

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

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

There is no legal requirement to appoint link governors, but they can be a very effective way to help the Management Committee understand, oversee, monitor and develop a particular area of responsibility within the school. The link governor should ultimately enrich the whole Management Committee's understanding of their particular area and contribute to informed decision making.

Link governors are also a useful way for the Management Committee 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 Management Committee with the staff concerned;
- monitors how well relevant policies adopted by the Management Committee are operating within the school and understands any barriers to their implementation;
- reports back each term via comments submitted to or attendance at the appropriate sub-Committee relevant to their role
- reports back each term, making recommendations where appropriate, to the full Management Committee

## THE ROLE OF THE CURRICULUM LINK GOVERNOR

Although not a statutory requirement, most Management Committees use link governors effectively as one way to help the Management Committee to understand, develop and monitor the curriculum on offer at the school. Management Committees 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 Management Committee, committees and school staff and regularly report to the Management Committee or committees.

It is for each Management Committee 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;
- talk to the Executive 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 Management Committee;
- report back regularly to the Management Committee, making recommendations where appropriate, either via a governors' committee or to full Management Committee 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 Executive 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 Management Committee's understanding of the school as well as the visiting governor's. The Management Committee should receive a report of the visit at the next meeting preferably a short written report, which should be discussed in advance with the Executive Headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body.
- Governors should keep in mind that the report should not name individual staff members or a criticism of a member of staff.

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

Under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, Management Committees 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 Management Committees to have appropriate child protection procedures in place.

Each school should have procedures for handling suspected cases of child abuse in accordance with local 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 Executive Headteacher/designated teacher over child protection issues;
- also has responsibility for the oversight of procedures relating to allegations made against the Executive Headteacher;
- ensures that all governors and staff know the name of the nominated governor;

- ensures that the LEA 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 LEA has been notified of the name of the designated teacher;
- ensures that there is an annual item on the Management Committee 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 Management Committee, making recommendations where appropriate, either via a governors' committee or to full Management Committee meetings.

**2. The Management Committee should ensure that :-**

- the school has a child protection policy and procedures in place that are in line with local ACPC 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;
- 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 MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (also called CHILDREN IN PUBLIC CARE)**

Under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, Management Committees 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.

Children who are in the care of a local authority are a particular concern to those authorities because, in general, they figure too highly in the proportions of pupils: not attending school, excluded, underachieving, reaching 16+ without examination results and consequently less likely to be able to participate effectively in employment and further education. Numbers of such children vary from year to year. In secondary schools there may be up to about 20, in primary schools seldom more than 3 or 4, of whom some may be in care to authorities other than Islington. The school will make no distinction between children on the basis of the local authority to which they belong.

A government report states that:

“Management Committees should be informed about the number and overall attainment levels of children in care in their schools, with designated teachers giving an annual update on progress. Local authorities, in their role as corporate parents, could also expect LEA governors to act as ‘designated governors’ in schools and nursery schools to champion and promote the needs of children in care and monitor educational outcomes. This should not detract from other governors, who might otherwise be well placed to support children in care, from taking on this role.” – *A better education for children in care, Social Exclusion Unit, 2003*

Management Committees are consequently asked to have a nominated governor (not necessarily an LA appointee) 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 children in public care and whether they have attended appropriate training;
- liaise with the designated teacher and keep the Management Committee informed about issues affecting children in public care;
- provide support for the designated teacher;
- maintain oversight of the implementation of the DfES and DoH guidance and school policy on supporting children in public care: for example, in the implementation of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for each one;
- attend specific training events on the education of children in public care and to keep abreast of national and local issues;
- ensure that there is an annual item on the Management Committee agenda regarding:-
  - (i) training undertaken by designated teacher, other staff and governors;
  - (ii) the progress (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.

- reports back regularly to the Management Committee, making recommendations where appropriate, either via a governors' committee or to full Management Committee meetings.

## **2. The Management Committee should ensure that:-**

- the LA has been informed of the name of the nominated governor;
- the LA has been notified of the name of the designated teacher;
- the school takes specific action to maintain and improve the progress of children in public care;
- admissions criteria give children in public care highest priority.
- no child in public care is excluded;

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

All Management Committees have important statutory duties towards pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Management Committees should, with the Executive 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 LEAs 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 Executive Headteacher.

Most Management Committees 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 Management Committee 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 Management Committee 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 Management Committee 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 Executive 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;
- Ascertain how the LEA provides SEN resources and how the school decides how the money should be spent;
- Ascertain 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 Management Committee, making recommendations where appropriate, either via a governors' committee or to full Management Committee meetings.

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

- Ascertain 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 DfES VIDEO AND BOOKLET 'MAKING A DIFFERENCE – A GUIDE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS GOVERNORS' – available from Governors' Services.**