

Recruitment Toolkit



**A Guide for the Recruitment of New Governors
in Local Authority Maintained Schools**

**Your part in achieving the highest standards, as good
as the best, for all Suffolk children and young people
today and for their futures.**

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Introduction

Dear Colleague,

School leadership at all levels, including governance, is central to school improvement and the quality of education that pupils receive. Strong and effective leaders will make a significant contribution in ensuring that all Suffolk Children and Young People achieve an education of the highest standards, today and for their futures.

It's the governing board's responsibility to recruit to most vacancies. This should include succession planning for the Chair of Governors and Vice-Chair positions, well in advance of these posts being empty.

The National Governance Association (NGA) lists having the right people around the table as one of the **eight elements of effective governance**. They state that achieving this requires “a continuous cycle that begins with evaluating your board's current and future needs and building an effective team.”

An effective team will consist of a range of diverse individuals with different viewpoints and experiences. Open debate on governing boards leads to better decisions in the interest of the school and boards should be mindful of becoming too dominated by one particular strand of opinion.

We have created this Recruitment Toolkit to aid you in the recruitment and appointment of new governors. The Toolkit includes guidance on succession planning, what to consider when thinking about recruiting new governors, advertising your vacancies, introducing prospective candidates to the governing board and how new governors should be appointed and inducted.

A flowchart to aid you in your recruitment process can be found [here](#), and links to all resources mentioned can be found at the end of the Toolkit.

If you need further assistance please contact us by emailing governance@suffolk.gov.uk or phoning 01473 260163.

Yours sincerely,

Governor Services

Standards and Excellence Team
Education, Skills and Learning
Directorate of Children and Young People
Suffolk County Council

WellbeingEqualityAchieveSupportPrideInnovateRespectEmpower

Succession Planning

Governor vacancies can arise for a number of reasons and at any time, not just at the end of a governor's term of office. Governor recruitment and succession planning should therefore be an ongoing conversation. This will help to ensure that you are prepared to fill any vacant positions, or at least continue to successfully carry out board duties until a new governor can be appointed.

Top Tip:

Add succession planning to the agenda of every full governing board meeting to ensure it remains a continuous priority.

To help with succession planning you can:

- Frequently review the roles and responsibilities of current governors. Ensure that each individual not only carries out responsibilities relating to their individual skills and experience, but also acquires training in areas they feel less confident in. One governor alone should not be relied on as the expert in their area. For example more than one governor should be trained on finance to avoid a knowledge gap should a resignation occur.
- Do not wait until you have a vacancy to recruit to your board. The composition of your governing board will be defined by your Instrument of Government and the number of governors per governor type cannot exceed this. However you can appoint interested candidates as associate members. As such they will be able to join and contribute to full governing board and committee meetings and enrol on Schools' Choice training. Whilst associate members cannot vote on full governing board decisions they can be given a vote on, and even Chair, committees. Should you find yourself with an unexpected vacancy you will already have an individual who is familiar with the board and who can potentially step into the governor position.

Succession Planning

Chair of Governors Succession Planning

Developing the team is part of the Chair's role and it is good practice for the Chair to work with the governing board to plan who will take their place when they step down. A good time to prepare others to take over is during the third or fourth year of the term of office. This might be from within the existing governing board or through recruitment of new governors who have the skills to become a Chair at a later date. It can be the case that when a Chair of Governors resigns, identifying a new Chair can be difficult. Some suggestions for supporting others to put themselves forward for election as Chair are:

- review the role of the clerk so that there is maximum support and advice
- encourage governors to be Vice-Chair and chairs of committees and include them in some of the Chair's activities, such as meetings with the Headteacher
- encourage governors to go on training for prospective Chairs
- rotate the chairing of meetings to build experience of the role within the governing board
- be clear on the time limit of the Chair's term of office and offer to remain on the board to give support if the new Chair would find that helpful
- if necessary, work together with another governor to prepare them for the Chair's role
- if there are no volunteers from the existing governors, consider appointing a future Chair to the next vacancy which arises.

