Percy Hedley School
Governing Board Handbook

All Governors will receive the following:

- Welcome letter

- Governing Board Handbook

- Scheme of Delegation

- Safeguarding Training Links

- Central Services Induction

Contents

1. Introduction – the purpose of governance

The purpose of governance is to provide confident and strong strategic leadership which leads to robust accountability, oversight, and assurance for educational and financial performance. All governance boards, no matter what type of school or how many schools they govern, have three core functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent

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.

Strategic Leadership and Accountability are the core pillars of the board's role and purpose. People and Structures define the way governance is organised, and Compliance and Evaluation ensure and improve the quality of governance as described in the DfE [Governance Handbook](#).

2. Roles and Responsibilities (Terms of Reference)

a. Board of Trustees:
- The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility and ultimate decision-making authority for all the work of the Foundation. This is largely exercised through strategic planning and the setting of policy. It is managed through business planning, monitoring of budgets, performance management, the setting of standards and the implementation of quality management processes. The Board of Trustees has the power to direct change where required.
- The Board of Trustees will have regard to the interests of the other services for which the Foundation is responsible in deciding and implementing any policy or exercising any authority in respect of the School.
- The constitution, membership and proceedings of the Governing Board is determined by the Board of Trustees and the Scheme of Delegation expresses and acknowledges the authority delegated to the Governing Board to enable the Governing Board to run the school and fulfil core responsibilities in line with the Foundation's ethos and mission.

b. Governing Board – key responsibilities:
- To ensure the school is conducted in accordance with the ethos and values to meet the object of the Foundation.

- To have financial oversight and ensure proper procedures are put in place for the effective management and safeguarding of funds.
- To follow risk management strategies and adopt financial prudence in managing the financial affairs of the Foundation, in so far as these relate to the School.
- To raise with the Director of Finance / Finance Committee of any need for significant unplanned expenditure and will discuss options for identifying available funding.
- To develop a five-year estate management strategy (in conjunction with the Board of Trustees) which will identify the suitability of building and facilities considering long-term curriculum needs and the need for and availability of capital investment to meet the Governing Board's responsibility to ensure the buildings and facilities are maintained to a good standard.
- To have regard to the safety of the users of the buildings and the facilities and the legal responsibilities of the Board of Trustees (and/or any others) as owners of such buildings and facilities.
- To be involved in the appointment and management of staff to be employed at the School.
- To ensure the performance management of all staff is in place, supported by procedures for the proper professional and personal development of staff.
- To monitor and review the curriculum regarding DfE requirements to provide a broad and balanced curriculum.
- To be responsible for the standards achieved by the School and the pupils attending the School.
- To be responsible for the setting, and reviewing from time to time, the School's admissions policy provided that no change will be made to the admissions criteria without the consent of the Board of Trustees.
- To comply with all obligations dealing with the day-to-day operation of the Governing Board.
- To adopt and will comply with all policies of the Foundation
- To have duty to act independently and not as agents of those who may have appointed them; to act with integrity, objectivity, and honesty in the best interests of the Foundation and the School and to be open about decisions and be prepared to justify those decisions except in so far as any matter may be considered confidential.
- To review the Governing Board policies and practices on a regular basis, having regard to recommendations made by the Board of Trustees to ensure the governance of the School is best able to adapt to the changing political and legal environment.
- To provide data and information regarding the business of the School and the pupils attending the School as the Board of Trustees may require from time to time.
- To help to decide the priorities for the school when the school improvement plan is being developed.
- To review progress against strategic plan and evaluate Governing Body effectiveness.
- To monitor targets for pupil achievement and progress.
- To receive information about the quality of provision in the school.
- To have a published strategy for dealing with parental complaints and concerns.
- To ensure health and safety /risk management/safeguarding issues are addressed.
- To work with the headteacher when making decisions.
- To appoint link governors to monitor and report upon key areas of responsibility.
- To ask challenging questions to ensure transparency.

c. **Chair – key responsibilities:**
- To think strategically about the future direction of the organisation and identify the steps needed to achieve goals and lead the Governing Board to ensure operational decisions

contribute to strategic priorities.

