher, who is responsible for day-to-day management of the school, it is the governors who set the school's aims and policies and ensure compliance with them as well as relevant national policies and guidelines, including those of the Lincoln Diocese.

The Governing body also provides non-executive leadership. Its role is to operate as a board akin to the board of trustees of a charity, or the board of directors of a company. In all matters, our governors operate at a strategic level, leaving the head teacher and senior school leaders responsible and accountable to it for the operational day-to-day running of the school and the delivery of pupil's education.

A clear understanding of, and distinction between, the role of the board of Governors and the head teacher is crucial to effective governance. The regulations make clear that the head teacher is responsible for the educational performance of the school and for the internal organisation, as well as the management and control of the school – which includes the performance management of staff. The board's role is to hold the head teacher to account for exercising their professional judgement in these matters and for the performance of all of their other duties. Having advised the board, the head teacher must comply with any reasonable direction given by it.

To create robust accountability, governors ask challenging questions on the basis of robust objective data presented to them. However they do not just rely on information provided by the head teacher, rather, they scrutinise objective national data; use visits to verify what they are told, and ensure the head teacher's termly report provides appropriate and sufficiently detailed information.

Although governors are volunteers, they have a vital and demanding role that requires both skill and professionalism, with each hopefully bringing their own skill set to the board to hopefully provide a diverse and extensive skill set to support the school in delivering its vision. It is only right therefore that the board of governors is accountable to Ofsted for its effectiveness, along with the supporting the Church of England with their denominational inspections. The School Inspection Handbook sets out how inspectors judge the effectiveness of a school's governance based on criteria that directly reflect the board's three core functions, namely

- **Clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.**
- **The head teacher being held to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff**
- **Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.**

The Governors also carry out a number of important additional duties, which include:

- Ensuring the school is compliant with educational and other legislation, such as safeguarding, equality and health and safety for example.
- Forming policy on the school's curriculum and collective worship
- Setting standards for pupils' behaviour and discipline.
- Making sure school buildings are welcoming and safe.
- Setting and monitoring the school's aims and policies.

Effective governance is based on six key features

- Strategic leadership that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy.
- Accountability that drives up educational standards and financial performance.
- People with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity.
- Structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements.
- Evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance

There are currently ten Governors with three vacancies that make up the Governor Board at Billingham Primary School, serving across three structured committee bodies. They are supported by a Clerk who is not entitled to vote but is considered to be an integral part of the Governing Body as they provide advice and updates on the administrative structure as provided by the Local Council and National Department for Education. The Clerk also prepares and distributes the minutes and agendas and deals with any correspondence.

Currently the Governor Board comprises (see separate sheet for names, attendance details, declared interests, etc)

- The headteacher
- One staff Governor
- Three Foundation Governors
- Two Parent Governors
- One Local Authority Governor
- Five Co-opted Governors

Our Governors usually meet as a Full Governing Body once a term. This is the meeting where all major decisions are made.

In addition our Governing Body use a sub-committee structure to ensure that their roles and responsibilities are carried out efficiently. All Governors belong to at least one sub-committee and sometimes more than one. At Billingham Primary School, we have the following three sub committees:

Finance & Staffing

This committee sets the annual budget, monitors costs and authorises any major items of expenditure. It is also concerned with any staffing issues, appointments, redundancies etc. It meets once per half-term.

Curriculum & Standards

This committee deals with curriculum matters and policies, assessment data and curriculum development and monitoring. It meets once per half-term.

School Improvement Steering Group

This committee deals each year with the selection of 3 or 4 key priorities for the school, defining both the challenges for those priorities as well as the road maps to successful delivery along with regular monitoring. It meets once per half-term.

There are also specific sub-groups which meet as required to cover such areas as

- Headteacher Performance Management
- Compliance with Lincoln Diocese Board's Vision for church schools (SIAMS)
- Temporary Working Group to investigate a particular initiative or issue.

We also assign specific Governors to monitor specific important aspects of the school such as SEND, Safeguarding, Health & Safety Attendance, etc.

Our three sub-committees can be given delegated powers to make decisions which do not then need the approval of the full Governing Body. All committee meetings are formal meetings, with minutes taken and decisions recorded by the Clerk. The Terms of Reference set out the duties allocated to each committee. Committee meetings usually last between one and two hours.

Governors are also allocated specific monitoring subjects within school and will liaise with the designated subject leader so that they become aware of the strengths and weaknesses and are knowledgeable about any relevant assessment data as well as ensuring the agreed curriculum is being delivered within the school.