It is strongly advised that Chairs think ahead to plan for their successor to make sure that there is continuity and smooth transition when they do step down.

The National Governance Association document '[Finding your Next Chair](#)' has some helpful ideas and tips on this theme.

Governors for Schools offer a paid for Chair recruitment service. You can find further details at [Find or become a chair of governors - Chair Recruitment Service](#).

Planning for Recruitment

When thinking about recruiting new governors, it may be tempting to circulate an advert as soon as possible. However there are several things to consider and initial actions to take that can make the recruitment process more effective.

- Make sure you've notified the Suffolk County Council Governor Services team of any governor resignations so that we're aware of the vacancies on your governing board. If we don't know you have a vacancy we won't be able to send over any suitable applications that we receive.
To report a resignation please return the following form to governance@suffolk.gov.uk
[Report a Governor Resignation](#)
- If you have a Foundation vacancy notify the Diocese. They may have a candidate to offer you or be able to assist in your recruitment.

Things to Consider:

- Reconstitution - If you have an excess of vacancies but your governing board composition is within the legal requirements and is working effectively, you may not feel the need to recruit. In which case you may want to think about reconstituting and changing your Instrument of Government (IoG) instead. If you would like to find out more about how reconstitution can work for your governing board please contact us at governance@suffolk.gov.uk or by phone at 01473 260163.
- Look at the vacancies you have on the governing board and ensure that all existing governors are filling the right governor role for them. For example, you might have a long-standing parent vacancy but have a current co-opted governor eligible to fill this role. You must always advertise parent and staff vacancies to everyone eligible to fill the positions, however if your advert results in no interest you may want to move your eligible co-opted governor into your parent governor vacancy and recruit to your co-opted one instead.

Top Tip:

Don't be tempted to fill your co-opted vacancies with parents because they may be a captive audience. Too many parents in addition to your allocated parent governor positions can lead to an inward focused governing board lacking in challenge and debate. You will need to recruit individuals from your wider community.

- Consider whether you have any associate members who would be prepared to become governors. (Please refer to the previous page for further details on associate members).

Planning for Recruitment

- Carry out a skills audit with your existing governing body. You can either create your own document or use [the NGA's version](#). This will help you to determine what skills, experience and perspectives you may be lacking and therefore what you would be looking for from applicants.
- Decide who will do what during the recruitment process. Who will distribute your advert, who will be the initial contact for interested applicants, who will introduce them to your governing board? You may like to appoint a link governor with a responsibility for recruitment.
- Make sure you have an application form that you ask potential governors to complete. If you would like to use our Local Authority governance application form you can find it [here](#), however you may like to formulate your own.

Remote Governance

You may want to consider appointing a remote governor. Remote governors do not have to live near to the school or to join meetings in-person. By joining meetings virtually they can still make an important contribution, with greater flexibility to fit their governance role around their location and other commitments. Appointing remote governors is also an option if you are trying to increase diversity on your board.

Hundon and Thurlow Primary School Federation have successfully recruited a remote governor and would recommend this to other boards. You can [read an interview with former Chair of Governors, Val Phillips](#), to learn more about how they did this and how remote governance can best work for you.

Board Diversity

The Department for Education's maintained schools governance guide states:

“Equality, diversity and inclusion should be an integral part of the governing body's strategy. It is important that this includes not just legal or regulatory obligations but also how equality, diversity and inclusion is championed and embedded throughout the school.”

A board composed of governors who bring a diverse range of skills, experiences, qualifications, characteristics and perspectives and who are from different backgrounds and settings will have a positive impact on setting the strategic direction for the organisation. Below are some things to consider whilst thinking about recruiting diversely.