- To provide effective leadership of organisational change even when this is difficult and to recognise when the governing board or an individual member is not behaving as expected and take appropriate action to address this.
- To work with the Secretary or Clerk to ensure appropriate information is provided by senior leaders and is accessible to the Governing Board and open to scrutiny.
- To ensure the Governing Board's business is conducted in accordance with regulations and that governors follow the rules and codes of conduct to ensure democracy.
- To set high expectations for conduct and behaviour for all those in governance and is an exemplary role model in demonstrating these.
- To make it clear that all governors must accept collective responsibility for decisions taken at Governing Board meetings.
- To lead Governing Board meetings in a way which embodies the culture, values, and ethos of the organisation.
- To ensure meetings are run effectively, focusing on priorities, and making the best use of time, and to ensure that all members have equal opportunity to participate in discussion and decision-making.
- To ensure the Governing Board understands the scope of issues in question and is clear about decisions they need to make.
- To ensure that different perspectives, viewpoints and dissenting voices are properly considered and recorded.
- To construct and agree an agenda for meetings, in conjunction with the Secretary or Clerk, considering recommendations from the Headteacher and requests from other governors.
- To approve draft minutes for publication taking account of confidential items.
- To use time effectively by planning a year's cycle of meetings and timetable of actions.
- To help new governors become involved in the work of the governing body. Ensure all governors receive relevant information and materials.
- To promote and foster a supportive working relationship between the Governing Board, Clerk, Senior Leaders, Staff, and external Stakeholders.
- To take a strategic view of the skills the Governing Board needs, identifying gaps and taking action to ensure these are filled. To facilitate succession planning as necessary.
- To ensure the Governing Board acts as a sounding board to the Headteacher and provides strategic direction / supportive challenge.
- To create a culture in which governors are encouraged to take ownership of their own development and promotes mentoring and support for all members of the Governing Board.
- To co-ordinate the Governing Board role in Ofsted inspections and external reviews.
- To manage the school's complaints process.
- To attend Local Authority Briefings where beneficial.
- To build an open and supportive working relationship with the vice-chair and support involvement so that they can act if the Chair is not available.

d. **Vice-Chair: key responsibilities:**

- To liaise with the Chair and Headteacher on a regular basis to ensure you are fully informed.
- To take on responsibilities delegated by the Chair.
- To deputise for the Chair in their absence.
- To establish and foster an effective relationship with the Headteacher based on trust and mutual respect for each other's roles.
- To use time effectively by planning the year's cycle of meetings and a timetable for action in

conjunction with the chair.

- To ensure governors' participation in and between meetings.
- To attend Local Authority Briefings etc. on the chair's behalf if necessary.

e. Headteacher

- The internal organisation, management, and control of the school.
- Formulating aims, objectives and policies for the governing body to consider adopting.
- Advising on and implementing the governing body strategic framework.
- Giving governors the information needed to assist in maintaining school standards.
- Reporting to the Governing Board at least three times per year via a Headteacher's report.

3. Attendance and Apologies

Good attendance at meetings, both full governing body and committees, is important so that all governors develop a good overall understanding of school business and are involved in making corporate decisions.

The Governing Board shall meet at least three times in every school year as convened by the Secretary or Clerk to the Governing Board. All formal meeting of the Governing Board needs to be quorate to make decisions. Meetings are quorate when at least three members are present (in addition, the Chair or Vice-Chair must be present to be quorate).

Attendance at Governing Board meetings is monitored by the Secretary or Clerk to the Governing Board. If governors cannot attend a meeting then they should submit apologies to the Secretary/Clerk or via the Headteacher or Chair. The Governing Board decides whether to accept apologies. If a governor does not attend three consecutive Governing Board meetings, then they can be disqualified from the Governing Board (this date is calculated from the date of the first full meeting missed). Where governors fail to send their apologies in advance of a meeting, their apologies may not be accepted or approved after the meeting. If there are issues around the Governing Board being quorate any member of the Governing Board can participate in meetings by telephone or remotely, provided they give due notice (as outlined in Appendix 1 section 6.19 of the Scheme of Delegation). In the unlikely event of a significant difference between the Board of Trustees and the Governing Board, the Governing Board may request a special meeting with the Board.

