

Effectively inducting new governors

June 2019



Tips from the Education community

Your tips for inducting new governors

Each month, we share a question chosen and answered by you; the Education community! This month, we asked: **How do you ensure your new governors are being inducted effectively?**

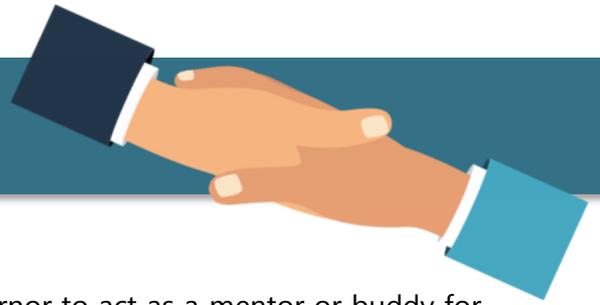
When a new governor takes up a position on the governing board, it's important that they receive a good induction – one that provides them with all the key information they need without overwhelming them too much.

This report combines the good practice recommendations we have received from schools and governors across the country, to help ensure you are providing a comprehensive induction to all new governors that allows them to successfully fulfil their role.

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Appoint mentors or buddies



It is useful to consider appointing an experienced governor to act as a mentor or buddy for new governors. Several respondents cited this method as an effective way to induct new governors and help to steer their learning, including Louise Martin, Business Manager at St Mary's Catholic High School, and Yusuf Seedat, headteacher at Islamiyah School in Blackburn. Yusuf told us that his school pairs new governors up with more experienced governors, who can offer information, support and guidance. Brendan Hollyer, chair of governors at Brampton Primary Academy, also advised that mentors and buddies can assist new governors as they grow into their role.

A mentor or buddy should:

- Welcome the new governor onto the governing board.
- Arrange an informal meeting with the new governor and offer them a chance to ask questions.
- Arrange for the new governor to attend a school assembly.
- Provide the new governor with a copy of the school's governor induction pack.
- Help the governor work through their induction checklist where necessary.
- Attend regular review meetings with the new governor to discuss progress and areas of uncertainty.
- Explain:
 - How governing board meetings are conducted.
 - How to propose agenda items.
 - The role of each committee of the governing board.
 - Child protection arrangements and the governing board's role in safeguarding and child protection.
 - The school's response to children who go missing from education.
 - The identity and role of the DSL and any deputies.
 - The relationship between the governing board and the headteacher.
 - The actions to take if the new governor is ever unable to attend a governing board meeting.
 - The importance of confidentiality, and how to ensure it.
 - The layout of school buildings and grounds, their suitability, and their state of repair.

New governors should be given the opportunity to meet their mentor or buddy as soon as possible, to ensure they are aware of who they can contact if they need help. New governors should be accompanied by their mentor or buddy to their first full governing board meeting to provide support if needed.

Create an induction pack

Induction packs are a useful way to collate all the information that new governors need – they can be stored online rather than provided as a physical pack of information. Naureen Khalid, a trustee at Connect Schools Academy Trust, explained that induction packs make up a large part of her school's induction process. Naureen uses the packs to provide new governors with minutes of recent meetings, the SDP, governor and clerk contact details, dates of upcoming meetings, frequently used acronyms, useful websites, and login details for any online packages the governing board uses.

Another respondent, who also uses induction packs as part of their process, ensures the packs are signed by new governors – this provides confirmation that the new governor has read, understood and received all the necessary information. Consider putting together an induction checklist – as recommended by one of our respondents – you can use this to identify all the information new governors need to be given and tick each one off once you have provided it as part of the induction package.

What information should be included in an induction pack?