- Be aware of language and visuals used on displays, the school website, the entrance/reception area, and what it says about the culture of the school.
- Consider appointing an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) link governor, who can work together with a lead member of staff to champion EDI.
- Review the diversity of visiting speakers to the school and links you have formed with people and places you visit. Consider how you can develop these links with the view to recruit if/when a position is available.
- Ensure governors are present at school events such as the summer fair, parents evening, SENDCO drop ins, parent/class sessions, to engage with all parents, especially those that might be reluctant or less confident to come forward directly. Something like a governor lanyard may help parents and visitors to easily identify governors.
- Ensure the language you use in your advert is inclusive. Ensure it is engaging and not full of governance jargon. Consider linking to [the National Governance Association's video](#) explaining the role of the governing board.
- If possible, seek advice from local community leaders on the best ways to access the local community to recruit new governors.
- Consider appointing a remote governor to the board, if the diversity you are looking for isn't available in your local community.
- Ensure all governors are on board with the importance of diversity. Where necessary organise CPD as appropriate to better understand EDI and how to avoid tokenism. Both Schools' Choice and the National Governance Association provide EDI training.

Advertising a Vacancy

Once you've spent time thinking about your recruitment, decided on the qualities you're looking for and are sure of who's doing what in the recruitment process you will be ready to advertise your vacancy. Here are some suggestions for how to do this.

- Methods of recruitment should suit the type of governor you are trying to attract. For example parent governor positions could be advertised in your school newsletter/noticeboard and staff governor positions in the staffroom or by internal email.
- Create your own promotional materials. Make your advertisement personal to your school and board. This could include some brief information about school ethos and vision, what the role would entail and who to contact if interested. Be open about the expectations but emphasise how rewarding the role is, the personal development it offers and the valuableness of existing skills. It's a common misconception that governors need to have prior knowledge of the education system so you may want to disprove this. Tailor your selling points to what will resonate the most with the people you are trying to recruit. For example, if you are trying to attract a younger demographic, don't put an emphasis on professional experience.
- If you are trying to increase the diversity of your governing board then consider the language used in your promotional material and the places you circulate it. Include a paragraph on inclusivity in your advert but only if you can demonstrate this in your practice and school culture. Many larger organisations will have a range of staff networks that you may want to contact.
- Increase the visibility of your board and the important work it carries out. Having a regular governance item in the school newsletter may encourage parents to step forward for parent positions.
- Use [Governors for Schools](#) and [Inspiring Governance](#) to advertise your vacancy. Governors for Schools will send applicants to you based on your selected preferences and Inspiring Governance allows you to search and contact interested candidates in your area.
- Use technology and social media to your advantage. For example, governor vacancies can be advertised on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. You may even like to create a short promotional video for the school website or use the [NGA version](#). If you are unfamiliar with LinkedIn, our [LinkedIn Guide](#) will talk you through how to set up an account and advertise your vacancies.

Advertising a Vacancy

- Have governors available at school fetes and other events to generate interest from the wider community. Our recruitment statistics show that some of the most interest we've received has been from people who have been encouraged to apply by current or former governors. Similarly, have a governor on hand at parents' evening to discuss parent vacancies.
- Consider holding an open event for members of the community to find out more about governance. This could be an information drop in session or have a more structured agenda depending on what you think would work best for you.
- Contact local businesses and social organisations and see if they'd advertise your vacancy. Advertise your vacancy at your workplace, or at a family member's or a friend's.
- Contact your parish council to see whether they could advertise the vacancy. Is there a village newsletter, flyer or noticeboard that would advertise your vacancy? Consider contacting the local County Councillor for your school and asking for their help circulating your advert.
- Contact other local schools and ask whether they have members of staff that would be interested in a governance position at yours. Governance is a fantastic opportunity for professional development but not all staff members want to govern at their own school. It may also be that existing governors of other schools would be interested in taking on a second position.
- Contact the Chamber of Commerce and ask whether they could advertise your vacancy.
- Speak to any visitors that might be invited to the school about governance, for example to deliver an assembly, about whether they would consider a governance position.

Introducing a Candidate to the Governing Board

Once you have identified a candidate interested in your role you will want to ensure certain processes are in place to introduce them to your school and governing board.