4. Term of Office

Appointments to the Governing Board shall be for a period of three years, which may be extended for two further three-year periods, provided the member still meets the criteria for membership of the Governing Board. A member of the Governing Board may be reappointed annually thereafter if there are exceptional circumstances and if the Board of Trustees resolves that, in the circumstances, it is desirable and in the interests of the School that he be reappointed. Re-election does not apply to ex officio members if they continue to remain employed by the Foundation.

5. How governors are involved in monitoring

Monitoring is an essential part of the role of governors in supporting the school's own self-evaluation process which help to raise standards. By being involved in monitoring, governors, working in partnership with the headteacher and teaching staff of the school, will develop a better

understanding of how well the plans and policies are working in practice. They will then be able to use this information to better inform future strategic planning. The work of the governing body should also be monitored and evaluated.

The purpose of monitoring is to:

- check that agreed plans are being implemented
- identify what's going well and celebrate it
- identify what is not going well and the reasons for this
- modify plans, if appropriate
- be accountable as a governing body

6. School Visits / Link governors

It is expected that all governors visit the school **at least** once per term (during the school day).

Some governors may be linked to specific areas and/or priorities from the School Development Plan. Visits may involve meeting teachers and pupils, visiting classes, book scrutinies, learning walks or attending events (for example, assemblies, productions). All visits should be planned in consultation with the Headteacher or Staff Lead and a report produced and shared with the Governing Board.

7. Advice on Visiting School

Visiting the school during the day is an important part of the governor's role because it enables them to develop an understanding of the school beyond the information gleaned at meetings. The DfE Governance Handbook states that:

"Governing Boards need to know their school if accountability is going to be robust and their vision for the school is to be achieved. Many boards find that visiting their school(s), particularly during the day, is a helpful way to find out more about the school, its staff, and students. Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, the Board can see for themselves whether the school is implementing their policies and improvement plans and how they are working in practice. Visits also provide an opportunity to talk with pupils, staff, and parents to gather their views. Boards are not inspectors, and it is not their role to assess the quality or method of teaching or extent of learning. They are also not school managers and should make sure they do not interfere in the day-to-day running of the school. Both are the role of executive leaders. If boards wish to spend time within a classroom, they need to be very clear why they are doing so"

A key role for governors is to monitor the performance of the school. Visiting school is one part of that role and can help governors in their strategic duty of holding the school to account and evaluating its performance by giving a first-hand appreciation of what goes on in school. Another key role is to support the school and visiting can play an important part in this.

The leadership team in school is responsible for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and they will have a planned programme of visits to classrooms to monitor and evaluate standards. The evidence gathered by the leadership team from classroom visits will be used in the school's self-evaluation and will be fed back to Board members. Board members have a responsibility to validate the information they receive and visiting classrooms to see staff and pupils working, talking to pupils, or undertaking learning walks can help to do this.

Ofsted inspectors will often ask Board members about their visits to school and how the visits support their knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The Ofsted Report on School Governance "Learning from the Best" highlighted visiting school as an example of effective practice.

Visits to school should ideally be linked to the School Development Plan but Board members may also visit school to monitor other aspects of school life. The Governing Board may wish to draw up an annual programme of visits or learning walks.

8. School Policies

Statutory school policies are published on the school website and can be accessed via the following link: Policy documents | Percy Hedley School

9. New Governor Induction and Expectations

New governors will be provided with the following documents:

- Updated Governing Board Handbook (and Appendices)
- Minutes of most recent Governing Board meeting
- Skills Audit – for completion

New governors are expected to contact the Chair of Governors and Headteacher to arrange a meeting and tour of the school (when this is permitted).

All governors are expected to undertake ongoing training and as an introduction will undertake NSPCC Safeguarding training for school governors which will be arranged through the Foundation.