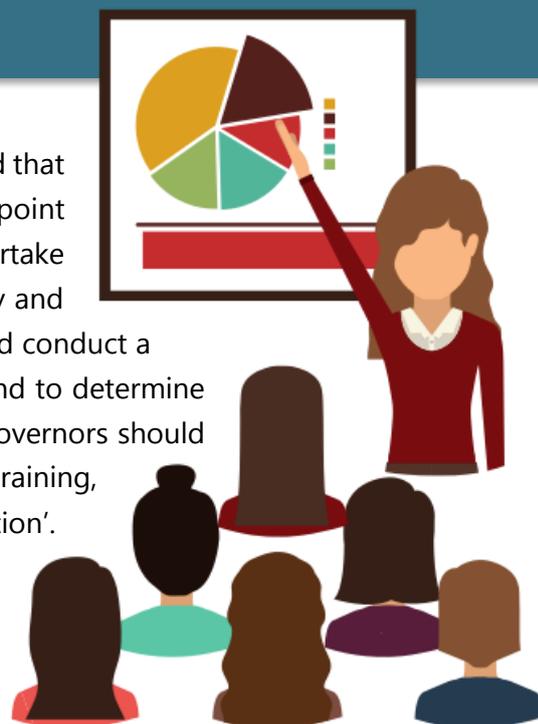
- The DfE's 'Governance handbook' and 'A Competency Framework for Governance' guidance document, and a copy of part one of 'Keeping children safe in education'
- A link to the school website, common acronyms list and FAQs
- A school organisation chart outlining governance and staffing structures
- A list of school staff and their responsibilities
- The SDP
- The school's latest Ofsted report
- Copies of the most recent governor newsletters
- Copies of the minutes from the most recent governing board meetings (we recommend at least three)
- A schedule containing details of upcoming governing board meetings
- Details of the governing board's committees and their associated remits
- The Code of Conduct for governors
- A copy of the latest budget report and headteacher's report to governors
- A copy of the school holiday schedule and events calendar
- The contact details of relevant staff members and members of the governing board
- A guide to commonly used terminology and acronyms
- For academy local governing board (LGB) governors, the trust's scheme of delegation

New governors should also be given access to all relevant policies, including the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, and the Behavioural Policy. Any other policies you feel are relevant should also be included, e.g. the Whistleblowing Policy.

Promote induction training

Naureen from Connect Schools Academy Trust also suggested that you should emphasise the importance of CPD when you appoint new governors. New governors have a responsibility to undertake any training or CPD needed to complete their role effectively and maintain compliance with governance regulations. You should conduct a skills audit to identify any gaps in a governor's knowledge and to determine where CPD and training should focus. As a minimum, new governors should attend new governor training and complete safeguarding training, including reading part one of 'Keeping children safe in education'.

New governors should be provided with funding to complete training for their role. Most LAs will provide this training – several of our respondents told us that they ensure all new governors attend the training provided by their LAs. You should contact your LA to find out what training opportunities they offer for new governors. The format of training courses may differ depending on the LA; some may offer school-based training, while others may offer e-learning courses.



Courses will cover aspects such as:

- The principles of good governance.
- The roles and responsibilities of governing boards.
- The three core functions of governance.
- How governing boards and their meetings work.
- How the governing board should support and challenge the work of the school.
- Governors' role in the school self-evaluation and improvement planning.
- Governors' relationship with the headteacher.
- Governors' use of data.
- The governing board's role in ensuring good financial management.
- The governing board's role in performance management.
- How Ofsted impacts on the role of the governing board and what to expect from a school inspection.

We recommend that new governor training be undertaken after a governor has attended one or two meetings, as this will enable them to have an idea of the role and ask questions during the training session. You may find that there are additional courses offered that are specific to an individual's allocated responsibilities (e.g. if they are appointed as a safeguarding link governor) – some of these may be arranged for individual governors or the whole board.

Host governor induction visits

An important part of the induction process is inviting new governors into the school. For the core functions of governance to be carried out effectively, governors need a sound understanding of the school and its context. It's important for all new governors to have the opportunity to gain this understanding early in their role to enable them to carry out their strategic duties and to inform any monitoring activities the board identifies and plans.

Mumin Humayun, associate headteacher at Whitefield School, said her school's induction process involves inviting new governors in for a governors' welcome day. A tour of the school was suggested by over 40 percent of our respondents – this provides new governors with an opportunity to meet key staff and see the school in action.

If possible, consider inviting all new governors to visit the school as a collective group to give them the opportunity to meet each other and for all questions to be answered. You may also choose to invite new governors in at different times of the school day, e.g. for assemblies, so they have the chance to experience different areas of the school.



Induction visits could include a learning walk, a tour of the school premises, a safeguarding induction, and a chance to sit in on a governing board meeting. One respondent told us that different staff members and pupils support each aspect of their school's governor induction day, which helps governors to get to know staff and pupils in their school. The school also tries to ensure governor induction days take place on a day when there is an after-school event, such as a performance, to ensure the new governor has a chance to be part of a range of school experiences.

Governors should be expected to make at least one visit during the academic year to demonstrate the governing board's role in the strategic management of the school by helping to evaluate and improve practice. A Governor Visit Policy can help ensure visits run smoothly and are as efficient and effective as possible – this could outline visit etiquette, how to prepare for a visit, how governors should conduct themselves during a visit, and what should be done following a visit.

Top tips from our governance expert

We asked our governance expert, Nicki Wadley, for her top tips for effective governor inductions.