- When planning for your recruitment you should have already agreed on who will do what. You will have allocated responsibilities and decided who will be the first point of contact for potential candidates. This can be the Chair of Governors, or the Vice-Chair but could also be a link governor or another experienced member. It is advisable that the candidate be contacted within 48 hours and a meeting arranged with them at the school where they can be shown around and a potential position discussed. This is an opportunity for them to learn what's expected of governors and for you to get an idea of who they are and what they'd be like to work with. This meeting could include the opportunity to meet the Headteacher and could also provide an opportunity for an informal interview. Expect candidates to have their own questions about the role and be prepared to answer them.
- Before appointment, the candidate should be given the opportunity to meet with the rest of the governors and observe a full governing board meeting. They can be asked to leave the room if anything confidential needs to be discussed. They should have the opportunity to ask questions and the other governors should feel able to ask questions of the candidate.
- When speaking with a candidate about the role, be honest about your expectations, the responsibility and the time required. Being upfront now will decrease the chances of you making an appointment, only for the new governor to resign a few months in because the role isn't what they expected.
- Do not exclude a candidate if they don't possess the skills you are looking for straight away. They may offer a different personal quality that would be of great benefit to your board. If they are willing to learn then certain skills and knowledge can be acquired through training.
- Speak to candidates about your school ethos and vision and your governor code of conduct. Are they able to uphold the qualities intrinsic to your organisation?

Appointing a New Governor

Once you've identified a suitable candidate you should carry out the appropriate method of appointment for their governor role. Make sure you're clear on the processes for appointing different types of governor:

- **Parent Governors:** are elected by the parent body of the school and can include any individual with parental responsibility for a registered pupil at the school at the time of election. Parent governors can continue until the end of their term-of-office even if their child leaves the school.

Whilst governing bodies must make all necessary arrangements to fill parent governor vacancies through elections, they can directly appoint parent governors if not enough parents stand for election.

- **Staff Governors:** are also appointed by election. Teaching and support staff who at the time of election are employed by either the governing body or Suffolk County Council to work at the school under a contract of employment are eligible to be a staff governor. They are elected by the staff body and cease to be a governor if their employment at the school ends.

- **Local Authority (LA) Governors:** Nominees have to be approved by the Local Authority before they can be appointed, however schools can nominate their own candidates. If you have a candidate that you would like to put forward for the LA position please contact the Governor Services team at governance@suffolk.gov.uk. We will then process the nomination for you by collecting the required information and sending the nomination to the Cabinet Member for SEND and Education to review.

Any individual eligible to be a staff governor at the school cannot be appointed as LA governor.

- **Co-opted/Community Governors:** are appointed directly by the governing board and are people who the governing board consider to have the correct skills to contribute effectively to the governance of the school.

Further information on the different governor types and their appointment procedures can be found in the [Department of Education's Constitution of Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools: Statutory Guidance](#).

Appointing a New Governor

Recruitment Checks

References

You will want to collect references for your new candidates to ensure that they are suitable for the role. If you have your own application form you can include a section for referee details. If not simply ask the candidate to provide you with the names and contact details of two referees. Ideally at least one of these will come from a current or former employer. It's best practice for referees not to be family members or friends of the candidate.

The Local Authority will collect references for LA governor candidates as part of the nomination process.

Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) Checks

Governors are required to have an enhanced DBS check. DBS checks will look for spent and unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands and final warnings. They also ask local police for any additional information that is reasonably considered relevant to the role. Anyone refusing a request for a DBS check is disqualified from being a governor.

Section 128 Checks – governors should also have a section 128 check, in addition to an enhanced DBS. If someone has a section 128 direction against them they are banned from being involved in the management and governance of schools.

DBS checks and Section 128 checks will usually be managed by the school's admin team, so you will want to ensure that they have the information they need.