Governors are required to sign a Declaration of Pecuniary Interests form and a Governor Declaration form which will be arranged through the Foundation – Central Services at the Forest Hall site.

Governors will be provided with a Foundation email address for all Governor correspondence.

10. School Information

The School will ensure the up-to-date information below is available to Governing Board:

- School Improvement Plan (SIP) and School Development Plan (SDP)
- Staff List & Responsibilities
- Pupil Numbers

11. Scheme of Delegation

This will be provided to the Governing Board by the Chair of Governors.

12. Latest Ofsted Report

The latest Ofsted report can be accessed via the website and by the following link: Ofsted | Percy Hedley School

Appendix A: Governing Board Information

Forename	Surname	Email	Category	Position	Start Date	End Date
Paul	Cook	paulcook2@btinternet.com	Co-opted		22/06/2021	21/06/2024
Ruth	Corless	Ruth.corless@newcastle.gov.uk	Clerk	Clerk	01/09/2022	
Tom	Cosh	tom.cosh@ncl.ac.uk	Co-opted	Vice Chair	01/09/2013	31/08/2023
Julie	Dick	julie.dick@northumbria.ac.uk	Co-opted		29/11/2022	28/11/2025
Claire	Hayden	c.hayden@percyhedley.org.uk	Staff (Teaching)		01/09/2015	31/08/2023
Kate	Hellens	kate.hellens@hellens.co.uk	Parent		09/03/2021	08/03/2024
Ros	Holden	roslawley@hotmail.com	Parent		31/01/2022	30/01/2025
Allan	Lacey	allanjohnlacey1@gmail.com	Co-opted	Chair	04/05/2023	03/05/2026
Carla	Maley	c.maley@percyhedley.org.uk	Staff (Non-Teaching)		01/03/2022	28/02/2025
John	Steward	john.steward@percyhedley.org.uk	Headteacher	Headteacher	01/02/2022	
Kerry	Warren	kerry.warren@percyhedley.org.uk	Associate	(Schools Finance Business Partner)	01/11/2022	31/10/2025

Appendix B: Governing Board Code of Conduct

As governors, we will focus on our strategic functions:

1. ensuring there is clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction
2. holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils and the performance management of staff
3. overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent
4. ensuring the voices of stakeholders are heard

As individuals on the board, we agree to:

Fulfil our role & responsibilities

1. We accept that our role is strategic and so will focus on our core functions rather than involve ourselves in day-to-day management.
2. We will develop, share, and live the ethos and values of our school/s.
3. We agree to adhere to school/trust policies and procedures as set out by the relevant governing documents and law.
4. We will work collectively for the benefit of the school/s.
5. We will be candid but constructive and respectful when holding senior leaders to account.
6. We will consider how our decisions may affect the school/s and local community.
7. We will stand by the decisions that we make as a collective.
8. Where decisions and actions conflict with the Seven Principles of Public Life or may place pupils at risk, we will speak up and bring this to the attention of the relevant authorities.
9. We will only speak or act on behalf of the board if we have the authority to do so.
10. We will fulfil our responsibilities as a good employer, acting fairly and without prejudice.
11. When making or responding to complaints we will follow the established procedures.
12. We will strive to uphold the school's reputation in our private communications (including on social media).

Demonstrate our commitment to the role

1. We will involve ourselves actively in the work of the board, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, serving on committees or working groups where required.
2. We will make every effort to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to.
3. We will arrive at meetings prepared, having read all papers in advance, ready to make a positive contribution and observe protocol.
4. We will get to know the school/s well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
5. We will visit the school/s and when doing so will plan with relevant staff in advance and observe school and board protocol.
6. When visiting the school in a personal capacity (i.e., as a parent or carer), we will continue to honour the commitments made in this code.
7. We will participate in induction training and take responsibility for developing our individual and collective skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis.

Build and maintain relationships

1. We will develop effective working relationships with school leaders, staff, parents, and other relevant stakeholders from our local community/ communities.