Nicki Wadley is currently chair of governors for a large junior school in Gloucestershire and also volunteers as a local leader of governance, supporting other governors across Gloucestershire.



1. Prepare an induction pack

As suggested by many of our respondents, Nicki suggests preparing an induction pack and having this ready for when new governors begin in their new role. Being prepared will mean the induction will be more successful, unnecessary pressure is avoided, and governors won't have to rush to create one when a new governor is recruited. Preparing the induction pack is a role the clerk to governors will be able to help with. Ensure it includes all the documents a new governor will need that tell them about the school and the role. Nicki suggests that you store the induction pack somewhere that is easily accessible, e.g. online.

2. Assign each new governor a mentor

It's a good idea to rotate this role around board members, to ensure everyone can participate in developing good governance and sharing their experience and expertise. It's important to agree what the mentor's role will involve – Nicki recommends that a mentor should meet with the new governor before their first meeting to go through the meeting paperwork, answer any questions, and provide context for the upcoming meeting. The mentor should then meet with the governor following the meeting, to talk through what happened and answer any questions.

3. Invite all new governors to tour the school during the school day

Many of our respondents suggested inviting new governors in for an induction day – Nicki says that this should involve meeting pupils and staff, as they are the school's most important stakeholders. Invite new governors into the staff room with another governor for a drink, and then meet staff outside of the classroom. Governance is about building relationships, and as governors have limited time in school, any opportunity for them to meet with staff is valuable. This can be particularly useful for parent governors who may have only met with staff in their capacity as a parent.

4. Treat all new governors equally, whilst maintaining a flexible approach

The content of each induction should be specific to individual needs. A staff governor will know more about certain aspects of the school than a non-staff governor but they may not have experienced the school's financial management procedures, or may not have governed before, so try not assume they won't need the same training as non-staff governors. Governors who have governed before will have governance experience, but not necessarily in the same school phase or model as yours. Do not assume their induction needs are less than anyone else's.

5. Agree and set expectations for governor induction and training

There is no statutory requirement for induction training for new governors, but the governing board can set its own standards and expectations, which should be included in the board's Code of Conduct and induction checklist. The board should set non-negotiables for the induction process and ensure these are communicated during the recruitment and appointment processes, so that new governors are fully aware of what they are signing up for and the expectations of the governing board.

6. Ask for feedback

The best people to tell the governing board how effective and successful the induction process is are the governors who have experienced it. Ask them to complete a short questionnaire and share their views on what went well, what could be improved, and any ideas for developing the induction process. Ensure this feedback is considered and used to improve the induction process in the future.



Helpful resources from TheSchoolBus

TheSchoolBus has a number of resources that can help you to ensure you are providing effective governor inductions – we have categorised these into the following areas:

Resources for governor inductions

- [Governor Induction Policy](#) – this policy details the procedures to ensure success at every stage of a new governor’s induction and help provide ongoing support.
- [New Governors Induction Checklist](#) – this document allows you to manage the induction process for new governors and audit their skills and experience.
- [Governing Board Skills Audit](#) – this document can provide a basis for your skills audit of new governors, to help you to identify any gaps in knowledge and determine where CPD and training should focus.
- [Governor Induction Feedback Survey](#) – this template can be used to gather views of new governors on what went well during their induction and what could be improved.

Resources to help new governors

- [Acronym Buster for Governors](#) – this document can be used to help new governors get to grips with the numerous acronyms used within governor meetings and reports, which can be particularly overwhelming and challenging to begin with.
- [New Governor: FAQs and the Answers You Need](#) – this article highlights the most common questions new governors have and provides answers using clear terminology. It also includes hyperlinks to direct new governors to key resources on TheSchoolBus that can support them in their role.
- [Getting to Know your School: Questions for New Governors](#) – this template includes suggested questions for governors to ask when getting to know their new school. The questions can be asked during an informal visit with the headteacher, during the induction period, or during a full governing board or committee meeting.
- [Preventing Overwhelm – A Guide for New Governors](#) – this article can help new governors to focus on priority areas, identify who can help them settle into their role, and prevent them feeling overwhelmed so that they can enjoy being a governor.
- [Governor Visit Policy](#) – this policy contains procedures for conducting monitoring visits as a governor. It addresses fundamental considerations, such as what to do in preparation for a visit, how governors should conduct themselves during a visit, and how to report findings to the full governing board.
- [An introduction to governance CPD course](#) – this course can help new governors to understand the expectations and requirements of their new role and the role of the wider governing board.

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