Inducting a New Governor

- Your process for inducting new governors is just as important as your recruitment process. You are more likely to retain new governors who are properly inducted and feel well supported. Induction is often led by the Chair of Governors but can be delegated to another experienced governor. You may have a link governor with responsibility for induction.
- Notify the Governor Services team at governance@suffolk.gov.uk of new appointments so that we're able to update our records, send induction materials to new governors, including the Mentoring Programme, and add them to the Governor Headlines mailing list.
To help you report a new governor or reappointed governor please use the following form:
[Report a New Governor Appointment/Reappointment](#)
- If you subscribe to Schools' Choice update your governing body's records on Governor Hub and enrol your new governor on the appropriate training courses. We would strongly suggest that each new governor completes the Schools' Choice Welcome to Governance course. A list of all available Schools' Choice courses can be found in their [online training brochure](#). Ensure that your new governor is aware of GovernorHub and Schools' Choice and that they feel able to enrol themselves on training in areas they feel less confident in.
- Guidance given in the National Governors' Association [Welcome to Governance handbook](#) (available for purchase) states that the following documents should be provided to new governors upon their appointment to the governing body:
 - a copy of the schools' Instrument of Government or Articles of Association
 - a list of the members of the governing body
 - a list of the governing body's committees and terms of reference
 - the school's current prospectus (if applicable) or a link to information on the school's website
 - information about the performance standards in the school including any necessary login details
 - the school and governing body's most recent self-evaluation or facilitated review
 - the code of conduct
 - a calendar of meetings for the year, for both the full governing body and its committees
 - the current strategy document
 - the most recent Ofsted inspection report
 - access to the statutory and non-statutory policies adopted by the governing ¹⁴body

Inducting a New Governor

- New governors can often feel isolated and it's best practice to allocate them with another experienced member of the board who can act as a mentor. Having a mentor on hand for advice can be reassuring for new governors, especially if they have questions that they don't feel they can ask at a full governing board meeting. Even something as simple as explaining certain acronyms can be a great support to new governors.
- A mentor can also help a new governor prepare for their first full governing board meeting by checking that they have everything they need and know what to read in advance and by answering any questions they might have. New governors aren't expected to understand everything at once. Instead you might want to encourage them to focus on a certain agenda point that they find interesting or already have an existing knowledge of.
- Speak to new governors about your vision for improvement and your strategy for the future. Explain how the governing board and individual committees work. Outline expectations and introduce key documents. You may have already done this at your initial meeting but it's likely the new governor will appreciate a recap.

Resources

Department for Education - Constitution of Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/constitution-of-governing-bodies-of-maintained-schools>

Department for Education – Maintained Schools Governance Guide:
[Maintained schools governance guide - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maintained-schools-governance-guide)

Governors for Schools:
<https://governorsforschools.org.uk/>

Inspiring Governance:
<https://www.inspiringgovernance.org/>

National Governance Association – Annual Governance Survey:
[School and Trust Annual Governance Survey 2024 | National Governance Association \(nga.org.uk\)](https://www.nga.org.uk/annual-governance-survey)

National Governance Association – Finding Your Next Chair:
[Finding your next chair \(nga.org.uk\)](https://www.nga.org.uk/finding-your-next-chair)

National Governance Association – Skills Audit:
[https://www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/Good-governance/Effective-governance/Governing-Board-Self-Review-\(1\)/Skills-Audit-and-Skills-Matrix.aspx](https://www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/Good-governance/Effective-governance/Governing-Board-Self-Review-(1)/Skills-Audit-and-Skills-Matrix.aspx)

National Governance Association - Welcome to Governance handbook:
<https://www.nga.org.uk/Publications/Welcome-to-Governance-Resources.aspx>

Schools' Choice Training Brochure:
[Governance Training - 1 \(pagetiger.com\)](https://www.pagetiger.com/governance-training-1)

Suffolk County Council Governor Services - Report a New Governor Re/Appointment form:
<https://suffolklearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Report-A-New-Governor-Appointment-Reappointment.docx>

Suffolk County Council Governor Services - Report A Governor Resignation form:
<https://suffolklearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Report-A-Governor-Resignation.docx>

Useful Contacts

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If you are unsure on who is your school's Regional Lead please ask us at
governance@suffolk.gov.uk

Schools' Choice

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