2. We will express views openly, courteously, and respectfully in all our communications with board members and staff both inside and outside of meetings.
3. We will support the chair in their role of leading the board and ensuring appropriate conduct.

Respect confidentiality

1. We will observe complete confidentiality both inside and outside of school when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern individual staff, pupils, or families.
2. We will not reveal the details of any governing board vote.
3. We will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.
4. We will maintain confidentiality even after we leave office.

Declare conflicts of interest and be transparent

1. We will declare any business, personal or other interest that we have in connection with the board's business, and these will be recorded in the Register of Business Interests.
2. We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the need arise.
3. If a conflicted matter arises in a meeting, we will offer to leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion and any subsequent vote.
4. We accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the school website.
5. We will act in the best interests of the school as a whole and not as a representative of any group.
6. We accept that in the interests of open governance, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the governing board, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of governor and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the school's website.
7. We accept that information relating to board members may be collected and recorded on the DfE's national database of governors (Get information about schools), some of which will be publicly available.

We understand that potential or perceived breaches of this code will be taken seriously and that a breach could lead to formal sanctions.

Adopted by Governing Board of Percy Hedley School on <u>01 November 2022</u>

The governing board agrees that this code of conduct will be reviewed annually, upon significant changes to the law and policy or as needed and it will be endorsed by the full governing board.

Signed TOM COSH   Chair of Governors

Appendix C: Link Governor Guidance

Link governors are members of and are appointed by the Governing Board to oversee specific aspects of governors' responsibilities within the school.

There is no statutory requirement to appoint link governors (although there is a strong recommendation in some areas – Safeguarding, SEN, LAC), but many governing bodies find them a very effective way to help the Governing Board to understand, oversee, monitor, or develop a particular area of responsibility within the school. The link governor should enrich the whole governing body's understanding of their area and contribute to informed decision making and understanding of strengths and areas for development.

Link governors are also a useful way for the governing body to develop positive links with staff and to maintain a visible and professional profile within the school.

Governing bodies can link governors to curriculum or subject areas, year groups (more often in primary schools) or priorities in school. It is up to the Governing Board to determine how best to organise themselves.

The functions of a link governor could be performed by a working group or committee.

Name		Role	Status	Link Responsibility
Paul	Cook		Co-opted	Safeguarding including attendance
Tom	Cosh	Vice Chair	Co-opted	Health & Safety
Julie	Dick		Co-opted	PfA and Careers / Pupil Premium
Claire	Hayden		Staff (Teaching)	SMSC, BV, CIT & RE
Kate	Hellens		Parent	Literacy & Reading
Ros	Holden		Parent	Therapy & Physical development
Allan	Lacey	Chair		Leadership & Curriculum
Carla	Maley		Staff (Non-Teaching)	School Business Manager
Kerry	Warren		Associate	Finance
John	Steward	Headteacher	Ex-officio	

What does a link governor do?
- takes a special interest in their 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 area
- discusses the implications of any policies adopted by the governing with the staff   concerned
- monitors how well relevant policies adopted by the governing body are operating within the school and understands any barriers to their implementation
- reports back regularly to the governing body, making recommendations where appropriate, either via a governors' committee or to full governing board meetings.

Benefits to having link governors
- they constitute part of a strategy to monitor and regularly evaluate the progress of the school development /improvement plan

- they are a means to build up relationships, based on mutual trust and respect
- they provide Ofsted with concrete evidence about the involvement of the governors in the school
- they inform the school's self-evaluation process
- they allow governors to see first-hand the resources used in school, the fabric of the building etc., so that they can make informed decisions about future budget allocations.

See Model Link Governor Report Template on the next page.

Model Visit Note Template

Percy Hedley School - Governor Visit Note Form	
Name –	**Date –**
Purpose of Visit	
School Improvement Plan link (if applicable)	
Governor Comments relating to the meeting	
Key Issues emerging from the discussion – impact of policy, action, resources needed?	
Any Suggested Actions? (indicate who is responsible for the action)	
Date report taken to Governing Board meeting	
Governing Board Feedback / Comments	